

REL125: Magic and the Occult

Professor Steven Daniel Sacks
Class Schedule:

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MTuW 1:00-3:00 TuTh 9:00-10:30 F 9:00-10:30

An introduction to the place of magic in Western Civilization and beyond, with a focus on its understanding of the natural world, philosophy, theology and the role of human beings in the cosmos.

The content and methods correspond to Cornell's educational priorities as follows:

- 1) **Knowledge:** Students will integrate and apply knowledge from an interdisciplinary perspective concerning the events and understandings of Magic.
- 2) **Inquiry:** Students will encounter a variety of interpretive schema, and will be asked to produce critical analysis to discern the benefits and detriments of differing interpretations and positions.
- 3) **Communication:** Students will be asked to develop skills in oral presentation and argumentation in every class session and in formal oral assignments, and to provide clear structured arguments, with ample use of source materials, on written assignments. This is a writing course, so special emphasis will be placed upon improving your writing.
- 4) **Intercultural Literacy:** Students will be asked to identify with, argue on behalf of, and critique a wide variety of perspectives and positions with which they do not personally identify.

Class attendance and participation are compulsory for this course, as is the originality of your work; absences without verifiable cause or plagiarism will be cause for failing grades. Late final papers or missed exams will be subject to a minimum of a half-grade penalty. Failure to submit an assignment may be penalized by failure in the course.

Grading:

Class participation	20%
Portfolio	20%
Papers (3)	60%

All readings are listed below, due on the day that they appear, and may be downloaded from our Moodle forum. Attendance and contribution to our class discussions are expected on a daily basis. You are expected to bring your readings to class every day. Completion of daily responses must be posted on moodle at least two hours before class.

I will hold regular office hours, but please feel free to contact me any time with questions or concerns about the course. The present schedule and/or readings are liable to be amended as is necessary. Students are expected to complete a significant amount of work outside of the course which supplements scheduled hours within the classroom, and exceeds the government's regulations on course credit equivalency.

Students should only miss class in circumstances documented by a note from the health center, or similar form of external verification; exceptions may be made in circumstances deemed to be exceptional by the instructor. Three absences may be cause for a failing grade.

Cornell College expects all members of the Cornell community to act with academic integrity. An important aspect of academic integrity is respecting the work of others. A

student is expected to explicitly acknowledge ideas, claims, observations, or data of others, unless generally known. When a piece of work is submitted for credit, a student is asserting that the submission is her or his work unless there is a citation of a specific source. If there is no appropriate acknowledgement of sources, whether intended or not, this may constitute a violation of the College's requirement for honesty in academic work and may be treated as a case of academic dishonesty. The procedures regarding how the College deals with cases of academic dishonesty appear in The Catalogue, under the heading "Academic Honesty."

Students who need accommodations for learning disabilities must provide documentation from a professional qualified to diagnose learning disabilities. For more information see cornellcollege.edu/disabilities/documentation/index.shtml

Students are required to have an intimate knowledge of the day's readings, and should bring current readings and assignments to class. You will be assigned to a group of six classmates who will work inside and outside of class to reinforce one another's understanding of the course and the questions raised from the material that we will study.

In order to prepare for each class, you will be required to do the following:

1. Journal Marginalia: Print out every reading, and every time you feel the urge to highlight or underline something, write out in the margins why you wanted to underline it. Why is that passage important? Is it a major new point in the argument? A significant piece of support? A summary of the opposition? A particularly strong or particularly weak point? Use the margins to summarize the text, ask questions, give assent and protest vehemently – do not just color the pages. I will review your marginalia each week.
2. Leadership Role: Every day one member of your group will assume the role of leader and (a) compose and post a thesis seeking question to our moodle forum by 7:00 PM the evening before class; this question will seek to clarify the intent and/or argument of our readings – the question will not address questions of fact or content, but rather arguments presented in our readings; (b) observe, record and present the group's consensus solution from class and online discussion; the product should not be a summary of "what the group talked about" but a persuasive presentation of the group's work, and summary of their consensus solution to a problem in a one sentence thesis statement, where appropriate.
3. Portfolio: Since this is a writing class, I will provide several opportunities for a variety of writings assignments, opportunities to revise an earlier writing assignment, and to reflect upon the writing process. At the end of the course you will submit all of these writings assignments in an online portfolio accompanied by a two page (minimum 500 word) reflective narrative on the areas of strength and weakness in your writing process, and the steps that you have taken and will need to take to improve your writing. Please collect your writing at every major stage of development or time of completion to add to your portfolio.

