



Philosophy, Magic, and Religion in the Renaissance

SECTION I: Course Overview

Course Code: PHIL352

Subject Area(s): Philosophy

Prerequisites: None

Language of Instruction: English

Total Contact Hours: 45

Recommended Credits: 3

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores the complex interactions between scientific theory and religion in the fifteenth century through a practical and mystical lens. Through reading primary sources, students will engage with the major philosophical personalities of the Renaissance. The class will analyze case studies that engage scientific and magical thinking. From Leonardo DaVinci's experiments to the historic scandal and trial of Galileo Galilei, students will gain a historical framework for early thinking in Western Europe, with a strong emphasis on Italy. Students will track the cultural view of the role of religion, science, magic, and philosophy and see how these shifts still impact contemporary western culture.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

- Explain significant aspects of Western culture through a careful reconstruction of their historical context.
- Interpret primary sources within the philosophical debates of early Europe.
- Discuss philosophical principles and the Renaissance interest in magic in light of the religious developments and scientific discoveries of the age.

SECTION II: Instructor & Course Details

INSTRUCTOR DETAILS

Name: TBA

Contact Information: TBA

Term: SEMESTER

GRADING & ASSESSMENT

The instructor will assess your progress towards the above-listed learning objectives by using the forms of assessment below. Each of these assessments is weighted and will count towards your final grade. The following section (Assessment Overview) will provide further details for each.

FORM OF ASSESSMENT	VALUE
Engagement	20%
Research Paper	20%
Midterm Exam	30%
Final Exam	30%

ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

This section provides a brief description of each form of assessment listed above. Your course instructor will provide further details and instructions during class time.

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

Research Paper (20%): You are required to research and write a paper (4-6 pages of text) about a philosophical topic of your choice that is relevant to the thematic contents covered in class.

Written work is evaluated in terms of argumentative consistency, width of material employed, appropriate use of quotations from primary sources; understanding of class discussions, and correct use of English language.

Guidelines for written papers:

- Handwritten papers are not accepted. All papers must be typed in character size 12, with double-spaced lines. The text of the paper should be 4-6 pages long and should additionally include a cover page with the title and your name and a bibliography page.
- Texts should be carefully written with a correct documentation of sources in proper footnotes or endnotes (any format, MLA, Chicago etc. is acceptable).
- All papers must include a pertinent bibliography, and any websites utilized must be clearly cited as references. You are not allowed to use other internet sources than the ones cited in the syllabus or those of a recognized academic status. Wikipedia will not be considered an academic source of information.
- Plagiarism as well as undocumented 'borrowings' or quotations are unacceptable and will result in a D grade.
- Editing and proof-reading are important. Avoid repetitions (of concepts or words), spelling mistakes etc.
- One letter grade will be deducted for the first week of delay. Unacceptable work might be returned for re-submission.

Midterm and Final Exam (30% each): The midterm and final exams follow the same format and will consist of one long essay (around 1000 words) and 3-4 shorter questions.

REQUIRED READINGS

Reading assignments for this course will come from the required texts and/or the selected readings listed below. All required readings will be provided in electronic format and must be completed according to the due date assigned by the course instructor.

I. REQUIRED TEXT(S):

Agrippa, C. *Three books concerning occult philosophy* (selections).

Bailey, M.D., *Magic and Superstition in Europe. A Concise History from Antiquity to the Present*, New York-Toronto, Rowman & Littlefield Pub., 2007

Bodin, J. *La Démonomanie des Sorciers* (selections).

- Burkhardt, J. *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (selections)
- Bruno, G. *Cena de le ceneri* (selections); *On the expulsion of the triumphant beast* (selections)
- Campanella, T., *The sense of things and of magic* (selections)
- Copenhaver, B.P., *The Book of Magic: From Antiquity to the Enlightenment*, Penguin, London, 2015.
- Corpus Hermeticum* (selections)
- Della Porta, G. *Natural magic* (selections)
- Dickie, M.W., *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, Routledge, London-New York, 2001.
- Ficino, M., *Three books on life* (selections)
- Galilei, G., *Letter to Madame Christina* (selections)
- Nostradamus, *The prophecies* (selections)
- Pico della Mirandola, *Oration on the dignity of man* (selections); *Disputationes adversus astrologiam divinatricem* (selections)
- Savonarola, G., *Letters to his Father* (selection)
- Waite, G.K., *Heresy, Magic, and Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe*, New York, Palgrave, 2003
- Wier, J., *De praestigiiis* (selections)

II. RECOMMENDED READINGS

These recommended readings are not mandatory, but they will assist you with research and understanding course content.

- Bremmer, J. N., "The Birth of the Term 'Magic'", *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 126 (1999), pp. 1-12
- Burnett, Ch., *Magic and Divination in the Middle Ages*, London, Routledge, 1996
- Ciraolo, L.-Seidel, J. (ed. by), *Magic and Divination in the Ancient World*, Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2002
- Collins, D., *Magic in the Ancient Greek World*, Malden (Mass)-Oxford, Blackwell, 2008
- Dieleman, J., "The Greco-Egyptian Magical Papyri", in: D. Frankfurter (ed.), *Guide to the Study of Ancient Magic*, Leiden and Boston, Brill, 2019, pp. 283-321
- Dukes, E.D., *Magic and Witchcraft in the Dark Ages*, Lanham-New York-London, University Press of America 1996
- Kolpacoff Deane, J., *A History of Medieval Heresy and Inquisition*, Lanham-New York-London, Rowman & Littlefield, 2011
- Levack, B.P., *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, London, Routledge, 2015. Mertens, M., *Magic and memory in Giordano Bruno. The art of a heroic spirit*, Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2018
- Walker, D.P., *Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella*, Penn State Press, 2000
- Yates, F.A., *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, London and Chicago, 1964
- Zambelli, P., *White Magic, Black Magic in the European Renaissance*, Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2007

Key Resources

In order to ensure you success abroad, CEA CAPA has provided the academic resources listed below.

