Anthropology 490C
Seminar: Witchcraft in Anthropological Perspective

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Office Hours: TR 11:00 - 12:00; Th 4:00 - 5:00

I. Objectives
This course explores the study of witchcraft from an anthropological perspective. "Witchcraft" has fascinated historians, anthropologists and sociologists for at least two hundred years, but there is little agreement on what it is. The word "witch" can mean a range of different things, depending on cultural, historical and religious context. This class will explore some of these connotations, ranging from anthropological studies of witchcraft and sorcery in pre-industrial societies, to an examination of European and American witch hunts, to the reclamation of witchcraft by the feminist and Neo-Pagan movements of the late 20th century. In examining these different meanings, we seek to find both differences and similarities between them. The central question of this seminar is: does the term “witchcraft” refer to similar, cross-culturally documentable phenomena, or do these different cultural forms have little in common with one another? What factors contribute to a belief in and practice of witchcraft? What form do these beliefs and practices take in response to different social, historical and cultural factors? How useful is the term “witchcraft” in referring to a range of cultural, social and religious phenomena?

II. Format
This course is designed as a seminar. Each week’s meeting will be structured around student presentations; the instructor will lecture only occasionally to provide background information. Students who are not presenting that week will turn in to the instructor a 1-2 page reading reaction to the week’s readings. These may be turned in on email before the beginning of class, or in hard copy in class. Reading reactions are worth 10 points each.

Student attendance and participation are crucial to the success of this course. Attendance entails not missing more than 2 class meetings, notifying the instructor in cases of prolonged absence, arriving on time and staying for the duration of the class. Students are expected to come to class prepared, e.g. having read the day’s assignment and taken notes on it. Participation means actively contributing to each discussion with questions and comments, and a clear, well-thought-out and well-presented class presentation.

This course requires a substantial amount of reading and writing. If you are not able or willing to do the work, you should drop the class. In addition to the reading reactions and class presentation, students will also complete a 20-page research paper on some aspect related to the study of witchcraft. Final papers may be an expansion of the class presentation, but must draw from sources not in the syllabus. More information on this assignment will be available separately.
III. Requirements

The following books are required reading for the course:

E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande*
Paul Stoller, *In Sorcery's Shadow: A Memoir of an Apprenticeship Among the Songhay of Niger*
Clyde Kluckhohn, *Navajo Witchcraft*
Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors: the Social and Cultural Context of European Witchcraft*
Carlo Ginzburg, *The Night Battles*
Paul Boyer and Steven Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*
Debbie Nathan and Michael Snedeker, *Satan's Silence*
Sabina Magliocco, * Conjuring Culture: Folklore and the Making of American Neo-Paganism* (not yet published; available as a packet at ASAP Copies)

The following is recommended reading for the course. It will serve as a *vade mecum*, or guide, for the course structure. It is especially useful if this is the first time you have studied this topic.
Jeffrey B. Russell, *A History of Witchcraft*

A packet or readings, available at ASAP Copies, is also required. All books are available for purchase in the bookstore, and most readings are also available on reserve in the Oviatt Library.

IV. Evaluation

**Final Grade Breakdown:**

- Attendance and participation..........................10%
- Reading reactions........................................20%
- Class presentation.......................................30%
- Final paper................................................30%

**V. Grading Scale**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>93-100 = A</td>
<td>83-88 = B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-92 = A-</td>
<td>80-82 = B-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88-89 = B+</td>
<td>78-79 = C+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73-77 = C</td>
<td>68-69 = D+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63-67 = D</td>
<td>59 and below = F</td>
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VI. Week-by-Week Course Syllabus

Note: Readings are to be done by the date indicated at left.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Topic and Readings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8/26</td>
<td>Introduction; explanation of key concepts; assignment of presentations.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recommended readings: Russell, Introduction; Dundes, “Projection in Folklore” and “Ritual Murder or the Blood Libel in reader.</td>
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Part I: Witchcraft and Sorcery in Traditional Societies

9/2    Witchcraft in Sub-Saharan Africa, Part I
       Evans-Pritchard, Chapters I - VII.

9/9    Witchcraft in Sub-Saharan Africa, Part II
       Evans-Pritchard, Chapters VIII - XIII

9/6    Witchcraft in Sub-Saharan Africa, Part III
       Stoller, *in its entirety*

9/22   Native American Witchcraft
       Kluckhohn, Part I (Data), pp. 1 - 64

9/30   Native American Witchcraft, cont’d.
       Kluckhohn, Part II (Interpretation), pp. 65-130 + Appendices

  Paper Proposal Due!

Part II: European and North American Witchcraft, 1350-1750

10/7   European Witchcraft, Part I
       Briggs, Chapters I - V
       Recommended: Russell, “Witchcraft, heresy and the inquisition,” 55-70

10/14  European Witchcraft, Part II
       Briggs, Chapters VI - X

10/21  But Could European Witchcraft Be Related to Ancient Pagan Beliefs?
       Ginzburg, *in its entirety*
       Recommended: Russell, “Roots of European Witchcraft,” 37-54

10/28  The Witch Craze in North America I
       Boyer & Nissenbaum, Part I
Recommended: Russell, “Witchcraft in Britain and America,” 90-121

11/4      The Witch Craze in North America, cont’d.
          Boyer & Nissenbaum, Part II

11/11     Modern-Day Witch Hunts
          Nathan & Snedeker, in its entirety
          **Paper Outline Due!**

**Part III: Modern Neo-Pagan Witchcraft**

11/18     Anthropology and the Romance of Witchcraft and Magic
          Magliocco, Introduction and Part I
          Recommended: Russell, 131-148

11/25     Reclaiming Ecstatic Experiences and Traditional Ways of
          Knowing
          Magliocco, Parts II and III
          Recommended: Russell, 148-176

12/2      Review and Wrap-Up
          Oral Presentation of Final Paper Topics

12/9      **All final research papers due by 5:00 PM!**
Additional Resources by Topic

The following list is not intended to be exhaustive, but merely to give you a place to start research for your presentations and final papers. Please consult the instructor and the library for additional suggestions. Even more resources can be found in the bibliographies of the textbooks for this course.

Part I: Witchcraft and Sorcery in Traditional Societies


Part IIA: European and North American Witchcraft, 1350-1750

Ankarloo, Bengt and Stuart Clark, ed. *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: the Series.* Pennsylvania State University Press. *This series of edited volumes presents the latest thinking on European witchcraft, from Biblical times to the present. There are 6 volumes in the series, each covering a different time period. Highly recommended.*


Cohn, Norman. 1975. *Europe's Inner Demons.* London and New York:


Ginzburg, Carlo. 1990. *Ecstasies.* *The translation of Ginzburg’s latest historical revisionist account of witch trials in medieval northern Italy; more along the lines of The Night Battles.*


**Part II B: Modern Witch Hunts**


Miller, Arthur. 1954. *The Crucible.* *This is a work of fiction, a play -- but it implicitly compared the McCarthyism and communist witch hunts of the 1950’s with the Salem witch trials in U.S. history.*


**Part III: Modern Neo-Pagan Witchcraft**


