

Hist 118. Witchcraft and Possession  
Fall 2017

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TTh 1:30-3, College Hall 314  
Office hours: W 10-12  
College Hall 311-D

This lecture explores the society and culture of the modernizing world by looking at one of its most widespread, intensely debated, and tension-filled aspects: witchcraft and possession. The mere mention of the terms, or of such close cousins as demonology, sorcery, exorcism, magic, and the witches' Sabbath, and the texts that describe them, raises a clear historical challenge: how can the analysis of witchcraft—including beliefs, patterns of accusation, the general social position of “victims,” the intensity and timing of “witch hunts,” and its articulation with religious practice, law, literature, language, gender, social marginalization, and property—lead us to a more humane understanding of culture and lived experience? Given that these terms and issues had no fixed meanings for any past societies or for present imagination, how can we arrive at usable language for analysis?

These are some of the interdisciplinary questions that we will explore. In addition, as recent scholarly work on early modern witchcraft makes abundantly clear, we will be considering a range of interpretive issues vital to the history of society and religious practice as we progress. But there is another challenge, too: how does the work on the history of witchcraft square with such Pagan groups as Wicca, Druid, Celtic revivalists, and other Goddess worshippers, among other forms of New Age spirituality.

The requirements for the course include: 1. Even though this is nominally a lecture class, you should feel free to ask questions and make regular contributions to class discussion by addressing issues critically engaged with the readings for the week (10%); 2. a mid-term examination (on Thursday October 13, 30%); 3. a paper (no less than 7 pp, no more than 10) due in class on Thursday Nov. 9, 20%) This paper will consist of a compare/contrast exercise that chooses two of the required books covered up to that point. I recommend that the books can be chosen from any combination of: *Salem Possessed*, *The Bewitching of Anne Gunter*, *Night Battles*, and *The Possession at Loudon*. However, if any of you would like to work on any recommended texts or titles from the course bibliography, you must let me know and it is also up to you to locate them; and 4. A final examination, scheduled for Thursday, Dec. 22 from 12-2 pm (more later on its location, 40%).

The books for this semester are available at The Penn Book Center:

Boyer, Paul, and Stephen Nissenbaum. *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976.

De Certeau, Michel. *The Possession at Loudon*, trans. Michael B. Smith. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.

Favret-Saada, Jeanne. *Deadly Words: Witchcraft in the Bocage*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980.

Ginzburg, Carlo. *Night Battles: Witchcraft & Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth & Seventeenth Centuries*, trans. John and Anne Tedeschi. New York: Penguin, 1985.

Sharpe, James. *The Bewitching of Anne Gunter: A Horrible and True Story of Deception, Witchcraft, Murder, and the King of England*. New York: Routledge, 1999.

Smith, Jay M. *Monsters of the Gévaudan: The Making of a Beast*. Cambridge: Harvard University, 2011.

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Note: on the syllabus below, all readings marked by an asterisk (\*) are on the course Canvas site.

1. (Aug. 29, 31) Introduction to course

2. (Sept. 5, 7) Witchcraft: some basic aspects

Req.: \*John Demos, "Witches: A Collective Portrait," ch. 3 of his *Entertaining Satan: Witchcraft and the Culture of Early New England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 57-94?

\*Valerie Kivelson, "Introduction: The Moral Economy of Desperation in Seventeenth-Century Russia," in her *Desperate Magic* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), pp. 1-12.

Rec.: See essays gathered in *The New Generation Witches: Teenage Witchcraft in Contemporary Culture*, eds. Hannah E. Johnston and Peg Aloi (Burlington VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2007).

3. (Sept. 12, 14) Witchcraft, community faction, law (with cuts from *The Crucible*)

Req.: Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*.

Rec.: Macfarlane, Alan. *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England: A Regional and Comparative Study*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970.

Richard Godbeer, *Escaping Salem: The Other Witch Hunt of 1692* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

4.(Sept. 19, 21) England: Cultural Themes of Local Witchcraft

Req.: Sharpe, *The Bewitching of Anne Gunther: A Horrible and True Story of Deception, Witchcraft, Murder, and the King of England* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

Rec.: James Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness*, pp. 1-189.

MacDonald, Michael. *Mystical Bedlam: Madness, Anxiety, and Healing in Seventeenth-Century England*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

Purkiss, Diane. *The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth-Century Representations*. New York: Routledge, 1996.

