

## **HIS 185: Witchcraft in the Early Modern World**

Course Credits: 3  
Semester: Fall 2016  
Prerequisites: None

**Dr. Jennifer M. Black**

### **Course Description**

What is a witch, and how did people in the past understand the “problem” of witchcraft? This course examines witchcraft accusations in Early-Modern England, Latin America, and the North American colonies from a comparative perspective. The course will begin with a discussion of the political, religious, and social factors that pushed European colonization of the Atlantic World in the 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. We’ll then examine European beliefs about witches and witchcraft—including the socio-political factors that pushed accusations and “outbreaks”—before moving on to compare these with accusations in Latin America and the North American British, Spanish, and French colonies. In each case, cultural understandings of racial, religious, and gendered difference shaped witchcraft accusations in different ways. A close examination of historical texts will illustrate the intersection of gender, religious belief, and social norms in witchcraft “outbreaks” during this period. Finally, we will end with a unit discussing the public memory of these witchcraft accusations, in theater, film, and other popular sources. The course thus provides an introduction to the histories of gender, race, and religion in the age of colonization, while giving insight to both the interaction of European and non-European cultures in the Early Modern Atlantic World and the ways that history has reshaped the memory of these events for viewers today.

### **Course Objectives**

Students enrolled in this course will gain a thorough understanding of the factors that motivated European colonization in the Early Modern period; the different socio-cultural definitions of proper gendered behavior and religious practice throughout the Atlantic World; the socio-political, cultural, and economic factors that motivated witchcraft accusations in this period; the outcomes and consequences of such accusations; and the ways that public memory of these events changed since the seventeenth century. Through lectures, readings, and classroom discussion, students will encounter and compare different theoretical interpretations of witchcraft “outbreaks” in the Atlantic World and will evaluate these historical perspectives against primary source evidence. Engaging with these materials, students will develop critical thinking skills to make their own arguments about this period. By the end of the semester, students will have a firm understanding of the intersections of gender, religion, and social practice in this period, as well as the differing ways that cultural belief systems in the Atlantic World structured the outcomes of witchcraft accusations.

### **Course Disciplinary Objectives:**

- Identify major events in local, national, and international history and politics
- Identify different historical and theoretical perspectives
- Analyze primary and secondary sources

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- Develop an argument that evaluates evidence within a specific historical context

### **Course Goals**

- ❖ HIS 185 contributes to the following University goals for undergraduate education:
  3. Consider ethical issues and values and make reasoned judgments about them.
  4. Think independently and creatively, analyze information critically, and solve problems.
  5. Respect and understand cultural differences.
  6. Understand global perspectives.
  7. Communicate and interact effectively.
  
- ❖ HIS 185 contributes to the following goals of the Core Curriculum:
  1. Develop effective communication skills including oral, written and/or artistic presentations.
  2. Develop and enhance critical thinking and problem solving skills.
  5. Develop an awareness of ethical issues across disciplines.
  6. Develop an awareness of and appreciation for global interdependence and diversity.

\*These goals will be assessed through exams, quizzes, and class participation.

### **Required Texts**

- Wiesner, Merry E. *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2007.  
ISBN: 9780-618-474806
- Breslaw, Elaine. *Witches of the Atlantic World*. New York: NYU Press, 2000.  
ISBN: 9780-8147-98515
- Games, Alison. *Witchcraft in Early North America*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010.  
ISBN: 9781-4422-03587
- Oakes, James, et al. Custom Textbook in American & World History, Oxford University Press  
(2016). ISBN: 9780-1906-59233 \*\*Available through the University bookstore only\*\*

\*Additional Readings available on Blackboard

### **Course Assignments & Evaluation**

There will be three exams, a series of short in-class activities, and a final group project in this class. Each of these will test your understanding of the course material and objectives. The final course grade will be calculated as follows:

Participation & Debates:	20%
Mid-Term 1:	15%
Mid-Term 2:	20%
Group Project:	20%
Final Exam:	25%

**Participation:** In this course you will be graded on your active participation in class discussions. This gives you a chance to verbally demonstrate your understanding of the course material, and includes raising your hand to ask or answer questions during lecture. We will also have a series of interactive activities that will take place in class. These may take the form of mock-jury trials, debates, image or film discussions, and other related activities. Participation in these activities is

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required; students who consistently miss class on scheduled activity days will lose participation points. You will, however be allowed two absences without penalty (see below).

**Group Project:** At the end of the term, student groups will make a short presentation that ties together representations of witches today with an element of history that we've discussed in class. Groups will also be required to submit a one-page write up that summarizes the modern representation and its relation to witchcraft history. Detailed instructions will be distributed after the mid-term.

