

# HISTORY 201: THE HISTORIAN'S CRAFT WITCHCRAFT, DIABOLISM, AND MAGIC IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE

Instructor: Alice Coulter Main  
Office Hours: Monday and Thursday  
4pm-5pm Central on Blackboard  
Email: [amain2@wisc.edu](mailto:amain2@wisc.edu)

University of Wisconsin-Madison  
Format: Online/Asynchronous  
Semester: Fall 2020  
Credits: 3

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will address the problem of magic in European society ca. 1400-1700. We will read a selection of landmark studies that chart the importance of illicit belief in ordinary people's struggle to endure and make meaning in a precarious world. We will ask, what role did soothsaying, healing, charms, and curses play in early modern communities? Why did authorities like the State and Church seek to control these popular practices? How did anti-witchcraft initiatives drive new allocations of power? And how did this process birth a society we recognize as modern?

The readings in this course span the breadth of early modern Europe. We will explore texts about men and women, the rural and the urban, the wealthy and the impoverished, the powerful and the disenfranchised. However, we will always return to our central topics: community dynamics; popular resistance to sanctioned doctrine; officials' march towards discipline; the creative appropriation of religion; gender; sexuality; and survival. By tracking the social, spiritual, and intellectual transformations incubated in early modern localities, students will strive to better understand the lived mentalities and perspectives of historical actors.

## COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course aims to facilitate student progress across three primary areas: content knowledge, general skills, and critical thinking. Students will gain a solid foundation in the social, religious, and cultural upheavals that drove the witch-hunts of early modern Europe. Students will also hone their abilities as readers and writers. Finally, they will practice asking provocative questions, testing claims against evidence, and elaborating logical connections.

## TEXTBOOKS

- Darren Oldridge, ed., *The Witchcraft Reader*, 3rd ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2020).
- Brian P. Levack, ed., *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, 1st ed. (New York: Routledge, 2004).
- Richard Godbeer, ed., *The Salem Witch Hunt: A Brief History with Documents*, 2nd ed. (Macmillan Higher Education, 2017).
- Peter A. Morton, ed., *The Bedevilment of Elizabeth Lorentz* (University of Toronto Press, 2018).
- Alec Rylie, *The Sorcerer's Tale: Faith and Fraud in Tudor England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

- Carlo Ginzburg, *The Night Battles: Witchcraft and Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, trans. John and Anne Tedeschi (London and New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2011).

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

Students in History 201 respond to semiweekly reading reflection prompts on the course's Canvas discussion board. Posts will be due on Tuesdays and Fridays at 6:00pm Central Time.

Students will also complete one three-page historiography paper and two five-page directed primary source papers. Prompts for these papers will be distributed closer to the due date. The prompts will be interpretive and require critical thinking about the texts.

As the capstone project for this course, students will compose a final paper of 8-10 pages based on independent primary and secondary source research. With assistance from the instructor, students will select a historical incident of witchcraft, diabolism, or magic to analyze, and will produce an original argument that puts their incident in conversation with the other texts studied in this course.

To fulfill the oral communication objective of a Comm-B course, students will also give two five-minute speeches. For the first speech, students will assume the persona of a character from *The Sorcerer's Tale* and perform a courtroom monologue arguing for the guilt or innocence of the magician Gregory Wisdom. For the second speech, students will present an overview of their final paper and its findings.

All assignments will be submitted online through Canvas.

## **GRADING**

- Discussion Posts: 30%
- Historiography Paper: 5%
- Directed Primary Source Papers: 10% each
- Oral Presentations: 5% each
- Research Paper Preparation: 10%
- Final Research Paper: 25%

## **CREDIT HOURS**

The credit standard for this course is met by an expectation of a total of 135 hours of student engagement with the course learning activities, which include regularly scheduled instructor/student meeting times, reading, writing, independent research, and discussion posts.

## **PLAGIARISM**

One of the fundamental principles of this university is that "academic honesty and integrity are fundamental to the mission of higher education and of the University of Wisconsin system" (Wisconsin Administrative Code 14.01). While what constitutes in-class cheating (copying the work of others, unauthorized use of prepared notes, etc.) is often obvious to students, plagiarism merits further elaboration.

Plagiarism is...

- Using someone else's words or ideas without proper documentation.
- Copying some portion of your text from another source without proper acknowledgement of indebtedness.
- Borrowing another person's specific ideas without documenting their source.
- Having another person correct or revise your work. This differs from getting feedback from a writing group, or from an individual, which you then attempt to implement.
- Turning in a paper written by another person, from an essay "service," or from a website (including reproductions of such essays or papers).

Writing handbooks are excellent sources for learning how to avoid plagiarism. The writing center has an online handbook that can be accessed at [www.wisc.edu/writing](http://www.wisc.edu/writing). And of course, you may always talk with me if you have any questions about plagiarism.

