Syllabus – HIST 640
Proseminar in European History – Magic and the Supernatural in Medieval Europe
Prof. Jarbel Rodriguez M: 16:10-18:55
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Classroom: SCI 268 Office Hours: MW: 1:30 – 3:00

Course Goals
The aim of this class is to provide an introduction to medieval beliefs in supernatural forces. Using saints, relics, miracles, magic, charms, folk traditions, fantastic creatures and places as our points of entry, we will attempt to understand what role the supernatural played in medieval society and more importantly what these beliefs reveal about the medieval world. Using a large range of primary sources from saints’ lives to spells to stories about vampires and ghosts and numerous historical methodologies, our aim will be to understand the place of the supernatural in a pre-modern society.

Prerequisites
ENG 214, HIST 300 and Upper Division status. Priority will be given to senior history majors, graduate students, and junior history majors in that order.

Required Books
Peter Brown, The Cult of the Saints (Chicago, 1981)
Carlo Ginzburg, The Night Battles: Witchcraft and Agrarian Cults in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (Baltimore, 1982)
Andrew Joynes, ed., Medieval Ghost Stories: An Anthology of Miracles Marvels and Prodigies (Suffolk, UK, 2001)
Jeffrey Burton Russell, Lucifer: The Devil in the Middle Ages (Ithaca, 1984)
Jean Claude Schmitt, Ghosts in the Middle Ages: The Living and the Dead in Medieval Society (Chicago, 1998)

Additional readings may be accessed through the class website or through e-reserve. Password “magic” [case sensitive.]

Grades
Leading a Class Discussion: 10%
Book Review (DUE NOV 24th): 20%
Class Participation: 20%
Research Paper (DUE DEC 8th): 50%

Assignments
Leading a Class Discussion: Each student will be responsible for leading one of our weekly discussion sections. You will come to class prepared to lead the discussion and present questions that will stimulate debate.
Book Review: Select one of the books that we are discussing in class—or pick one on your own and clear it with me—and write a 3-4 page critical review of the author’s work.

Class Participation: Class participation makes up a full 20% of your grade—the equivalent of two letter grades. It is measured by your comments during our discussions—not so much quantity as quality. I expect everyone to show up having read the assignments and ready to speak up. If you are fatally shy or believe that you cannot make useful comments, now is the time to get over it. Do not risk your grade by not speaking up.

Research Paper: Every student is required to submit a research paper (undergraduates 15-18 pages; graduates 18-25 pages) The research paper will be on a topic of your own choosing that relies mostly on primary sources—in other words, do not go and read a couple of books on your topic and tell me what they say. Instead, put together a group of primary sources that address your particular topic, develop a thesis/argument and create a work of original scholarship. You are required to turn in an abstract that describes your paper topic along with a brief bibliography of sources and secondary material you are thinking about using. There is more information in the class website under “Research Paper.”

All late assignments will be penalized 5 points per day—not per class, per day.

Week 1 (Sept 8th) – Introduction

Week 2 (Sept 15th) – Thinking about Magic and the Supernatural

Week 3 (Sept 22nd) – The Supernatural in the Late Roman World
Valerie Flint, The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe (Princeton, 1991) chs. 1, 2, 4-7
Augustine of Hippo, The City of God, bk. VI, ch. 10
Week 4 (Sept 29th) – Saints and Holy Men
Peter Brown, The Cult of the Saints (Chicago, 1981)

Week 5 (Oct 6th) – Hagiography in the Early Middle Ages
Paul Fouracre, “Merovingian History and Merovingian Hagiography” in Past and Present 127 (1990) 3-38
Clare Stancliffe, Saint Martin and his Hagiographer: History and Miracle in Sulpicius Severus (Oxford, 1983) 205-261 (????)
Sulpicius Severus, “The Life of Saint Martin of Tours” in The Internet Medieval Sourcebook
Gregory the Great, Dialogues: Book Two – The Life of St. Benedict [online]

Week 6 (Oct 13th) – Relics and Miracles
Peter Brown, “Relics and Social Status in the Age of Gregory of Tours” in his Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity (Berkeley, 1982) 222-250
Ronald Finucane, “The Use and Abuse of Medieval Miracles” in History 60 (1975) 1-10
Patrick Geary, “Coercion of Saints in Medieval Religious Practice” in his Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages (Ithaca, 1994) 116 – 124
Mary Ann Stouck, “Relics” in Medieval Saints (Peterborough, Canada, 1999) 355 – 409

Week 7 (Oct 20th) – Charms and Fetishes

Week 8 (Oct 27th) – Popular Practices and Pagan Survivals
Flint, The Rise of Magic, chs. 8 – 9
Ruth Mazo Karras, “Pagan Survivals and Syncretism in the Conversion of Saxony” in The Catholic Historical Review 553 – 572
Burchard of Worms, Corrector in Medieval Popular Religion ed. John Shinners (Peterborough, Canada, 1997) 441 – 456

Week 9 (Nov 3rd) – Ghosts

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Joynes, *Medieval Ghost Stories*, 3 – 41

**ABSTRACTS DUE**

**Week 10 (Nov 10th) – The (Un)Dead**
Nancy Caciola, “Wraiths, Revenants and Ritual in Medieval Culture” in *Past and Present* 152 (1996) 3 – 45
Patrick Geary, “Exchange and Interaction between the Living and the Dead in Early Medieval Society” in his *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, 1994) 77 – 94
Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (Chicago, 1960) chs. 1 & 8
Joynes, *Medieval Ghost Stories*, 87 – 125

**Week 11 (Nov 17th) – The Devil**
Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Lucifer: The Devil in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, 1984) [You may skim 28-61]

**Week 12 (Nov 24th) – Witchcraft**

**BOOK REVIEWS DUE**

**Week 13 (Dec 1st)**
NO CLASS – INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS AND WORK ON YOUR PAPERS

**Week 14 (Dec 8th) – Final Things**

**RESEARCH PAPERS DUE IN CLASS**