Folklore (FLR) 236: Magic in the Middle Ages

Syllabus

Read this whole syllabus for a complete description of how this course operates!

This course considers the period often considered the most “magical” historical period, the Middle Ages. Looking at the practices of medieval western Europe, particularly Britain, we will examine how medieval culture defined magic, what they hoped to achieve by practicing or forbidding magic, and the ways in which magic reflects the medieval understanding of the universe. Along the way we will investigate the medieval and magical origins of parts of two modern American holidays, Hallow’een and Christmas. Finally, we will look at some of the legacies of medieval thought about magic, from modern practices such as throwing coins in fountains to “new religions” such as Wicca and neo-paganism. The study of medieval magic will allow us to understand the role of magic in both the medieval and the modern world and give us the tools to give informed opinions about modern controversies.

This course counts towards the Arts & Letters requirement at the UO.

All texts are available online, most on the course Canvas site. There is no need to buy any books.

All quizzes/exams are also online, and there is no need for proctoring. (Quizzes and exams are open-book.)

Expected Learning Outcomes for this class:
After this class you should be able to:
• Identify, explain and analyze the role of magic in culture and the ways in which it reflects cultural views, anxieties, and worldview
• Identify, explain and analyze the understanding of magic and the supernatural in the Middle Ages
• Identify, explain and analyze connections between the understanding of magic, superstition, and the supernatural between the Middle Ages and the modern period
• Explain key things about the history of magic to others who may be interested — particularly useful in discussions of superstitions, modern magical traditions, and controversies around Hallowe'en
• Fend off supernatural dwarfs (results not guaranteed)
If you have a documented disability, you’re invited to let me know, and we’ll discuss accommodations for this class in conjunction with Disability Services.

Ominous warning section!
Plagiarism or academic dishonesty will cause you to fail this course. Please review the university policies on academic dishonesty at:
http://pages.uoregon.edu/tpayne/EG595/plagiarism.pdf
http://researchguides.uoregon.edu/citing-plagiarism/plagiarism

This intensive four-week course is wholly online!
That means that you will need a reliable computer (a desktop or laptop, not your phone) and a reliable internet connection. You will need to be online at least four days a week, ideally 5-6 days a week, for the duration of the course. You are required to develop a backup plan for access to computers and the internet in case your primary internet fails. Please locate your nearest public library now and ascertain its hours so you can go there if you need backup computer or internet access. Quiz, assignment, and discussion deadlines cannot be extended for internet problems — so do work before the last minute!
(Note: if you are taking this course from China, I should have already communicated with you about special challenges; e-mail me if you have Chinese internet problems and we will work around them.)

I am not an expert on internet glitches or Canvas problems and unfortunately cannot help with these — for problems with online access, contact the UO Libraries Center for Media and Educational Technologies (CMET), at:
https://library.uoregon.edu/cmet
Canvas support: 541-346-1942 or LMS-support@ithelp.uoregon.edu

Announcements:

So that you get all announcements sent out about the course, set your notification preferences for Announcements to "Notify Me Right Away."

Do this as follows:

1. Log into Canvas.
2. On the left, click on "Profile."
3. Then click on "Notifications."
4. Go down the list of settings to "Announcements" and click on the left-most checkmark.

Browsers:
Note this information on browsers. If you are taking a quiz with an unsupported browser and your internet goes down, your answers will not be saved. So use a supported browser for Canvas.

Canvas supports the current and first previous major releases of the following browsers:

- **Chrome** 66 and 67
- **Firefox** 60 and 61 (Extended Releases are not supported)
- **Flash** 29 and 30 (used for recording or viewing audio/video and uploading files)
• **Internet Explorer** 11 *(Windows only)—functionally supported; may exhibit slight visual differences from other browsers, but these differences do not restrict product functionality or accessibility)*
• **Edge** 41 and 42 *(Windows only)*
• **Respondus Lockdown Browser**
• **Safari** 10 and 11 *(Macintosh only)*

You should always use the most current version of your preferred browser. Your browser will notify you if there is a new version available.

Some supported browsers may still produce a banner stating *Your browser does not meet the minimum requirements for Canvas*. If you have upgraded your browser but you are still seeing the warning banner, try logging out of Canvas and deleting your browser cookies.

**Grading:**

The maximum number of points is 200

Ungraded survey: 5 points

Five short writing assignments: total 36% of grade
  - Writing assignments 1-5 (do 4 out of 5): 15 points each
  - Writing assignment 6: 20 points

Six quizzes: total 40% of grade
  - Quizzes 1, 2, 3 and 4 = 10 points each
  - Quizzes 5 and 6 = 20 points each

Discussion contributions: 24% of grade
  - (six modules, 8 points each)

Then you get 1 extra bonus point for finishing all assignments.

