

## HISTORY OF WITCHCRAFT

HIS 343P (39845)  
R S 357 (44580)  
WGS 345 (48105)

WAG 201  
TTH 11:00-12:30  
Instructor: Brian Levack  
T.A.: William Kramer

### Course description

The main purpose of this lecture course is to explain the prosecution of more than 100,000 people, most of whom were women, for the crime of witchcraft in Europe and colonial America between 1450 and 1750. We shall study the formation and dissemination of both learned and popular witch beliefs from ancient times to the eighteenth century, the development of criminal procedures that facilitated the trial and conviction of accused witches, the religious motives for prosecuting witches during the age of the Reformation, and the social contexts within which accusations of witchcraft arose. The course will conclude with a discussion of the decline and end of witchcraft prosecutions and the revival of witchcraft practices in the twentieth century.

### Required Reading

Brian P. Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe* (3rd ed., 2006)  
Darren Oldridge (ed.), *The Witchcraft Reader* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2008)  
Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons* (2001)  
Carlo Ginzburg, *The Night Battles: Witchcraft and Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (1983)  
Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed* (1975)

### **DEFINITIONS AND THEORIES**

1. Introduction: Approaches to the Study of Witchcraft (Jan. 14)
2. Religion, Magic and Witchcraft (Jan. 16) [Levack, *Witch-Hunt*, Ch. 1]

### **THE GROWTH OF WITCH BELIEFS**

3. The Ancient World (Jan. 21) [Cohn, chs. 1-2]
4. Paganism, Christianity and the Devil (Jan. 23) [Oldridge, ch. 9]
5. Witch Beliefs in the Middle Ages (Jan. 28) [Cohn, ch. 3-4]
6. Ritual Magic and harmful magic (Jan. 30) [Cohn, chs. 6-8]
7. The Devil (Feb. 4) [Levack, ch. 2]
8. The Worship of the Devil, Part I (Feb. 6) [Oldridge, chs. 11-13]
9. The Worship of the Devil, Part II (Feb. 11) [Cohn, ch. 9]

### **THE AGE OF THE WITCH-HUNTS**

10. Witchcraft and the Law, Part I (Feb.18) [Levack, ch. 3; Oldridge, ch. 1]
11. Witchcraft and the Law, Part II (Feb. 20) [Oldridge, chs. 17-19]
12. The Roman Inquisition and Popular belief (Feb. 25) *The Night Battles* [Ginzburg]
13. The Impact of the Reformation (Feb. 27) [Levack, ch. 4; Oldridge, ch.14-16]
14. Witchcraft and Women (Mar 4) [Oldridge, chs. 25-29]
15. Family and Social Relationships (Mar. 6) [Levack ch. 5; Oldridge, chs. 31-32]
16. Economic Change and Witch-hunting (Mar. 18) [Oldridge, ch. 8]

17. Demonic Possession and Witchcraft (Mar. 20) [Oldridge ch. 21-22]
18. Interpretations of Demonic Possession (Mar. 25) [Oldridge, ch. 23-24]

### **WITCHCRAFT IN ENGLAND, SCOTLAND, AND AMERICA**

19. Witch Beliefs in England (Apr. 1) [Levack, ch. 7]
20. Witch Trials in England (Apr. 3)
21. Witch-Hunting in Scotland (Apr. 8)
22. The Witch Hunt at Salem 1692 (Apr. 10) [Boyer & Nissenbaum]
23. Interpretations of Salem (Apr. 15) [Boyer & Nissenbaum,

### **WITCHCRAFT IN THE MODERN WORLD**

24. The Decline of Witchcraft Prosecutions (Apr. 17) [Levack, ch. 8; Oldridge, ch. 33]
25. The Decline of Witch Beliefs (Apr. 22) [Oldridge, ch. 35]
26. Witchcraft Yesterday and Today (Apr. 24) [Oldridge, ch. 37]
27. Enduring Patterns (Apr. 29) Levack, ch. 9; Oldridge, ch. 36]

### **Exams**

Students are required to take three exams and submit a final essay. The first exam will be given on Thursday, February 13, and will cover the following material:

Lectures 1-9

Levack, *Witch-Hunt*, chapters 1-2

Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*, chapters 1-4, 6-9

Oldridge, *Witchcraft Reader*, chapters 9-11-13]

The second exam will be given on Thursday, March 27, and will cover the following material:

Lectures 10-18

Levack, *Witch Hunt*, chapters 3-6

Ginzburg, *The Night Battles*

Oldridge, *Witchcraft Reader*, chapters 8, 17-29, 23-4

The third exam will be given on Thursday, May 1 and will cover the following material:

Lectures 19-27

Levack, *Witch-Hunt*, chapters 7-9

Boyer & Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*

Oldridge, *Witchcraft Reader*, chapters 33, 35-38

Each of the exams will consist of a number of short essay questions and one longer essay question. The grade for each of the exams will count for roughly 25% of the course grade.

Regularly scheduled make-up exams are not given in this course. Students who miss an examination and do not have a legitimate excuse (e.g., a note from a doctor) will receive a failing grade for that examination. Students who have legitimate excuses should notify the instructor before the exam takes place to make alternative arrangements.

### **Final Essay**

Each student is required to submit a final essay. The essay, which should run between 1500 and 2000 words, will consist of an answer to a question that will be distributed

about two weeks before the end of the semester. The purpose of the essay will be to develop your thoughts on some of the main issues the course has addressed. The essay is due on Monday, May 12 at 5 p.m. in GAR 3.502. The grade you receive for the final essay will count for roughly 25% of the course grade. Plus but not minus grades will be assigned in the course.

**Office Hours**

Levack: <[levack@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:levack@austin.utexas.edu)> Wed. 10:30-12:00 or by appointment in GAR 3.502

Kramer: [williamkramer@utexas.edu](mailto:williamkramer@utexas.edu)> TH 2:00-3:30 or by appointment in BEL 2.212N.