REL 50   Magic, Witchcraft, and Religion

Instructor: Prof. Cormack
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Office Hours: MTWF 11:00-12:00 or by appointment

This course is the senior seminar in the Religious Studies program. You are required to have taken Rels 210 before enrolling, so we will not spend a lot of time reviewing the many theories about religion. In the course we will examine:

1) Some western and definitions and theories of magic;
2) “Insider” ideas about religion and magic. Are “religion” and “magic” two ends of a continuum? Two sides of a coin? Do they use the same powers? Are supernatural beings involved, and if so, how? Are different beings approached for magic than for religion? Is the ability to perform magic and/or religion inherited or learned?
3) Is there a distinction between “magicians” and “priests” or other religious specialists?
4) What is the purpose of magic? Are its goals distinct from those of religion, or can they overlap?
4) Legal and social consequences of practicing magic. Are practitioners admired or feared? Sought out or shunned? Are there legal sanctions for/against them, and if so, why (i.e. is it enough just to be a magician, or does the magic have to have harmed someone)?

In addressing these questions, we will look at primary sources from different cultures and time periods, as well as scholarly literature about those sources. We will do our best to determine how members of the culture itself would answer the above questions, and how well their answers map onto modern theories about the phenomena. We’ll be focusing on Western European magico/religious traditions, starting with the ancient world. Unfortunately can’t work in Arabic or Jewish magic. However, we will look at Hinduism and Taoism for comparison with the Western material.

Required textbooks:
Scarre, *Witchcraft and Magic in 16th and 17th Century Europe* (out of print, but it is on reserve.)

Optional textbooks:

There will also be readings on OAKS

Grading Scale:
Grading is cumulative - you can calculate the grade you have earned to date by adding up the points you have received so far and comparing the total to the grading scale. For privacy and security reasons, I do not convey information about student grades by email.

Your grade is cumulative. It is calculated as follows:

2 Research Assignments on Aug. 25 and 27 3.5 points each 7
5 – 10 2-3 page Analysis assignments 4 points each 28

Although not all of the following will apply to all articles, in general you should look for:
- Who is the author (name, academic discipline, when and where is s/he writing)
- What time and place(s) is s/he writing about? Is this explicitly stated, or do you have to deduce it?
- What is the author’s definition of magic and / or religion and / or science?
- Does the author critique other definitions? On what grounds? Does s/he rely primarily on argument or on evidence s/he presents that was either not considered or misinterpreted? Or refer to other articles?
- Does the author present new (or new kinds of) evidence? Describe it!
- If the author considers social, political, or gender issues, what are they?
- What was, for you, the most interesting part of the reading, and where would you go to find out more about it?
- Address any specific questions I ask about the reading.

10 such assignments are listed below, the last on Oct. 15. You must do a minimum of five of these. Since the grading is cumulative, and they are an easy way to make up for deficiencies elsewhere, I strongly recommend that you do them all, skipping only when absolutely necessary. For example, 2 assignments with a grade of 2 are the equivalent of 1 with a grade of 4. Grades of 4 are rare. You get a grade on the assignments if it is handed in as hard copy in class, or submitted to the OAKS drop-box by the beginning of the class period for which it is assigned. Even if you don’t hand it in, you are responsible for doing the assignment and participating in the discussion. If it is late, the rules applying to late work apply.

An essay exam on Sept. 24 15

A 15-20 page research paper. on the basis of which you will give an oral presentation in class periods Nov. 5-12 30

Of this, 20% is for the research paper, 5% for the oral presentation, and 5% for the
annotated bibliography. You will get detailed descriptions and a rubric for each of these components as the date approaches. The paper is due October 31, and you will make a presentation based on it in November. Comments on the paper (by me) and on the presentation (by your classmates) may cause you to want to make revisions. If this is the case, come see me and we will discuss whether this is a productive use of your time. If so, the revised paper will be due Dec. 2

A “semi-take-home” final exam. 20
I will give you the exam topic in advance but you will write it in a blue-book during the exam period.

- Extra Credit: As indicated above, grades are cumulative, so if you do poorly on the Analysis assignments (or any other part of the course) you can pull up your grade by doing more analyses. In addition, you may earn up to three extra points this way. However, the total number of points acquired through analysis assignments plus extra credit cannot exceed 31 (i.e. you can earn 3 extra credit points).

Late materials will lose 15 % for each day late. (This means that an assignment that is a week late is worth 0.) Unless special arrangements are made, nothing will be accepted more than a week after the due date.

4 points will be deducted from your final grade for any unexcused absence. Arriving more than 15 minutes after class starts counts as an absence.

Disabilities: If you have a disability that qualifies you for special accommodation, please present a letter to me from the Center for Disability Services (SNAP) at the beginning of the semester. Although you are under no obligation to do so, if you have any special needs that may affect your work in my class (for example if your native language is not English, or if you regularly run out of time on essay exams) please let me know.