**Come prepared to plunge in, discuss and learn!**

**Estimated workload:**

This is an intensive 4-credit class, equal to a class that meets three times a week for a ten-week term. So each week of this course equals two and a half weeks of a regular course. Imagine how much reading you would have for one week of a regular 200-level course — every week for this course you will have two-and-a-half-times as much reading. So there is a lot of reading per day compared to a 10-week course! This is not just so that you can learn the material, but is required by the university so you can earn the specified amount of credit. In addition to doing the reading, you will also need to spend time viewing the PowerPoints, reading the lectures, writing the assignments, participating on the discussion boards, and studying for and taking the quizzes. The class should take around 15 hours per week, which means 3 hours per day for 5 days a week (or less or more spread out differently, of course). Please plan to put in the time accordingly, and plan ahead to give these assignments the time necessary. On the plus side, you are in complete control of when in the day those hours occur, and what could be a more interesting way to spend your time!

A note about online resources:
There are some online non-UO sites where people post materials from UO courses. Some of the material from previous years of this course has been posted on those sites. (No tests have been posted, so don't waste your time looking!) However, that material is out of date and not useful for this year of the course, so don't bother with those sites.

**How the course works**

The course is divided into six *Modules* (units). Modules 1, 2, 3 and 4 are short (half a week). Modules 5 and 6 are long (a full week each). The detailed Schedule below spells this all out precisely.

The modules will go like this:

- First week: modules 1 (Mon-Weds) and 2 (Thurs-Sun)
- Second week: modules 3 (Mon-Weds) and 4 (Thurs-Sun)
- Third week: module 5 (Mon-Sun)
- Fourth week: module 6 (Mon-Sun)

Plan to put in some work every weekday, taking only two days maximum off per week.

It is important to keep up and do each module’s work within the designated time period. This allows everyone to discuss the module’s material at the same time. You will also need to take each module’s quiz *before the end of that module* — another reason it is vital to keep up!

For each Module, you will do the following:

1. View the PowerPoint. (Put it into “Slideshow” mode before starting — use the little button third from the left at the bottom of the screen to do this. Use Escape to exit.)
2. Read the short “Lecture”
3. Look at the Module Study Guide to help prepare for absorbing the reading.
4. Do the assigned reading (articles and chapters of books).
5. Write and turn in the writing assignment. **You may skip one writing assignment (except not module 6's writing assignment).** There's no need to let me know you're going to skip an assignment — Canvas figures it out automatically.
6. Participate in the discussion board: minimum of 1 substantial observation and two substantial responses to others' comments
7. Take the Quiz.

I suggest that for week 1, you divide your workload this way:

Monday (first module of the week): view the PowerPoint, read the "Lecture," read the assigned texts, start on writing assignment.

Tuesday: Finish and submit writing assignment. Visit discussion board, post your first observation, read others’ observations (post a response if you want).

Wednesday: Visit discussion board, read, post remaining responses.

Thursday (second module of the week): view the PowerPoint, read the “Lecture,” read the assigned texts, start on writing assignment.
Friday: Finish and submit writing assignment. Visit discussion board, post your first observation, read others’ observations (post a response if you want).

Saturday: Visit discussion board, read, post remaining responses. Take the Ungraded Review Quiz (which only appears in Module 1). Study the material again and take the Graded Quiz. Study material again and take the Graded Quiz.

Sunday: Take a break! Relax!

Note: again, you may skip one writing assignment from modules 1-5. If you do not skip one writing assignment, I will count the assignments from modules 1-4 only. You may not skip the final writing assignment (for module 6). And again, there's no need to let me know you're going to skip an assignment — Canvas figures it out automatically.

Discussions

For the discussions you must post a substantial original observation in answer to the question (maximum 3 points), and then at least 2 substantial responses to others' comments (maximum 2 points for each of 2 comments, plus 1 extra bonus point possible for true awesomeness). Responses such as "Yeah" and "Nice comment!" do not earn any points. Be polite and civil — no flaming! Rules of civilization apply!

Finding course materials

The easiest way to find the course materials on the Canvas course site is by going to the course home page, which will list all the Modules with their assignments listed in the order you should complete them.

You may also get at the various components of the course (quizzes, lecture files and PowerPoints files, reading files, assignments, and discussions) by clicking on the relevant term on the menu on the left side of the course home page on Canvas.

Note that all times specified are Pacific (U.S. West Coast) times. Plan accordingly if you are in a different time zone!