Rubrics

Class Participation:

The grade for class participation will be categorized as follows: “A” for exceptional contributions to our daily discussions and the Moodle forum, with no missing or late assignments. “A-“ for exceptional contributions, with one missing or late assignment; “B+” for excellent and consistent contributions to our daily discussions and the Moodle forum; “B” for solid contributions to our daily discussions or Moodle forum, with one or two missing or late assignments; “B-” for uneven contributions to our daily discussion or the Moodle forum; C+ for uneven contributions to our daily discussion and the Moodle forum, with two or three missing or late assignments; “C” and below for poor effort to participate in our daily discussions and the moodle forum, with three or more missing or late assignments.

Papers:

In grading “thesis papers” I ask myself the following set of questions:

1. Does the paper have a thesis?
2. Does the thesis address itself to an appropriate question or topic?
3. Is the paper free from long stretches of quotations and summaries that exist only for their own sakes and remain unanalyzed?
4. Can the writer produce complete sentences?
5. Is the paper free from basic grammatical errors?

If the answer to any of these questions is “no,” I give the paper some kind of C. If the answer to most of the questions is “no,” its grade will be even lower.

For papers which have emerged unscathed thus far, I add the following questions:

6. How thoughtful is the paper? Does it show real originality?
7. How adequate is the thesis? Does it respond to its question or topic in a full and interesting way? Does it have an appropriate degree of complexity?
8. How well organized is the paper? Does it stick to the point? Does every paragraph contain a clear topic sentence? If not, is another kind of organizing principle at work? Are the transitions well made? Does it have a real conclusion, not simply a stopping place?
9. Is the style efficient, not wordy or unclear?
10. Does the writing betray any special elegance?
11. Above all, can I hear a lively, intelligent, interesting human voice speaking to me (or to another audience, if that’s what the writer intends) as I read the paper?

Depending on my answers to such questions, I give the paper some kind of A or some kind of B

Schedule

Monday, October 21 1:00-3:00 pm:
Introduction to Writing Magic in the West

Tuesday, October 22: 9:00-10:30 am and 1:00-3:00 pm
Morning: *Changing Writing* 8-21
Afternoon: Spinoza, B. *Theological-Political Treatise* 1-8.

Wednesday, October 23: 1:00-3:00 pm
Levy-Bruhl, L. *How Natives Think* 69-90.

Thursday, October 24: 9:00-10:30 am
Evans-Pritchard, E.E. *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande*, 64-83.

Friday, October 25: 9:00-10:30 am
Little Brown Handbook 28-43 and 101-105
****FIRST PAPER DUE AT 5:00 PM****

Monday, October 28: 2:00-3:00 pm
Paper Conferences
Little Brown Handbook 72-87

Tuesday, October 29: 1:00-3:00 pm
Paper Conferences
R. Ritner *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*
D. Silverman *Ancient Egypt* 134-135.
FILM: Robert Ritner "A Game of Thrones and Coffins"

Wednesday, October 30: 1:00-3:00 pm
Copenhaver, B. *Magic in Western Culture* 102-126.
****REWRITE FIRST PAPER DUE AT 9:00 AM****

Thursday, October 31: 9:00-10:30 am
Nagel, A. "Animated Statues" 103-128.

Friday, November 1: 9:00-10:30 am
***** SECOND PAPER DUE AT 5:00 PM*****
Little Brown Handbook 138-145, 225-231

Monday, November 4: 1:00-2:00 pm
Paper Conferences
Bruno, "On Magic," 105-142

Tuesday, November 5: 10:00-11:00 am and 1:00-3:00 pm
Paper Conferences
Picatrix (selections)
Barton, T. *Ancient Astrology* 86-113.

Wednesday, November 6: 1:00-3:00 pm
Walker, D.P. *Spiritual & Demonic Magic* 75-84
Lehrich, C. *The Language of Demons and Angels* (selections).
*** **SECOND PAPER REWRITE DUE AT 9:00 AM*****

Thursday, November 7: 9:00-10:30 am
Szonyi, *John Dee's Occultism* 181-240

Friday, November 8: 9:00-10:30 am
Little Brown Handbook 146-163 and 185-195.
*** **FINAL PAPER DUE AT 3:00 PM*****

Monday, November 11: 1:00-3:00 pm
Mackay, *The Hammer of the Witches* (Malleus Maleficarum) 1-6, 17-18 and 194-201.
Culianu *Eros and Magic in the Renaissance* 209-223

Tuesday, November 12: 9:30-11:00 am
Paper Conferences

Wednesday, November 13:
*** **REWRITE FINAL PAPER AND PORTFOLIO DUE AT 12:00 PM*****