5. (Sept. 26, 28) Making a witch

*Acting like a witch:*

Req.; \*Robin Briggs, "Myths of the Perfect Witch, in his *Witches and Neighbors: The Social and Cultural Context of European Witchcraft* (New York: Penguin, 1996), pp. 17-59.

*Talking like a witch:*

\*Kamensky, Jane, "'The Tongue is a Witch,'" in *Governing the Tongue: The Politics of Speech in Early New England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 150-80.

*Looking like a witch*

\*Norbert H. Ott, "Facts and Fiction: The Iconography of Demons In German Vernacular Manuscripts," and Ludovica Sebreghondi, "The Devil in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Florentine Engravings, 111-32, both in *Demons: Mediators between This World and the Other. Essays on Demonic Beings from the Middle Ages to the Present*, eds. Paul Neubauer and Ruth Petzoldt (New York: Peter Lang, 1998), pp. 51-64, 111-32.

Rec.: Venetia Newall, ed. *The Witch Figure: Folklore Essays by a Group of Scholars Honouring the 75<sup>th</sup> Birthday of Katherine M. Briggs*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973.

## 6. ( Oct. 3) Witch Hunting and FALL BREAK

Req.: \*”The Hartford Witch Hunt (1662-1665),” in *Witch-Hunting in Seventeenth-Century New England: A Documentary History 1638-1692* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991), pp. 141-63.

- James Sharpe, “England’s Mass Witch Hunt: East Anglia, 1645-7,” in his *Instruments of Darkness: Witchcraft in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), pp. 128-47.

Rec.: Marianne Hester, “Patriarchal Reconstruction and Witch Hunting,” in *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe: Studies in Culture and Belief*, ed. Jonathan Barry et al (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 288-306.

Rolf Schulte, “Witch-hunts and the Male Witch: A Chronology,” ch. 4 of his *Man as Witch: Male Witches in Central Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 74-91.

## 7. (Oct. 10, 12) Multiple causality, local variation

Req.: Carlo Ginzburg, *Night Battles: Witchcraft & Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, trans. John Tedeschi and Anne Tedeschi. New York: Penguin, 1985.

Rec.: Klaniczay, Gábor. *The Uses of Supernatural Power: The Transformation of Popular Religion in Medieval and Early-Modern Europe*, trans. Susan Singerman, ed. Karen Margolis. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990.

Schmitt, Jean-Claude, “‘Religion populaire’ et culture folklorique,” *AESC* 31 (1976): 911-53.

Martin, Ruth. *Witchcraft and the Inquisition in Venice 1550-1650*. New York: Basil Blackwell, 1989.

NO CLASS ON Oct. 6: FALL BREAK

## 8. (Oct. 11, 13) Summing up first half of course, review session on Oct. 11. Mid-Term exam on Oct. 13..

## 9 (Oct. 17, 19) Witchcraft and Shamanism in Native North America, and screening of Korean film, "Manshin: Ten Thousand Spirits," (2014) made by media artist and filmmaker

about the tortuous life of Kim Guem-hwa a well-known shaman in Korea.

Req.: \*Amanda Porterfield, "Witchcraft and the Colonization of Algonquian and Iroquois Cultures," *Religion and American Culture* 2: 1 (Winter 1992): 103-24.

\*Matthew Dennis, "Seneca Possessed: Colonialism, Witchcraft, and Gender in the Time of Handsome Lake," in *Spellbound: Women and Witchcraft in America*, ed. Elizabeth Reis (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1998), pp. 121-44.

Rec.: Philip A. Kuhn, *Soulstealers: The Chinese Sorcery Scare of 1768* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990).

\*Robert Moss, "Missionaries and Magicians: The Jesuit Encounter with Native American Shamanism on New England's Colonial Frontier," in *Wonders of the Invisible World: 1600-1900*, ed. Peter Benes (Boston: Boston University Press, 1995), pp. 17-33.

Alfred A. Cave, "Indian Shamans and English Witches in Seventeenth-Century New England," *Essex Institute Historical Collections* 128: 4 (October 1992): 239-54.

Natalie Zemon Davis, "New Worlds: Marie de l'Incarnation," in *Women on the Margins: Three Seventeenth-Century Lives* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, Belknap Press, 1995), pp. 63-139.

*Mexico:*

Ruth Behar, "Sex and Sin, Witchcraft and the Devil in Late-Colonial Mexico," *American Ethnologist* 14: 1 (1987): 35-55.