- **UNH Online Library:** As a CEA CAPA student, you will be given access to the online library of the University of New Haven (UNH). You may access the UNH online library [here](#). You must comply with [UNH Policies](#) regarding library usage.

- **CEA CAPA Online Classroom – Canvas:** Canvas is the official LMS of CEA CAPA. Students should check Canvas regularly for updates and deadlines about course material. Canvas is also the primary platform for contacting your instructor in case of questions or concerns about the course.

COURSE CALENDAR
Philosophy, Magic, and Religion in the Renaissance

SESSION	TOPICS	ACTIVITY	READINGS & ASSIGNMENTS
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General introduction. • What is magic? Classifying magic and some basic terminology. • Roots in the ancient world: ghosts, magical papyri and spell books, amulets. • Magic in the Greek and Roman world. 	<p>Course Introduction</p> <p>Classroom lecture</p>	Copenhaver, chap. 1-2 (excerpts); Bailey, chap. 1; Dickie, chap. 1; 5-6
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Magic in the Bible and ancient religious texts. • Magic and Christianity. • Church <i>versus</i> magic in late antiquity and the early Middle Ages. 	Classroom lecture	Copenhaver, chap. 3-5 (excerpts); Bailey, chap. 2
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Between science and magic: medieval astronomy and the Aristotelian-Ptolemaic cosmos. • Horoscopes and geomancy. • The medieval condemnation of magic, 1000-1500 • Medieval witchcraft trials. 	Classroom lecture	Copenhaver, chap. 6-7 (excerpts); Bailey, chap. 2-4; Waite, chap. 1
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Magic in the Renaissance: new ideas and ideals of man. • the Magus as Renaissance man: Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519); • Prophecy and heresy: the persecution of Girolamo Savonarola (1452-1498) and Michelle de Nostredame or Nostradamus (1503-1566). 	Classroom lecture	Copenhaver, chap. 8 (excerpts); J. Burkhardt, <i>The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy</i> (selections); Pico della Mirandola, <i>Oration on the dignity of man</i> (selections); Nostradamus, <i>The prophecies</i> (selections); Savonarola, letters to his father

5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Platonism and Hermeticism in the Renaissance. Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499) and the <i>Corpus Hermeticum</i>. Ficino astral magic and cosmic medicine; the divinatory tarots. 	Classroom lecture	Copenhaver, chap. 8 (excerpts); <i>Corpus Hermeticum</i> (selections); M. Ficino, <i>Three books on life</i> (selections)
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The rise and fall of natural magic. The interpretation of natural signs. Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494) and the condemnation of astrology. Giambattista Della Porta (1535-1615) and his definition of natural magic. 	Classroom lecture	Copenhaver, chap. 9 (excerpts); Pico della Mirandola, <i>Disputationes adversus astrologiam divinatricem</i> (selections); G. Della Porta, <i>Natural magic</i> (selections)
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Reformation, magic, and science. Alchemy and medicine: Paracelsus' (1493-1541) and Girolamo Cardano's (1501-1576). Disputes with the medieval establishment and the Church 	Classroom lecture	Copenhaver, chap. 9 (excerpts); Waite, chap. 2; The Hermetic and alchemical writings of Paracelsus (selections); Cardano's works (selections)
8	MIDTERM EXAM		
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elaborating the Neoplatonist picture: Pico della Mirandola and the Kabbalah. Johannes Trithemius (1462-1516), Cornelius Agrippa (1486-1535) and ceremonial magic. 	Classroom lecture	Copenhaver, chap. 8-9 (excerpts); Pico's 900 thesis; C. Agrippa, <i>Three books concerning occult philosophy</i> (selections)
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Reformation, magic, and witchcraft. Religious conflict and the rise of witch-hunting in early modern Europe 1450-1650. Historical overview of the Catholic Inquisition: persecution and torture; religion and tolerance. 	Classroom lecture	Bailey, chap. 5-6; Waite, chap. 4-5 Research paper due.

11	Witch-hunters and witch-advocates: Jean Bodin (1529/30-1596) and Johann Wier on witchcraft and demons.	Classroom lecture	Waite, chap. 6; J. Bodin, <i>La Démonomanie des Sorciers</i> (selections); Johann Wier, <i>De praestigiis</i> (selections)
12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giordano Bruno's philosophy and magic. • Trial, condemnation, and death. 	Classroom lecture	Copenhaver, chap. 9 (excerpts); G. Bruno, <i>Cena de le ceneri</i> (selections); G. Bruno, <i>On the expulsion of the triumphant beast</i> (selections); Bruno's works on magic
13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tommaso Campanella (1568-1639): prophecy, divination, and magic. • The conflict with the Church • Science <i>versus</i> religion: Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) • Magic, science and religion: some conclusions. 	Classroom lecture	Copenhaver, chap. 11 (excerpts); T. Campanella, <i>The sense of things and of magic</i> (selections); G. Galilei, <i>Letter to Madame Christina</i> (selections); excerpts from Galileo's letters to his daughter.
14	FINAL EXAM		

SECTION III: CEA CAPA 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, that address student learning holistically and frame a larger learning context.