

GLSP SOCS 617

Magic, Miracle and Witchcraft in Europe before 1700

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Until the 'disenchantment of the world' in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Europeans lived in a universe shot through with hidden and awesome power. God's action in the world was possible but puzzlingly He often operated through other agents, through his saints and by miracle. On the other hand, humans were often tempted to appeal to other powers to get what they wanted and the use of magic, some pagan in origin, some not, was a pervasive influence. The world was full of demons and even devils, who used illusion and magic to entrap people by possessing them or turning them towards witchcraft in exchange for wealth and health. Surprisingly, the occult was not all bad and Catholics and later Protestants too wrestled with the question of what to accept and what to suppress. Magical forces did not fade with the Renaissance but actually grew alongside the first developments towards modern natural science in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The necromancer joined the saint, the priest, and the witch as the faces of occult power. This course will take a broad look at the people and powers that filled the place where science and a lot of religion sit today.

The instructor will provide background and the narrative history in order to place the readings into their appropriate context.

In surveying the long history of magic and miracle in Europe, we shall ask such questions as: what exactly these terms mean and how the meanings changed? How far away from such a world-view are we today and did magic really end in the seventeenth century? And, if so, why? Who controlled the use of magic and how was its misuse identified and punished? Were the processes of inquisition and prosecution fair or effective? Were there really witches or just witch-hunts? Why did people believe in miracles and magic? Who were the practitioners?

Requirements:

There will be two take home textual examinations and one ten-page research paper due after the end of the class sessions.

Class participation and adequate preparation are crucial for the course's success and a considerable part of the evaluation will be based on this in-class participation. Discussion is an important basis for learning in this course. Readings must be done conscientiously with a critical eye to the overall argument of the texts and preparatory questions may be requested in advance of class attendance.

Attendance is expected at every class session. Students will not be able to receive credit if more than three class periods are missed without permission or adequate explanation.

Evaluation:

Grading will be based on class preparation, attendance and participation (25%), two take-home 'examinations' on assigned texts (20% each), and a ten-page research paper (35%), which will require additional reading and library work.

SYLLABUS:

- 1. January 26: Definitions, Chronologies, Possibilities:**
 - a. Readings: Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 1-16
 - b. Levack, *Witchcraft*, 5-30

- 2. February 2: Supernatural Reality: An Example, c. 1600**
 - a. Ginzburg, *The Night Battles*, 1-147
 - b. Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 19-55

- 3. February 9: Early Medieval Magic: Danger and Power**
 - a. Flint, *Rise of Magic*, 1-35, 59-84, 87-199

- 4. February 16: Earth Magic**
 - a. Flint, *The Rise of Magic*, 203-328, 393-407

- 5. February 23: Holy People, Holy Bodies:**
 - a. Geary, *Furta Sacra*, 3-134
 - b. *Rise of Magic*, 331-92

- 6. March 2: Royal Magicians**
 - a. Bloch, *The Royal Touch*, 1-150, 177-243

- 7. March 2: Saints and their of Miracles: St Dominic**
 - a. *Legend of St Dominic* (c. 9000 words)
<http://www.domcentral.org/trad/brethren/breth02.htm>;
 - b. *Bologna Canonization Inquiry* (about 14000 words)
[:http://www.domcentral.org/trad/domdocs/0003.htm](http://www.domcentral.org/trad/domdocs/0003.htm);
 - c. *Miracles of St Dominic* (14000 words):
<http://www.domcentral.org/trad/domdocs/0006.htm>;
 - d. *Bull of Canonization* (1700 words):
<http://www.domcentral.org/trad/domdocs/0007.htm>
 - e. Stephen of Bourbon, "St Guinefort" (about 3500 words)
<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/guinefort.html>
 - f. St Augustine, "On Miracles", (aprox. 7500 words):
<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/augustine-cityofgod-22-9-10.html>

- g. Hume, *On Miracles* (aprox. 7600 words):
http://oll.libertyfund.org/?option=com_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=341&chapter=61972&layout=html&Itemid=27

8. March 23: Judicial Magic? Oaths and Ordeals

- a. Colin Morris, "Judicium Dei: The social and political significance of the ordeal in the eleventh century." *Studies in Church History*, 12 (1975), pp. 95-111.
- b. Peter Brown, "Society and the Supernatural" *Daedalus* (1975), 133-51.
- c. Kerr, Forsyth and Plyley "Cold Water and Hot Iron: Trial by Ordeal in England," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*
- d. John Baldwin, "The Intellectual Preparation for the Canon of 1215 Against Ordeals," *Speculum*, 36 (1961), pp. 613-36.
- e. Charles Radding, "Evolution of Medieval Mentalities: A Cognitive-Structural Approach," *American Historical Review*, 83 (1978), pp. 577-97 and "Superstition to Science: Nature, Fortune and the Passing of the Medieval Ordeal," *American Historical Review*, 84 (1979), pp. 945-69.
- f. John Spurr, "A Profane History of Oaths" *TRHS* 2001

9. March 30: Towards Necromancy

- a. Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 56-201

10. April 13: Witchcraft:

- a. Levack, *Witchcraft Sourcebook*, 31-116
- b. John Demos, *The Enemy Within*, 1-79

11. April 20: Witchhunting:

- a. Demos, *The Enemy Within*, 80-228
- b. Levack, *Witchcraft Sourcebook*, 117-44, 173-230

tba

12. April 27: Hysteria and the Decline of Magic?

- a. Demos, *The Enemy Within*, 229-296
- b. Levack, *Witchcraft Sourcebook*, 145-72, 275-318 (options to follow)
- c. Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 641-68 (reserve)

Assignments: Two four-five page papers on set texts and questions. First due by Feb. 17; second by April 17.

Final research paper due: May 5.

Due dates are tentative till first class session discussion.

