

HSTEU 205  
Fall Quarter 2006

EUROPEAN WITCH TRIALS

Prof. Mary O'Neil  
Office: Smith 212A

Office Hours: M-Th after class, Weds 1:30-3PM, Thurs 10:30-11:30 & by appointment

COURSE WEB PAGE <http://courses.washington.edu/hsteu205>

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REQUIRED BOOKS (at Bookstore; also on reserve in Odegaard Undergraduate Library)

Norman Cohn, Europe's Inner Demons (Revised edition, 2001)  
Kors & Peters, Witchcraft in Europe 1100-1700: Documentary History (2cd ed, 2001)  
Brian Levack, The Witch Hunt in Early Modern Europe 2006, 3rd edition (2cd OK)  
Christopher Marlowe, Doctor Faustus  
Carlo Ginzburg, The Night Battles: Witchcraft & Agrarian Cults in 16-17th C  
Boyer & Nissenbaum, Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft

XEROX PACKET: will be available around midterm; includes a more readings for second half of course and documents for second papers; **also available on OUGL reserve.**

LECTURE OUTLINES: These will be posted on course web page before (as often as possible) or after every lecture. Be sure to consult these outlines when studying.

REQUIREMENTS: **\*\* ALL ASSIGNMENTS MUST BE COMPLETED TO PASS THIS COURSE \*\***  
Incompletes at end of quarter for medical or personal emergencies only. Contact Prof. O'Neil directly.

1) ATTENDANCE AT LECTURES, KEEP UP WITH READING (about 120 pages week: this is a lot but very interesting, sometimes amazing reading.)

2) SECTIONS and E-POST (10%) Specific readings will be discussed in Friday sections. Discussion questions will be posted earlier in the week on course web site. Students are encouraged to post questions to E-Post and also to reply to questions

3) EXAMS: Mid-term exam (15%) Monday, October 23 in class (Week 5)  
Final exam (25%) Thursday, December 14 (2:30-4:30 PM)  
(An earlier final will be scheduled for those leaving; details in class.)

5) TWO SHORT PAPERS:

First paper due Tuesday October 10 (Wk 3) 2-3 pages (15%)  
Second paper due Wednesday November 29 (Wk 10) 5-7 pages (25%)  
Late papers will be marked down -.1 per day overdue (weekend = 2 days)

FIRST PAPER TOPIC (2-3 pp) Analysis of texts from early medieval witchcraft legislation. Further details available on last page of this syllabus. Texts will be discussed in section & lecture.

SECOND PAPER TOPICS (5-7pp) are to be drawn from assigned course readings, based on an analysis of primary documents such as the Malleus, Doctor Faustus, 16th C. Witch Debate, transcripts of witch trials, including the benandanti (Night Battles) in Italy, and others from France, Germany or England. Materials from the Salem witch trials will be on reserve for those who want to write about the Salem trials (also using Salem Possessed). Details available after midterm.

Historical Background: There are no prerequisites for this course, but it covers a broad span of history from Middle Ages to the 17th C. If students want more background on topics covered in class, here are some general surveys of medieval and early modern history (available at Odegaard Undergraduate Library):

C. Warren Hollister, Medieval Europe: A Short History [D117/H6]  
Coffin, Stacey, Lerner & Meacham, Western Civilization [CB245/L47]

Reading: Cohn, Europe's Inner Demons, Ch 1 (on stereotype), pp. 1-15;  
Ch 8 (on Margaret Murray), pp. 144-161  
Levack, Ch 1 "Introduction," 3rd edition, pp. 1-29 (2cd ed pp. 1-26)

W 9/27 Introduction to course: What was witchcraft? Who was a witch?  
Basic Themes: 1) witch beliefs versus witch trials 2) learned and popular levels of witch belief

Th 9/28 Witchcraft as a belief system: anthropological approaches  
Definition of terms: witchcraft, magic, sorcery, superstition

F 9/29 **SECTION DISCUSSION:** Cohn, Ch 1 and 8, also Purkiss Handout #1

## PART I. EUROPEAN WITCH BELIEFS FROM THE MIDDLE AGES TO THE REFORMATION

**WEEK 2 Reading:** Levack, Ch 2, "Intellectual Foundations," 3rd edition, pp. 30-73; (2cd ed pp. 27-67)  
Kors and Peters (2cd ed), pp. 42-47 (Augustine), 60-67 (Canon Episcopi),  
81-86 (St. Justina), 115-132 (Vox in Rama)  
Cohn, Europe's Inner Demons, Ch 2 (on Devil), pp. 16-34  
Ch 3-4 (on demonization of heretics), pp. 35-78  
Ch 9 (on night-witch/striga), pp. 162-180

M 10/2 The Problem of evil: Judaic, Classical and Christian versions  
**READ:** selections from Book of Job (Handout #2), and Augustine, K&P 42-47

Tu 10/3 Christianity and Paganism: the conversion of Europe:  
**READ:** K&P, 81-86 (St. Justina)

W 10/4 Early medieval witchcraft legislation (Handout #3) and Canon Episcopi  
**EXPLANATION AND DISCUSSION OF FIRST PAPER TOPICS**