### **EMAIL POLICY**

My email address is [amain2@wisc.edu](mailto:amain2@wisc.edu). I will respond to all emails by the end of the following business day at the latest. For emails relating to specific assignments, be sure to email at least one business day in advance to guarantee a timely response

### **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

- The History Lab
  - Assistance from History Department grad students in improving your history papers
  - <https://history.wisc.edu/thehistorylab.htm>
- The Writing Center
  - Workshops, writers' groups, and one-on-one assistance to improve writing
  - <https://writing.wisc.edu/>
- McBurney Resource Center
  - Help with necessary accommodations in testing, classroom, etc.
  - <https://mcburney.wisc.edu/>

### **SCHEDULE**

#### **UNIT 1: INTRODUCTION TO HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS OF WITCHCRAFT**

- **Week 1**
  - Wednesday, September 2: Introduction to the Course
    - Darren Oldridge, "General Introduction," in *The Witchcraft Reader*, 1-16.
    - Julian Goodare, "Modern Western Images of Witches," in *The Witchcraft Reader*, 452-456.
  - Friday, September 4: Early Modern Mentalities, or the Cultural Backdrop to Witch-Belief
    - Euan Cameron, "Spirits in Popular Belief," in *The Witchcraft Reader*, 77-81.
    - Joyce Miller, "Witches and Charmers in Scotland," in *The Witchcraft Reader*, 82-86.

- Stuart Clark, “Inversion, Misrule, and the Meaning of Witchcraft,” in *The Witchcraft Reader*, 143-154.
    - Heinrich Kramer, *Malleus Maleficarum*, in *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, 57-68.
  - **Week 2**
    - Tuesday, September 8: Community, Health, and the Social Function of Witch-Hunting
      - Robin Briggs, “The Experience of Bewitchment,” in *The Witchcraft Reader*, 65-76.
      - Edward Bever, “The Medical Effects of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe,” in *The Witchcraft Reader*, 87-92.
      - Wolfgang Behringer, “Weather, Hunger, and Fear: Origins of the European Witch-Hunts in Climate, Society, and Mentality,” in *The Witchcraft Reader*, 93-106.
      - “The Trial of Françatte Camont in Lorraine, 1598,” in *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, 179-184.
      - Reginald Scott, “The Unreality of Witchcraft, 1584,” in *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, 285-292.
    - Friday, September 11: Gender and Accusations of Witchcraft
      - Jane P. Davidson, “The Myth of the Persecuted Female Healer,” in *The Witchcraft Reader*, 291-294.
      - Clive Holmes, “Women, Witnesses and Witches,” in *The Witchcraft Reader*, 302-322.
      - Louise Jackson, “Witches, Wives and Mothers,” in *The Witchcraft Reader*, 347-360.
      - E. J. Kent, “Masculinity and Male Witches in Old and New England,” in *The Witchcraft Reader*, 323-336.
      - “The confessions of witches in Guernsey, 1617,” in *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, 185-189.
  - **Week 3**
    - Tuesday, September 15: Central Authority, Judicial Procedure, and Torture
      - Brian P. Levack, “State-Building and Witch Hunting in Early Modern Europe,” in *The Witchcraft Reader*, 200-213.
      - Brian P. Levack, “The Decline of Witchcraft Prosecutions,” in *The Witchcraft Reader*, 379-386.
      - Friedrich Spee, “A Condemnation of Torture, 1631,” in *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, 145-153.
      - “The confessions of Johannes Junius at Bamberg, 1628,” in *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, 198-202.
    - Friday, September 18: Witchcraft and Religion from Early Modernity to Today
      - Stuart Clark, “Protestant Witchcraft, Catholic Witchcraft,” in *The Witchcraft Reader*, 161-173.
      - Jacqueline Simpson, “Margaret Murray’s Witch Cult,” in *The Witchcraft Reader*, 113-119.
      - Ethan Doyle White, “Wicca as Witchcraft,” in *The Witchcraft Reader*, 426-438.

## UNIT 2: COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY AND WITCH PANIC

- **Week 4**

- Tuesday, September 22: Introduction to the Salem Trials
  - *In Search of History: Salem Witch Trials* (film)
  - Richard Godbeer, "Introduction: Explaining the Salem Witch Hunt," in *The Salem Witch Hunt: A Brief History with Documents*, 1-31.
  - "Signs and Assaults from the Supernatural World," in *The Salem Witch Hunt: A Brief History with Documents*, 38-50.
  - "Beginnings," in *The Salem Witch Hunt: A Brief History with Documents*, 51-65.
- Friday, September 25: Citing Sources
  - Source citation activity
  - **DUE: Historiography Paper**

- **Week 5**

- Tuesday, September 29: The Evidence of the Salem Trials
  - "Witches on Trial," in *The Salem Witch Hunt: A Brief History with Documents*, 67-145.
- Friday, October 2: Ending the Salem Trials
  - "The Witch Court under Attack," in *The Salem Witch Hunt: A Brief History with Documents*, 147-167.
  - "Aftermath," in *The Salem Witch Hunt: A Brief History with Documents*, 169-185.
  - Thesis statements video