Schedule

First Week
Module 1: Monday-Wednesday, August 20-22

What is Magic? Why try to use it?

What to do—
All of the following are found on the course site on Canvas.
1. Take the 10-question Survey that helps you assess whether an online course is right for you. You get 5 points for answering this survey no matter what your answers are.
2. View the PowerPoint: “What is magic? Why try to use it?” (Put it into “Slideshow” mode before starting — use the little button third from the left at the bottom of the screen
to do this. Use Escape to exit. You have to advance the slides yourself — it is not a video.)
3. Read the short lecture: “Introducing Medieval Magic.” The lectures can be downloaded and read offline.
4. Reading (on Canvas):
   - Catherine Rider, “Common Magic” (from The Cambridge History of Magic and Witchcraft in the West, pp. 303-31). The readings can be downloaded and read offline. Download or refer to the Study Guide, which will help you focus on the main concepts of the reading. Take notes and think about the material as you go.
5. Write and turn in the writing assignment (500+ words). The question is: “Look over the article on common magic read for the this module. Judging from these examples, and any other information in the module you find helpful, what kinds of things did medieval people hope to accomplish by using magic? Use a number of specific examples in your essay. (See the online writing assignment sheet for more specifics.) It should be submitted in a Word file (.doc or .docx) to me via the Canvas site. It is due **Wednesday, August 22, at 11:59 pm Pacific time**. But I recommend doing it earlier, as outlined above, because there are other things to do afterwards!
6. Read the guidelines for discussions above. Then go to the Discussion section of Canvas, where you will already be enrolled into your Discussion Group. This week only, start by making a post introducing yourself: your name, your major, where you are taking this class (for instance, "I'm at home in California" — this part is optional), and something interesting about yourself (for instance, "I once appeared as an extra on Doctor Who"). Then you may go on to answer the discussion question, or you may answer the discussion question in a separate post. This discussion board closes **Wednesday, August 22, at 11:59 pm Pacific time**.
7. In preparation for the quiz, you may wish to take the optional Ungraded Study Quiz (10 questions, 10 minutes).
8. Study the materials again and take the Graded Quiz. The quiz is timed, has 10 questions, and has a time limit of 10 minutes. It is open-book (because in an unproctored situation, how could I stop you from looking something up?) Despite that, you are not supposed to look stuff up — you are supposed to take the quiz with knowledge you have studied from the module materials. But the quiz is designed to go fast enough that you will not have time to look stuff up to answer these particular questions. You are supposed to know the material thoroughly. So do not start this quiz until you have studied all the material, are ready, and have 10 uninterrupted minutes. The quiz cannot be repeated or stopped in the middle, so you need to be ready for it the first time around! It is due **Wednesday, August 22, at 11:59 pm Pacific time**. So start before the last minute!

**Module 2: Thursday-Sunday, August 23-26**

**An Introduction to Magical Beings and Creatures**

What to do—
All of the following are found on the course site on Canvas.
1. View the PowerPoint: "Banishing Supernatural Creatures" (advance the slides yourself)
2. Read the short lecture: "The Magical and the Human"

3. Reading:
   - "Brownie" (from Katherine Briggs, *Encyclopedia of Fairies*, pp. 46-49)
   - Walter Map, *Courtiers' Trifles* (pp. 27-31, 149-59, 345-49)
   - Charm against a Sudden Stitch

Refer to the Study Guide. Take notes and think about the material as you go.

4. Write and turn in the writing assignment (500+ words). The question is: "What patterns do you see in how humans interacted with magical beings? Choose one or two patterns or themes and analyze a number of examples from the reading, PowerPoint, etc. You might wish to look at themes such as when things go wrong between humans and supernatural beings; or the ways in which supernatural beings approach humans; or how human men interact with supernatural women; or the characteristics of the fairy world or 'Otherworld' — or any other ideas you find interesting." (See the online assignment for more specifics.) It should be submitted in a Word file (.doc or .docx) on the Canvas site. It is due **Sunday, August 26, at 11:59 pm Pacific time.**

5. Now discuss the discussion topic on the discussion boards in your assigned groups.

6. Study the materials again and take the quiz. The quiz is **timed** and this time will take 12 minutes. As always, it is open-book, but don't count on having time to look stuff up. It is due **Sunday, August 26, at 11:59 pm Pacific time.**

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**Second Week**

**Module 3: Monday-Wednesday, August 27-29**

**Everyday Magic**

What to do—

All of the following are found on the course site on Canvas.

1. View the PowerPoint, "Everyday Magic"
2. Read the short lecture: "Magic in Everyday Life"
3. Reading:

Look at the Review Guide. Take notes and think about the material as you go.