Ruth Behar, "Sexual Witchcraft, Colonialism, and Women's Powers: Views from the Mexican Inquisition," in *Sexuality and Marriage in Colonial Latin America*, ed. Asunción Lavrín (Lincoln, Neb., 1991), pp. 178-206.

*Brazil:*

Mello e Souza, Laura. *O Diabo e a Terra de Santa Cruz*. Sao Paulo: Editora Schwarcz, 1989.

*Surinam, Barbados, and Salem:*

Breslaw, Elaine G. *Tituba, Reluctant Witch of Salem*. New York: New York University Press, 1996.

10. (Oct. 24-26) Possession, and screening: cuts from *The Exorcist*.

Req.: \*David D. Hall, "A Servant Possessed," and "The 'Possession' of the Goodwin Children," in *Witch-Hunting in Seventeenth-Century New England*, pp. 107-211, 265-79

\*Kenneth P. Minkema, "'The Devil Will Roar in Me Anon': The Possession of Martha Roberson, Boston, 1741," in *Spellbound: Women and Witchcraft in America*, ed. Elizabeth Reis (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1998), pp. 99-120.

Rec.: John Demos, "A Diabolical Distemper," in *Entertaining Satan*, pp. 97-131.

## 11. (Oct. 31, Nov. 2) Loudon

Req.: Michel de Certeau, *The Possession at Loudon*.

Rec.: D. P., Walker, *Unclean Spirits: Possession and Exorcism in France and England in the late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981).

Tolosana, Carmelo Lisón. *Demonios y Exorcismos en los Siglos de Oro*. Madrid: Akal, 1990.

Rapley, Robert. *A Case of Witchcraft: The Trial of Urbain Grandier*. Toronto: McGill-Queens, 1999.

## 12. Nov. 7, 9) Wolves and werewolves

Req: Smith, *Monsters of Gevaudan*.

NB: Your required paper is due in class .

## 13. (Nov. 14, 16) The persistence of belief

Req.: Jeanne Favret-Saada, *Deadly Words: Witchcraft in the Bocage*.

Rec.: J. E. Timothy, *A War of Witches: A Journey into the Underworld of the Contemporary Aztecs*. Boulder CO: Westview Press, 1994 . This book is out of print, but is available on-line as a Google Book.

Marijke Gijswijt-Hofstra, "Witchcraft after the Witch Trials," and Roy Porter, "Witchcraft and Magic in Enlightenment, Romantic, and Liberal Thought," both in *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, ed. Ankarloo and Clark.

Aurand, A. Monroe, *The Pow-Wow Book: A Treatise on the Art of "Healing by Prayer" and "Laying on of Hands," etc., Practiced by the Pennsylvania Germans and Others... Including an Account of the Famous "Witch" Murder Trial, at York, Pa.* (Harrisburg: privately printed, 1929).

14. (Nov. 21) Screening: most of *The Devils* (1971), director Ken Russell's take on the possessions at Loudon

NO CLASS ON NOV. 23: THANKSGIVING BREAK

15. (Nov. 28, 30) Wicca, Druid, Celt, Norse: Are Neopaganisms Invention or Continuity?

Req.:\* Joanne Pearson, "The History and Development of Wicca and Paganism," in *Belief Beyond Boundaries: Wicca, Celtic Spirituality and the New Age*, ed. Joanne Pearson (Burlington VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2002), pp. 15-54.

\*Starhawk, "Witchcraft as Goddess Religion," in *Spellbound: Women and Witchcraft in Early America*, ed. Elizabeth Reis (Wilmington DE: Scholarly Resources, 1998), pp. 201-19.

Rec.: Carol Barner-Barry, *Contemporary Paganism: Minority Religions in Majoritarian America* (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2005).

Margot Adler, *Drawing Down the Moon: Witches, Druids, Goddess-Worshippers and Other Pagans in America* (New York: Penguin, 1979, rev. ed. 1986).

Gerald B. Gardner, *High Magic's Aid* (London, 1948, rpt. NY: Samuel Weiser, 1975).

Gerald B. Gardner, *Witchcraft Today* (London, Rider, 1954, with intro by Margaret Murray; rpt. New York: Magickal Child Publishing, 1991).

16. (Dec. 5, 78) Conclusion: multidisciplinary debates and directions for continuing study. Some last suggestions for reading:

Owen Davies, *Witchcraft, Magic and Culture, 1736-1951*. Manchester  
UK: Manchester University Press, 1999.

Ronald Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan  
Witchcraft* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).