- **Week 6**

- Tuesday, October 6: Secondary Sources on the Salem Trials
  - Sarah Rivett, "Our Salem, Our Selves," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 65, no. 3 (July 2008): 495-502.
  - Elizabeth Reis, "Damned Women in Puritan New England," in *The Witchcraft Reader*, 295-301.
  - Franklin G. Mixon, Jr., "'Homo Economicus' and the Salem Witch Trials," *The Journal of Economic Education* 31, no. 2 (Spring 2000): 179-184.
  - Veta Smith Tucker, "The Racial Metamorphosis of Tituba of Salem Village," *Journal of Black Studies* 30, no. 4 (March 2000): 624-634.
- Friday, October 9: Essay Structure
  - Essay structure activity

## UNIT 3: UNDERSTANDING DEMONIC POSSESSION

- **Week 7**

- Tuesday, October 13: Introduction to Demonic Possession
  - Brian P. Levack, "Demonic Possession and Witchcraft," in *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, 231-234.
  - "A Russian Witch-Trial at Lukh, 1657," in *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, 214-219.
  - Henri Boguet, "The Possession of Loyse Maillat, 1598," in *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, 239-242.

- H. C. Erik Midelfort, “The Devil and the German People,” in *The Witchcraft Reader*, 227-239.
    - Sarah Ferber, “Ecstasy, Possession, Witchcraft,” in *The Witchcraft Reader*, 257-266.
  - Friday, October 16: Prose Writing
    - Prose writing activity
    - **Due: Salem Paper**
- **Week 8**
  - Tuesday, October 20: Introduction to the Bedevilment of Elizabeth Lorentz
    - Peter Morton, “Introduction: The Devil in the World of Elizabeth Lorentz,” in *The Bedevilment of Elizabeth Lorentz*, xvii-lxii.
  - Friday, October 23: Library Research
    - Library research activity
    - Mid-semester survey
- **Week 9**
  - Tuesday, October 27: Elizabeth Lorentz’s Trial and World
    - “The Trial of Elizabeth Lorentz,” in *The Bedevilment of Elizabeth Lorentz*, 1-50.
    - Melchior Neukirch, “Devout Christian Prayers against the Devils, in the Poor Possessed People,” in *The Bedevilment of Elizabeth Lorentz*, 51-64.
  - Friday, October 30: Sample Papers on Demonic Affliction
    - Joseph Featherly, “The Black Devil Called Ergot” (2010)
    - Jael Goldfine, “Mary Warren: Empowered and Imprisoned” (2015)
    - Marika Levidow, “Physical Objects in Spectral Evidence: Legitimate Harm?” (2017)

#### UNIT 4: ALCHEMY, ASTROLOGY, AND EARLY MODERN SCIENCE

- **Week 10**
  - Tuesday, November 3: Introduction to Early Modern Science
    - Lawrence Principe, “Myth 4: That Alchemy and Astrology were Superstitious Pursuits that did not Contribute to Science and Scientific Understanding,” in *Newton’s Apple and Other Myths about Science*, ed. Ronald Numbers and Kostas Kampourakis 32-39 (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: Harvard University Press, 2015) [www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1c84d3w](http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1c84d3w)
    - Alec Ryrie, *The Sorcerer’s Tale*, xii-33.
  - Friday, November 6: Wisdom as Physician
    - Alec Ryrie, *The Sorcerer’s Tale*, 34-63.
    - **Due: Demonic Possession Paper**
- **Week 11**
  - Tuesday, November 10: Wisdom as Crook
    - Alec Ryrie, *The Sorcerer’s Tale*, 64-108.
  - Friday, November 13: Wisdom as Magician
    - Alec Ryrie, *The Sorcerer’s Tale*, 109-149.
    - **Due: Research Paper Prospectus and Annotated Bibliography**
- **Week 12**
  - Tuesday, November 17: Wisdom as Protestant

- Alec Ryrie, *The Sorcerer's Tale*, 150-183.
- Friday, November 20: Sample Papers on Female Witches and Social Anxieties
  - “Diabolical Prejudice: Factors in the Conviction of Tempel Anneke”
  - “Wretched, Wicked, Wondrous: The Functional Versatility of the Witch in 16th and 17th Century England”

#### **UNIT 5: SHAMANISM AND FOLK BELIEF**

- **Week 13**

- Tuesday, November 24: Introduction to the Benandanti
  - Carlo Ginzburg, *The Night Battles*, introductory material and Chapter 1.
  - **Due: *The Sorcerer's Tale* Oral Report**
- Friday, November 27
  - No assignment – Thanksgiving break

- **Week 14**

- Tuesday, December 1: Transformations in the Benandanti's Beliefs
  - Carlo Ginzburg, *The Night Battles*, Chapters 2-3.
- Friday, December 4: Final Paper Drafts
  - **Due: Final Paper First Drafts**

- **Week 15**

- Tuesday, December 8: The End of the Benandanti
  - Carlo Ginzburg, *The Night Battles*, Chapter 4.
  - **Due: Peer Review Responses on Drafts**
- Thursday, December 10: Final Paper Presentations
  - Course evaluations
  - **Due: Final Paper Presentations**

**FINAL PAPERS DUE WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 16 AT 11:59PM**