4. Write and turn in the writing assignment (500+ words). The topic is "From the reading and other material for this module, identify several examples of the law of similarity and the law of contagion, and discuss how they operate in these examples. Specify where you got each particular example from, for instance, ‘Wilson, p. 42.’" It should be submitted in a Word file (.doc or .docx) on the Canvas site. It is due **Wednesday, August 29, at 11:59 pm Pacific time.**

5. Now discuss the discussion topic on the discussion boards in your assigned groups.

6. Study the materials again and take the quiz. The quiz is timed and will take 10 minutes. It is due **Wednesday, August 29, at 11:59 pm Pacific time.**
Module 4: Thursday-Sunday, August 30-September 2
Witches, Hallowe’en, and a little bit of Christmas

What to do—
All of the following are found on the course site on Canvas.
1. View the PowerPoint, "The Prehistory of Hallowe'en"
2. Read the short lecture: “Witches, Hallowe’en, and a Little Bit of Christmas”
3. Reading:
   • “Witchcraft” (from The Cambridge History of Magic and Witchcraft in the West, pp. 371-80) (a rather dense selection!)
   • "This Just In! What ‘The Night Before Christmas’ Really Reveals about Santa," on my history blog: https://pastisaforeigncountry.wordpress.com/
   • Nisse and Tomtes: http://www.ingebretsens.com/culture/traditions/legend-of-nisse-and-tomte
Look at the Review Guide. Take notes and think about the material as you go.
4. Write and turn in the writing assignment (500+ words). It is posted under "Assignments" on Canvas. It should be submitted in a Word file (.doc or .docx) on the Canvas site. It is due **Sunday, September 2, at 11:59 pm Pacific time.**
5. Now discuss the topic on the discussion boards in your assigned groups.
6. Study the materials again and take the actual quiz. The quiz is timed and will take 12 minutes. It is due **Sunday, September 2, at 11:59 pm Pacific time.**

Third Week

Module 5: Monday-Sunday, September 3-9
Magic and Religion: Contradiction, or Good Partners?
Note that this is a seven-day module ending on Sunday!

What to do—
All of the following are found on the course site on Canvas, except where noted.
1. View the PowerPoint, "Magic and Religion"
2. Read the short lecture: "From Magic to God, from Fairies to Demons"
3. Reading:
   • Keith Thomas, "The Magic of the Medieval Church" (from Religion and the Decline of Magic, pp. 25-50)
   • Catherine Rider, "Charms, Prayers, and Prophecies: Magic and Religion" (chapter 2, pp. 46-69 of Magic and Religion in Medieval England).
Look at the Review Guide. Take notes and think about the material as you go.
4. Write and turn in the writing assignment (500+ words). Consult the Canvas Module 5 writing assignment for the specifics. It should be submitted in a Word file (.doc or .docx) to me via the Canvas site. It is due **Sunday, September 9, at 11:59 pm Pacific time.**
5. Now discuss the discussion topic on the discussion boards in your assigned groups.
6. Study the materials again and take the quiz. This quiz is longer than the others and worth more points — 20 questions and 20 points, where most other quizzes have 10
questions and are worth 10 points. The quiz is timed and will take 20 minutes. It is due Sunday, September 9, at 11:59 pm Pacific time.

Fourth Week

Module 6: Monday-Sunday, September 10-16
Modern Magic: Survivals, Revivals and Neo-Paganism
Note that this is a seven-day module ending on Sunday!

What to do—
1. View the PowerPoint, "Magic from Then To Now"
2. Read the short lecture: "The Long Sweep of Magic"
3. Reading:
   - Ralph Merrifield, "Survivals, Revivals and Reinterpretations" (from The Archaeology of Ritual and Magic, pp. 46-62)
   - Readings on Wicca and Neo-Paganism (from Ronald Hutton’s The Triumph of the Moon, pp. 205-206 and “Modern Pagan Festivals: A Study in the Nature of Traditions,” Folklore 119 (2008), 251-73)
Look at the Review Guide. Take notes and think about the material as you go.
4. Write and turn in the writing assignment (1000+ words). There is a choice of topics; see the course Canvas site for details. It should be submitted in a Word file (.doc or .docx) on the Canvas site. It is due Sunday, September 16, at 11:59 pm Pacific time.
5. Now discuss the discussion topic on the discussion boards in your assigned groups.
6. Study the materials again and take the quiz. This quiz is longer than most others and worth more points — 20 questions and 20 points. The quiz is timed and will take 20 minutes. It is due Sunday September 16, at 11:59 pm Pacific time.

That’s all!