Th 10/5 13th C Heresy and the medieval Inquisition

F 10/6 **SECTION DISCUSSION:** What did people believe about witches in early Middle Ages?  
**READING:** Early witchcraft legislation (Handout); Canon Episcopi, K&P pp. 60-67;  
Cohn Chap. 9 (on night witch or striga)

## TUESDAY OCTOBER 10 FIRST SHORT PAPER DUE (2 pp) see last page of syllabus

**WEEK 3 Reading:** Levack Ch 3 Legal Foundation, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed, pp. 74-108 (2cd ed, pp. 68-99);  
Cohn, Europe's Inner Demons, Ch 6-7 (on ritual magic), 103-143  
Kors & Peters, pp. 133-37 (Bernardino), 180-204 (Malleus on women)

M 10/9 Scholasticism and Demonology: Thomas Aquinas on demons

T 10/10 Sorcery and Politics in 14th Century Europe

W 10/11 Scapegoating: Demonization of the Jews

Th 10/12 Women in Middle Ages: Attitudes and images (**SLIDES**)

F 10/13 **SECTION DISCUSSION:** What image of women emerges in sermons, treatises?  
**READING:** Bernadino of Siena against women sorcerers: K&P, 133-137  
Malleus Maleficarum on women as witches: K&P, 180-204

**WEEK 4 Reading:** Kors & Peters, pp. 204-229 (Malleus on trial procedure)  
pp. 155-159 (Nider), 176-180 (Papal Bull)  
Cohn, Europe's Inner Demons, Ch 11-12 (witch hunt), pp 202-233

M 10/16 Growth of witch trials & witch theory in 15th century

**Read** Nider, Formicarius in K&P, pp. 155-159

T 10/17 The Inquisitor as Witch Hunter: Kramer and Sprenger, O.P.

**Read** Innocent VIII, Papal Bull Summis desiderantes K&P, 176-180

W 10/18 Malleus Maleficarum, 1486: Theory & practice of witch-hunting

Th 10/19 **MIDTERM REVIEW** Learned vs popular elements of witch beliefs & trials - 15th C.

Fr 10/20 **Discussion:** Malleus on how to conduct a witch trial: K&P, 204-229; **Review for Midterm**

**Weekend of 10/21-22: Start reading Doctor Faustus if you have time; NOT ON MIDTERM  
but it will be discussed in section Fri 10/27;**