If you need special accommodation through the SNAP program or for ANY other reason, please discuss the matter with me AT LEAST A WEEK before an exam is scheduled or the assignment is due. In particular, SNAP students are responsible for getting the necessary paperwork to me a week in advance of scheduled exams.

Computers. Computers may be used for note taking ONLY. Use of your computer for any other purpose will result in it being forbidden from the class in future. I may periodically call on computer users and ask to see their notes, either during or after class. If I am not satisfied with the quality of the notes, you may be prohibited from using a computer in future. If the notes are really excellent, I may ask you to share with those who have legitimate absences.

Cell phones must be turned off and put away (in pocket, purse, bookbag, etc.) before you enter the class.
Wearing headphones or equivalent in class is forbidden.
Use of all other electronic devices in class is forbidden.
Read the syllabus for exam dates and – if your parents are buying you airline tickets – make sure they know when your exams are so that the tickets are purchased AFTER ALL your exams are over. If you anticipate a conflict, for any reason, it is far better to deal with the problem BEFORE it arises than afterwards. I am always willing to work with a student who plans ahead to arrange make up (or make–before) exams. If you miss an exam you receive an automatic F (zero points) until a make-up exam has been arranged. An F for not completing required work means an F for the course.

College of Charleston Honor Code and Academic Integrity

Lying, cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism are violations of our Honor Code that, when identified, are investigated. Each incident will be examined to determine the degree of deception involved.

Incidents where the instructor determines the student’s actions are related more to a misunderstanding will handled by the instructor. A written intervention designed to help prevent the student from repeating the error will be given to the student. The intervention, submitted by form and signed both by the instructor and the student, will be forwarded to the Dean of Students and placed in the student’s file.

Cases of suspected academic dishonesty will be reported directly by the instructor and/or others having knowledge of the incident to the Dean of Students. A student found responsible by the Honor Board for academic dishonesty will receive a XF in the course, indicating failure of the course due to academic dishonesty. This grade will appear on the student’s transcript for two years after which the student may petition for the X to be expunged. The F is permanent. The student may also be placed on disciplinary probation, suspended (temporary removal) or expelled (permanent removal) from the College by the Honor Board.

Students should be aware that unauthorized collaboration--working together without permission-- is a form of cheating. Unless the instructor specifies that students can work together on an assignment, quiz and/or test, no collaboration during the completion of the assignment is permitted. Other forms of cheating include possessing or using an unauthorized study aid (which could include accessing information via a cell phone or computer), copying from others’ exams, fabricating data, and giving unauthorized assistance.

Research conducted and/or papers written for other classes cannot be used in whole or in part for any assignment in this class without obtaining prior permission from the instructor.

Students can find the complete Honor Code and all related processes in the Student Handbook at http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/honor-system/studenthandbook/index.php
**IMPORTANT MESSAGES!**

Always identify your course name AND MEETING TIME in email messages to me. DO NOT write your SS number or student ID on any assignment for this course.

When you have a question, or if I talk too fast, RAISE YOUR HAND AND LET ME KNOW! Other class members will undoubtedly be glad that you did so. There is no point in being in the class if you don't understand what is going on.

LAST BUT NOT LEAST: YOUR HEALTH MATTERS! Exercise regularly, and get plenty of sleep . . . Get a thermometer and learn how to use it! If you are sick, go to the health services; they will send a note to all your professors. DON’T come to class and infect your classmates! Remember to cough or sneeze into a tissue (or your elbow), don’t get so close to anyone that they can breathe on your face (and vice versa), WASH AND DRY your hands frequently and keep them away from your face.

**SCHEDULE**

The following list of readings is *provisional*. We may go a bit faster or slower, depending on the interests of the group. I have deliberately put more assignments at the beginning of the course so you won’t be too swamped at the end. This is the reason for the “Analysis assignment” and “Research Assignment” in the first few weeks of class.

Aug. 20. Introduction to course.

Aug. 25  **Analysis assignment**: Tyler, “Primitive Culture” (in Defining Magic and on-line)

**Research assignment 1:**
Create a file containing three separate definitions for the term(s) you received in class on Wednesday. Put the title of the source, in Chicago Style Manual Style for Bibliography, at the head of each definition.
If there are multiple definitions in your source, focus on the ones relevant to this class. Cut and paste them into a single file.
One of your sources should be the 20-volume Oxford English Dictionary (physical copy or on-line doesn’t matter. The on-line version is titled “Oxford English Dictionary On-Line” in the C of C catalog. Its arguably better, because it has lots of cross references.) You will know you have the right electronic edition because it will have lots of examples in early stages of English (you don’t have to understand these, but have a look at when the earliest examples of the meanings you are interested in appear) BE SURE YOU CHOOSE THE FULL ENTRY.
The other sources are up to you, though I’d suggest that you use encyclopedias of magic/religious studies and/or the “further reading” sections of the books listed above. Post the file in the OAKS dropbox, preferably before 2 PM Monday. We will look at them in class.
Aug. 27  **Analysis assignment:** Frazer, “Golden Bough” (in Defining Magic and online)

