

Course Last Updated [03/29/2024]



Witchcraft And Magical Performance in London

Section I: Course Overview

Course Code: THDA314

Subject Area(s): Theater Arts

Prerequisites: None

Language of Instruction: English

Total Contact Hours: 45

Credits: 3

Course Fees: N/A

Course Description

Witchcraft and Magical Performance in London charts the representation of the occult in the city from the Early Modern period to the present day. The course focuses on the performance and presentation of occult and magical phenomena and its reception by the general public and social elites during specific time periods. The course offers students the opportunity to understand why magic has fascinated us and continues to do so. Students will engage in the performance of such acts by viewing local and recorded performances. Class study is combined with field studies, including performances of the supernatural.

Learning Objectives

- Classify the idea of magic in a number of different time periods;
- Discuss a number of performance forms and genres
- Identify how performances present the magical and occult;
- Describe a variety of practical presentations of the magical and occult

Section II: Instructor & Course Details

Instructor Details

Name: TBC

Contact Information: TBC

Term: TBC

Course Day and Time: TBC

Office Hours: TBC

Grading & Assessment

The instructor assesses students' mastery of course learning objectives by using the forms of assessment below. Each of these assessments is weighted toward the final grade. The Assessment Overview section provides further details for each.

Engagement - 20%

Mid-term exam - 25%

Presentation Task - 25%

Final Paper (2000 words) - 30%

Assessment Overview

This section provides a brief description of each form of assessment listed above. Forms of assessment may be slightly modified in the term syllabus.

Engagement (20%): Students are expected to be engaged in class, to have read the [CEA CAPA Engagement Policy](#), and to understand the [Class Engagement Rubric](#) that outlines how engagement is graded.

Mid-term exam (25%): This assignment is a short-answer test, comprising of 20 questions. The questions are based on readings and class notes from weeks 1-6 of the semester.

Presentation Task (25%): The presentation may use PowerPoint or Prezzi. The presentation should be of 15-20 minutes duration, including an opportunity for a brief Q and A session at the end. Students may present individually or in a pair. Each student should submit a sheet of notes (bullet points acceptable) to the course tutor at the conclusion of the presentation.

Final Paper (2000 words, 30%): For the Final Paper, students will respond to one of five published prompt statements. These will be published in the week following semester break. Students should include citations and a full bibliography. Students must remember to cite all shows referred to, as well as in-class resources if used. The paper should be 2000-2200 words in length.

Active Learning

Experiential learning is an essential component of education abroad, and participation in field studies is a required part of coursework. In this course, students explore the city in which they are studying using a variety of methods. This provides the opportunity to gain nuance and perspective on the host context and course content, as well as to collect information and resources for assigned papers, projects, and presentations.

The assigned field component(s) are:

- A visit to a sacred space in the city
- A visit to a relevant live performance

Students are also strongly encouraged to participate in co-curricular program activities.

Readings and Resources

The below readings and resources are representative of what will be assigned as required in this course but may vary slightly in the term syllabus.

All students are given access to the online library of the University of New Haven (UNH), accessible [here](#), and are expected to comply with [UNH Policies](#) regarding library usage.

Wherever possible, required readings are made accessible through the online library or Canvas. Students are responsible for obtaining all required readings.

Each course utilizes Canvas as its LMS. Students are expected to check Canvas regularly for updates and deadlines. Canvas is also the primary platform for contacting your instructor in case of questions or concerns about the course.

Required Readings

Freud, S., Haughton, H., & McLintock, D. (2003). *The uncanny*. London: Penguin.

Hutton, R. (2018). *The witch: A history of fear, from ancient times to the present*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

McGarry, M. (2012). *Ghosts of Futures Past: Spiritualism and the cultural politics of nineteenth-century America*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Oppenheim, J. (2002). *The other world: Spiritualism and psychical research in England, 1850-1914*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.

Owen, A. (2004). *The darkened room: Women, power, and spiritualism in late Victorian England*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Pearson, P. M. (2021). *The Archaeology of Death and Burial*. Cheltenham: The History Press.

Playfair, G. L. (2011). *This house is haunted - the amazing inside story of the enfield poltergeist*. White Crow Books.

POTTS, T. (2021). *Wonderfull discoverie of witches in the Countie of Lancaster (ESPRIOS classics)*. S.l.: BLURB.

Turner, V. W. (2017). *The ritual process: Structure and anti-structure*. London: Routledge.

Course Calendar

Session 1	
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Topics	INTRODUCTION
Activity	In this first class, we will examine the key terms of the course and consider its broad overview. Why do people see ghosts? Why did Arthur Conan Doyle believe two girls had seen fairies? We will share our own experiences of strange or unanticipated events and consider some possible, rational solutions. We'll then consider the idea of rites of passage, and how we attempt to ensure the dead stay where we put them!
Readings and Assignments	Readings: The Ritual Process by Victor Turner (Chapter 1)

Session 2	
Topics	THE HAPPY DEAD
Activity	Here, we'll look more at rituals and rites of passage, then look at the idea of LIMINALITY – the condition of being 'betwixt and between'. In the second half of class, we'll travel into the ancient City of London to encounter a strange underground temple: THE LONDON MITHRAEUM!
Readings and Assignments	Readings: The Archaeology of Death and Burial by Mike Parker Pearson (excerpts)

Session 3	
Topics	HAUNTED HOUSES, HAUNTED SUBJECTS
Activity	Having spent time in a Roman empire era building, we'll begin by investigating a Roman account of a haunting. We'll look at real life accounts and a couple of famous fictional ones, too. We'll also prepare for our visit to Shakespeare's Globe for the magical play The Tempest...
Readings and Assignments	Readings: The Uncanny by Sigmund Freud (sections 2 and 3)