## WEEK V

M 10/23 **MIDTERM EXAM (BRING BLUE BOOKS)**

covers lectures and reading material through Week 4

**PART II: EUROPEAN WITCH PANIC OF THE 16TH & 17TH CENTURIES**

O'Neil, Page 3

- Reading:** Kors & Peters, pp. 239-45, 259-270; Marlowe, Doctor Faustus  
Levack, Ch. 4 "Impact of Reformation," 3<sup>rd</sup> ed, pp. 109-133, (2cd ed. pp. 100-124)
- T 10/24 Natural magic in the Renaissance learned tradition  
W 10/25 **SLIDE LECTURE:** Images of demons in 15-16th C. art  
Th 10/26 Reformation theology & the myth of Faust  
Fr 10/27 **SECTION DISCUSSION:** Marlowe's Doctor Faustus
- WEEK VI** **Reading:** \*Xerox Packet: #1 Weyer, Bodin & Brenz;  
Levack, Ch 5-6, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed, pp 134-203, (2cd ed pp. 125-184)  
Kors & Peters (2cd ed), pp. 281-302 (Weyer & Bodin), 394-401 (Reginald Scot), 302-308 (Chelmsford)
- M 10/30 Impact of the Reformation on European witch beliefs  
T 10/31 16th century witch debate: Weyer, Bodin, Brenz, & Scot **[Halloween]**  
W 11/1 English witch trials: a separate case? Handout on English statutes **READ:** K&P Chelmsford trials, pp.302-8  
Th 11/2 Matthew Hopkins: the "Witchfinder General" and the English Civil War  
Fr 11/3 **SECTION DISCUSSION:** 16th century witch debate: Weyer, Bodin, Brenz, & Scot
- WEEK 7** **Reading:** Kors & Peters, pp 345-55, 359-67, 425-29;  
Levack Ch 7, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed pp. 204-252 (2cd ed pp. 185-232);  
Xerox Packet: Selections #3 - 5 Germany, France & Italy
- M 11/6 Scottish witch hunt and King James Stuart (VI & I) **Read** K&P, Scotland 318-322  
T 11/7 The German witch panic **READ XEROX PACKET, #3** Germany (Trial of Walpurga Hausmannin)  
W 11/8 German witch panic (cont.) **READ** K&P, pp 348-55 (Bamberg, Wurzburg, Bonn), 425-429 (von Spee)  
Th 11/9 Witch trials in France and Switzerland **READ** K&P, 345-48 (Marie Cornu), 359-367 (Suzanne Gaudry)  
Fr 11/10 **HOLIDAY: READ BOYER AND NISSENBAUM**
- WEEK 8** **Reading:** Boyer & Nissenbaum, Salem Possessed; XEROX PACKET #7 SALEM (Medical theories)  
Kors & Peters, 367-70 (Cotton Mater), 436-37 (Salem jurors)
- M 11/13 Possession and exorcism in France, England and Italy  
T 11/14 Puritan New England and the Salem Witch Trials of 1692  
W 11/15 Salem village: The social context of witchcraft accusations  
Th 11/16 Salem village witch trials: theological and procedural issues; historical interpretations  
**READ: XEROX PACKET #7 SALEM** (Medical theories)  
Fr 11/17 **SECTION DISCUSSION:** Boyer & Nissenbaum, Salem Possessed: What happened at Salem?
- WEEK 9** **Reading:** Ginzburg, Night Battles, pp 1-39, 69-97, 147-171
- M 11/20 Roman Inquisition trials in Italy: heresy versus "superstition" & witchcraft and benandanti  
T 11/21 Benandanti as "counter-witches" **READ:** Ginzburg, Night Battles, pp 1-39, 147-171; Packet O'Neil article  
W 11/22 Spain: The Basque trials and the Spanish Inquisition  
**READ:** K&P, Salazar, 407-419; XEROX PACKET #6 SPAIN (Henningsen)  
Th 11/23-24 **THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY: NO CLASS**
- WEEK 10** **Reading:** Levack, Ch 8, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed, pp. 252-288 (2cd ed 233-260);  
XEROX PACKET: #8 Skeptics; Kors & Peters, pp. 402-406, 429-435, 438-444
- \*\* SECOND PAPER DUE WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 29<sup>TH</sup> AT LECTURE \*\***
- M 11/27 Late witch trials: Scandinavia and Eastern Europe  
T 11/28 **SLIDE LECTURE:** The image of the witch in European art  
W 11/29 Skepticism, materialism and the Scientific Revolution  
Th 11/30 The decline of witch trials: Judicial doubts and rules of evidence  
Fr 12/1 **SECTION DISCUSSION:** : Why did Europe stop believing in witches?  
**READ:** XEROX PACKET #8 SKEPTICS (Cyrano & Malebranche)  
Kors & Peters, pp. 402-06 (Montaigne), 429-35 (Bekker), 438-444 (Bayle)
- WEEK 11** **Reading:** Levack, Ch 9 3<sup>rd</sup> ed, pp. 289-308 [on e-reserve for those with 2cd edition]
- M 12/4 Historical Postscript: 18th C. Rationalism & 19th C. Romanticism  
T 12/5 20th C Anthropological & feminist interpretations; "Witch revivals"  
W 12/6 "Witch-hunting" analogues: 1) McCarthyism 2) child abuse cases  
Th 12/7 Conclusion: chronology, geography & explanations for witch trials  
Fri 12/8 **EXAM REVIEW IN SECTION**

**FINAL EXAM: THURSDAY DECEMBER 14 8:30-10:20 IN REGULAR CLASSROOM**

**Topic: Analysis of documents concerning early medieval witch beliefs.**

Further discussion of the issues will occur in Section for Week II and in lectures.

**Due Date: Tuesday October 10 (3rd week) at lecture.**

**Late penalty: -.1 per day late**

**Length: 2-3 pages, typed, double spaced; reasonable font and margins**

**Purpose: Exercise in close reading of primary documents or texts.**

Historical analysis is based on reading and interpretation of original historical texts from a specific time period. These are called "primary documents." In analyzing a document you need to figure out: 1) what a specific text is saying, and 2) whose point of view it represents. The first paper will focus on this kind of basic explanation and analysis of early witchcraft texts.

**Primary Sources:**

The central document under consideration will be the Canon Episcopi, included in Kors and Peters anthology, pp. 60-63

Related documents will be included on Handout in Week Two, and all will be discussed in lecture. Canon Episcopi will also be discussed in Friday sections of Week 2.

**Secondary Source:**

Norman Cohn, Europe's Inner Demons,  
Chap 9, "Nightwitch" in Popular Imagination," pp. 162-180

Cohn discusses the background of early medieval witch documents. Be sure to read this before starting your paper.

**Question: Choose one of the following.**

- 1) Analyze the text of the Canon Episcopi, explaining what position this document takes on the beliefs it describes. What do the authors believe about witchcraft and what do they reject in the popular beliefs held by ordinary people of their time?
- 2) How does the Canon Episcopi compare to earlier documents discussed by Cohn and included on the Handout on Early Witchcraft Legislation? Discuss the changes in beliefs reflected in these various documents.

**Points to consider:**

What kind of document is the Canon Episcopi? What is a "canon"? [This will be discussed in lecture.]

Whose point of view does the document represent, and to whom is it addressed?

What exactly is the popular belief being discussed? Who believes these things?

What is the official interpretation of this belief, and what action is recommended?

What attitude does the document take towards the people whose beliefs it describes?

**Assistance with papers is available from Teaching Assistants assigned to this class and from the History Department Writing Center in Smith 210 and from Professor O'Neil. Please make use of all these resources. Don't be shy! We want to meet with you.**