RELS 335 Western Esotericism
(1:40-2:55, TR ECTR 219, Spring 2013)

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Office Hours: Tues 11:00-1:00 & Weds 1:00-3:00 (or by appointment)

Course Description: This is an advanced survey course on Western Esotericism covering the following topics in a roughly historical order: Pythagoreanism, Hermeticism, Kabbalah, Grail, Alchemy, Rosicrucians & Masons, Esoteric Christianity, and contemporary, esoteric teachings/teachers. The learning-teaching strategy is to provide a general overview of each area and to show interconnection in a general pattern of historical development, including some of the problematic aspects of studying esotericism. The goal of the course is to provide students with an overview of the development and complexity of Western Esoteric traditions apart from mainstream religious teachings or institutions. We will not be studying normative Christianity, Judaism or Islam but esoteric traditions or schools that have developed in relation to these mainstream traditions, often in circumstances of oppression or institutional persecution. We will examine why these traditions have been persecuted and why they often have secret rites and an underground history. At the end of the course, we will consider the new popularity of esotericism and its impact on New Religious Movements.

Books:

E-Reserve articles, on-line at OAKES/Content; See Handout.

Requirements: Students are expected to attend all classes and participate in class discussions, more than three cuts will lower your final grade. The course grade will be based on the following NINE assignments: FIVE abstracts/summaries (4% each = 20%), TWO analytic papers (15% each = 30%), a MidTerm (25%), and a Final (25%).

Students are required to take exams when scheduled, no makeups will be given unless there is a valid excuse. Conflicting exams schedules, lack of preparation, misplaced books, oversleeping (and so on) are NOT acceptable reasons for missing tests. Students must make up any missed assignments (or receive an F); if there is a problem contact me by email or phone. Two missed assignments will result in your being dropped with a WF.

Honor Code: Lying, cheating, and plagiarism are violations of the Honor Code and are not permitted at the College. Cases of suspected academic dishonesty will be reported directly to the Dean of Students. A student responsible for academic dishonesty will receive a XF in the course, indicating failure based on dishonesty. Students should be aware that unauthorized collaboration--working together without permission--is a form of cheating.
Disabilities: If you have a disability that qualifies you for academic accommodation, please present a letter to me from the Center for Disability Services at the beginning of the semester. For more information regarding accommodation and the SNAP program, see: http://www.cofc.edu/~cds/index.htm.

Grade Scale: A+ = 100-97; A = 96-93; A- = 92-90; B+ = 89-87; B = 86-83; B- = 82-80; C+ = 79-77; C = 76-73; C- = 72-70; D+ = 69-67; D = 66-63; D- = 62-60; F = 59.

Reading Assignments: Readings should be done before the class for which they are assigned. Please come to class prepared to discuss the readings. Bring the current book to class.

I. Week One: January 10. Classical Sources of Western Esotericism
   A. Reading Assignment: Goodrick-Clarke, pp. 3-14

II. Week Two: January 15, 17. Hermeticism and Gnosticism
   A. Reading Assignment: Goodrick-Clarke, pp. 15-29, Cotnoir PP. 11-35

III. Week Three: January 22, 24. Hermeticism & Alchemy
   A. Reading Assignment: Cotnoir, pp. 36-66
   B. Writing Assignment: Abstract One, January 24; Cotnoir, 24-40

IV. Week Four: January 29, 31. Alchemy and the Opus Magnum
   A. Reading Assignment: Cotnoir, pp. 67-105

V. Week Five: February 5, 7. The Medieval Grail
   B. Writing Assignment: Abstract Two, Due February 5; Wood, all

VI. Week Six: February 12, 14. Renaissance Magic
   A. Reading Assignment: Goodrick-Clarke, pp. 33-47; Frank L. Borchardt, “The Magus as Renaissance Man.”
   B. Writing Assignment: Paper One, February 14, Borchardt & Goodrick-Clarke, Renaissance Magus {Happy St. Valentine’s Day!}

VII. Week Seven: February 19, 21. Renaissance Magic
    A. Reading Assignment: Goodrick-Clarke, pp. 49-70; 71-85
    B. Writing Assignment: Abstract Three, 19; Goodrick-Clarke, pp. 49-70.
VIII. **Week Eight:** February 26, 28  German Theosophy
   A. Reading Assignment: Goodrick-Clarke, pp. 87-105
   B. **MIDTERM EXAM: February 28**

IX. **Week Nine:** March 5, 7
   A. **SPRING BREAK: MARCH 2-10**

X. **Week Nine:** March 12, 14. Jewish and Christian Kabbalah
   A. Reading Assignment: Dan, pp. 1-35; 37-69
   B. Writing Assignment: **Abstract Four, March 14;** Dan, pp. 37-59

XI. **Week Ten:** March 19, 21. Jewish and Christian Kabbalah
   A. Reading Assignment: Dan, pp. 71-112; Goodrick-Clarke, pp. 107-129

XII. **Week Eleven:** March 26, 28. Rosicrucians and Freemasons
   A. Reading Assignment: Goodrick-Clarke, pp. 131-155; Fortune, pp. 17-56
   B. Writing Assignment: **Abstract Five, March 28;** Fortune, pp. 25-52

XIII. **Week Twelve:** April 2, 4. Spiritualism and Ritual Magic
   A. Reading Assignment: Goodrick-Clarke. pp. 191-228; Fortune, pp. 59-96

XIV. **Week Thirteen:** April 9, 11. Modern Esotericism
   A. Reading Assignment: Fortune, pp. 99-125; Roberts, pp. xvii-39;
   B. Reading Assignment: Fortune, “The Rationale of Psychism” (PDF)

XV. **Week Fourteen:** April 16, 18. Modern Esotericism
   A. Reading Assignment: Roberts, pp. 41-85; 86-134;

XVI. **Week Fifteen:** April 23, Conclusions
   A. Reading Assignment: Goodrick-Clarke, pp. 229-248
   B. Writing Assignment: **Paper Two, due April 16; Fortune/Roberts**

   C. **FINAL EXAM:** Tuesday, April 30, 12:00-3:00, ECTR 219