Session 4	
Topics	WITCHES: AN INTRODUCTION
Activity	In this class, we'll begin to look at the idea of witchcraft, from classical depictions of the witch to biblical ideas of devilish pact and evil. Where does the idea of absolute evil come from? How did the practises of 'cunning folk' in the European Middle Ages come to be associated with the Devil? Is there a more liminal figure than the witch?
Readings and Assignments	Readings: The Witch: A History of Fear by Ronald Hutton (Section 1)

Session 5	
Topics	WITCHES ON THE STAGE: MACBETH
Activity	Elizabeth I was sceptical about the existence of witches, but her successor James I was very, very different. He believed deeply in witches, and local lawmakers in England weren't slow to be influenced by their monarch and his literary work: DAEMONOLOGY! We'll then watch a recording of one of the most successful recent productions from the Globe theatre.
Readings and Assignments	Readings: The Witch: A History of Fear (Section 2)

Session 6	
Topics	FEMALE WITCHES AND MALE MAGES AND MIDTERM TEST
Activity	Why did women get the blame for witchcraft, and what kind of behaviour was the witch supposed to exhibit? Could men be witches, and what fates awaited them? The midterm test will take place in the second half of class.
Readings and Assignments	Readings: The Wonderfull Discoverie of Witchcraft in the Countie of Lancashire by Thomas Potts (excerpts part 1)

Session 7	
Topics	Guest Lecture

Session 8	
Topics	PENDLE: ANATOMY OF A WITCHCRAFT TRIAL
Activity	In this class, we'll look at the most infamous witchcraft trial in English history: Pendle - how did an argument on a forest path escalate into the death of 12 people, and in what ways did it foreshadow the events at Salem in the American Colonies 80 years later?
Readings and Assignments	Readings: The Wonderfull Discoverie of Witchcraft in the Countie of Lancashire by Thomas Potts (excerpts part 2)

Session 9	
Topics	HIDDEN FORCES
Activity	Was Isaac Newton the first scientist or the last alchemist? During the period known as The Enlightenment, fundamental values were questioned across a variety of fields. What were the new forces revealed at work in our world, and how frightening were their potential uses?
Readings and Assignments	Readings: Ghosts of Futures Past by Molly McGarry (Chapter 1)

Session 10	
Topics	MEDIUMSHIP: TEA AND TABLE-TURNING
Activity	This week, we will look at the astonishing case of the Fox Sisters, American teenagers who invented quite possibly by accident, a new religion: Spiritualism. Exporting the religion to London, the 'séance' became a social event for adventurous Londoners. Far from the sinister activity of modern horror movies, the original séance was a means of reconnecting the living and departed family via Tea and Table-Turning! FIELD STUDY: BOOKOO PHISH show
Readings and Assignments	Readings: The Other World: Spiritualism and Psychical Research in England by Janet Oppenheim (Chapters 1 and 2)

Session 11	
Topics	CITIES OF THE DEAD
Activity	During the late-Georgian and Victorian periods, the ghostly became a staple in novels, short-stories and plays of the period. At the same time, Europeans became obsessed with the monuments of ancient peoples that they were encountering via their imperial experiences. In the second half, we'll travel to the British Museum to look at the

	Egyptian Book of the Dead – a book Europeans seriously misunderstood!
Readings and Assignments	Readings: The Darkened Room: Women, Power and Spiritualism in Late-Victorian England by Alex Owen (Chapter 3).

Session 12	
Topics	THE STRANGE CASE OF THE ENFIELD POLTERGEIST
Activity	In 1977 an outbreak of poltergeist activity was recorded at an ordinary house in North London. The activities went on for over a year and involved multiple victims and witnesses. We'll investigate the case, looking at footage from the period and accounts of those involved. Why are adolescents often at the centre of these cases, and are there links to the witches and mediums we've encountered previously?
Readings and Assignments	Readings: This House is Haunted by Guy Lyon Playfair (White Crow).

Session 13	
Topics	CULTS
Activity	In this class, we'll return to some of the themes from Class One. What is it to think magically, to connect cause and effect in extraordinary ways and to believe in narratives that seem unbelievable to outsiders? We'll look at two cults, their belief systems and the people who follow them.
Readings and Assignments	

Session 14	
Topics	SUMMING UP
Activity	In this class we will draw together the strands of our study in the presentation of the occult and the magical and consider how ideas of remote power and the ghostly continue to fascinate us in the age of quantum physics. Is the occult simply science we don't yet know, or does its existence say something more profound about our need for belief in something greater than ourselves?
Readings and Assignments	Assignments: Your presentations will take place in this class.

Session 15	
Topics	PRESENTATIONS (CONTINUED)
Activity	Student presentations
Readings and Assignments	Assignments: Your presentations will take place in this class. Your final paper is due in this class.

Section III: Academic Policies and Standards

Academic Policies

Students are expected to review and understand all CEA CAPA student policies, including our [Academic Policies](#) and [Engagement Policy](#). CEA CAPA reserves the right to change, update, revise, or amend existing policies and/or procedures at any time. Additional

requirements that may be associated with a specific course or program are addressed in the term syllabus.

Student Learning & Development Objectives

CEA CAPA has identified [Student Learning and Development Objectives \(SLDOs\)](#) for all programs in all locations: content in context, navigating differences, power and equity, critical thinking and intellectual curiosity, career and professional development, and sustainability and migration.

These are meta-level learning objectives that transcend coursework and are infused across all elements of program delivery, beyond specifics of course offerings, addressing student learning holistically and framing it a larger learning context.