**Research assignment 2:**
Choose, and post on a GoogleDoc for which I have sent you the link, three items, formatted according to the Chicago style manual, on topics you would really like to know more about.
One item should be an article from the Journal *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft*. The college has an electronic subscription to the journal. I will tell you which volume to look at in class.
One item should be a peer-reviewed book owned by the College of Charleston.
One item can be a book or article found in a reputable academic source. By now you should know what this means – peer reviewed book or article, or one from a respectable academic press. I recommend skimming through the “further reading” section of our textbooks.
Here’s the catch: This is a cumulative list, and you aren’t allowed to repeat something that someone has already posted on the list. You must add NEW items (so it pays to start this assignment early!) If you do see something on the list that looks really interesting, you might try looking for other items by the same author.
In class, we will look at the entire file and you will each explain why you thought the items you chose were interesting, and what you expected from them. You don’t have to have read them already, but I expect you to have read the abstracts (if any) of journal articles, and looked at the Table of Contents of C of C books.

Sept. 1, Sept. 3  Magic in the Ancient World  Bailey Chapter 1  Kieckhefer chs.1, 2
Optional: Plotinus, Enneads, in *Defining Magic*

**Analysis assignment:** Articles by Segal, Versnel To what extent do these two scholars agree or disagree with each other? Why?

**Analysis assignment:** Fritz Graf, “Prayer and Magic in Religious Ritual”

Sept 8, Sept. 10  Magic and Religion in the Hellenistic World. Get an early start on the article by Aune for Wednesday, it’s long!

Monday: Guest Lecture, Prof. Huddlestun.
**Reading:** Hebrew Scripture / Old Testament, from the RSV or NRSV, both available on-line at [https://www.biblegateway.com/](https://www.biblegateway.com/)

Teraphim (Genesis 31:19, 34-35; 1 Samuel 19:11-17; Hosea 3:4)
Urim/Thummim (Deuteronomy 33:8; Numbers 27:18-23; 1 Samuel 14:36-42; Ezra 2:62-63)
Necromancy (1 Samuel 28)
Trial by Ordeal (Numbers 5)
Deuteronomy 13:1-4; 18:9-14 (the Deuteronomistic view of prophecy)
copy these quotes onto a file and bring it to class. (or bring a bible with bookmarks at the relevant passages).

Wednesday: Analysis assignment: 
Aune, Magic in Early Christian on line (start this early, it’s a long article). Does Aune agree more with Segal or Versnel? What would they think of his article?

Research project: Get a research topic approved by me by Friday

Sept. 15, Sept. 26 The Early Middle Ages Bailey ch. 2 Kieckhefer pp. 43-55

Analysis Assignment TBA Life of St. Martin

Canon Episcopi; Ordeal

Research project: Submit a Preliminary Annotated Bibliography by Friday

Sept. 22, Sept. 24

Analysis assignment: Page, Runes. What evidence is there for and against the idea that runes were originally a “magic” alphabet?

EXAM Sept. 24

Sept. 29, Oct. 1 Magic and Religion in Scandinavia. and Kieckhefer ch 4, 5 which are NOT about Scandinavia but you will need this for next week.

Analysis assignment: TBA

Oct. 6, Oct. 8 Learned European Magic in the Late Middle Ages Bailey ch. 3, 4 Kieckhefer ch. 6, 7, 8

Primary Source: The Book of Angels, Rings, Characters and Images of the Plants (Fanger pp. 45-75)

Analysis Assignment Theophilus, Saemundr


Malleus Malleficarum (extracts)

Analysis Assignment: Geoffrey Scarre, Witchcraft and Magic in 16th and 17th Century Europe This book is on reserve. Start the assignment early! The assignment is: What mistaken assumptions about the period of the Witch-Craze
does Scarre identify, and on what evidence does he base his statements that they are mistaken?

Oct. 20 Guest Lecture on Taoism by Prof. Siegler

Oct. 22 Guest Lecture by Prof. Komjathy. Read the following carefully for content: Strickman, “Spell Literature” (you will want to print this out, the scan has alternate pages upside-down!)

Oct. 23 last day to withdraw

Oct 27, Oct. 29 Hinduism **RESEARCH PAPERS DUE OCT. 31**

Guest Lecture by Prof. McDaniel.

Readings  TBA

FALL BREAK NOV 3.

Nov. 5 Student Presentations

Nov. 10, 12 Student Presentations

Nov. 17, 19 The “Renaissance” mage Bailey ch. 6

Dr. Faustus

Nov. 26 Modern Magic Bailey ch. 7 (Wiccan guest speaker, if anyone can find one!)

Thanksgiving vacation Nov 26-30

Dec. 1 Review for Final exam. Topic will be announced!
Dec. 2 REVISIONS OF PAPER DUE

The final hour exam will take place during the period scheduled for the final exam