**Exams** may include a combination of short answer, matching, multiple choice, image analysis, and essay questions. Study guides will be distributed one week prior to the exam. Make-up exams will not be permitted except in emergency situations, to be determined at my discretion.

### **Weekly Schedule**

*Items with an asterisk (\*) can be found on blackboard in "Additional readings"*

**Week 1 (Aug 29-Sept 2): Introduction to Witches and Historical Witchcraft Epidemics**

*Reading:* WEME: Introduction & section intros (p1-8, 11-14, 51-54, 99-102, 149-154)

Games, p. 3-18

**Week 2 (Sept 7): Pre-Modern Sources of Witchcraft**

*Guest Lecture: Dr. Korb*

**(Sept 9) Early Modern Beliefs on Witchcraft**

*Reading:* Breslaw, chapters 1 (p21-28), & 6 (p60-71)

WEME: Zika

### **UNIT I: WITCHCRAFT IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE**

**Week 3 (Sept 12-16): Overview**

*Reading:* Custom bk, p24-41; 78-97

**Week 4 (Sept 19-23): Documents**

*Reading:* Breslaw chapters 2-3, p28-41

\*Laws, Cases, Proceedings from Gibson (p5-9, 12-16 [doc 2], 52-59)

\*Debate / Discussion Activity 1

**Week 5 (Sept 26-28): Interpretations & Representations**

*Reading:* WEME: Briggs, Stevens, Scully

\*Fairytale, TBD

**(Sept 30)** *Guest Lecture: Dr. Caleb on Fairy Tales*

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**Week 6 (Oct 3): Discussion on Representations**

*Reading:* TBD

*Guest Lecture: Dr. Steinberger on Macbeth*

**(Oct 5, 7): Review & MID-TERM 1**

**UNIT II: WITCHCRAFT IN SPANISH NORTH AMERICA**

**Week 7 (Oct 10-12): Overview**

*Reading:* Custom bk, chapter 3 “New World”  
Games, p21-35

\*NO CLASS October 14 (Fall Break)

**Week 8 (Oct 17-21): Documents**

*Reading:* Games docs 1, 4, 5, 12  
\*Chuchiak docs, p108-110, 293-299

\*Debate / Discussion Activity 2

**Week 9 (Oct 24-28): Interpretations**

*Reading:* Breslaw chapter 21  
\*Silverblatt, “The Evolution of Witchcraft”  
Games, p48-55

\*Discussion Activity 3 due Friday, 10/28 in class- see instructions on Blackboard

**Week 10 (Oct 31): Halloween Discussion**

*Guest Lecture: Dr. Curran on Paganism & Halloween*

**(Nov 2-4): Review & MID-TERM 2**

**UNIT III: WITCHCRAFT AT SALEM**

**Week 11 (Nov 7-11): Overview**

*Reading:* Oakes, custom p16-28, on Puritans  
Oakes, custom p31-33, 44-53 on New England  
Games, p39-48, 55-76

\*WITHDRAWAL DEADLINE: Nov. 14<sup>th</sup> —Last day to withdraw without academic penalty

**Week 12 (Nov 14-18): Documents**

*Reading:* Games, documents 22, 26  
Breslaw, chapters 39 (Dalton), 41 (Tituba), 43 (Bishop), 45-46 (Tituba accusers), 48-49 (Bishop accusers)  
\*Proctor records

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\*Trial Activities & Discussion 4

**Week 13 (Nov 21): Native American Witches**

*Reading:* \*Kucich, "Discord of the Devil"  
Breslaw, chapter 20  
Games, p76-91

\*NO CLASS November 23-25 (Thanksgiving Recess)

**Week 14 (Nov 28-30): Interpretations & Representations**

*Reading:* Breslaw p427-429, chapter 37 (Karlsen), 54 (Upham), 58 (Matossian), 60 (Demos)  
\*Kent, on male witches  
\*Norton, "Devil in the Details"

\*Discussion Activity 5 due in class, Monday 11/28- see instructions on Blackboard

**UNIT IV: WITCHCRAFT'S LEGACY**

**(Dec 2)** *Guest Lecture: Matt Hinton on The Crucible*

**Week 15 (Dec 5-Dec 9): The Decline of Witchcraft & Its Legacy**

*Reading:* \*Levack on Decline (from Oldridge)  
Breslaw, p489-515

\*Group Project due 12/7, in class; Presentations 12/7 and 12/9 in class

**Week 16 (Dec 12): Review for Final Exam**

**FINAL EXAM (Date TBA—Refer to posted Final Exam Schedule)**