

# WITCHCRAFT IN THE ATLANTIC WORLD

**RELG 358-01; AMST 391-03**

*Instructor:* Douglas Winiarski

*Course Meeting Times:* Mondays, 3:00–5:40

*Location:* Richmond Hall 201

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*Office Hours:* by appointment

The early modern era of world history (roughly 1450 to 1850) witnessed a dramatic surge in the religious and legal persecution of men and women suspected of witchcraft. The infamous 1692 trials in Salem, Massachusetts, are perhaps most familiar to American students, but witch-hunting was a global phenomenon. Endemic to societies in Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Americas, witch hunting frequently mushroomed into large-scale panics involving hundreds and sometimes thousands of people. The cultural logic that informed this powerful mechanism of social control and its power dynamics varied considerably from place to place and culture to culture, but the broad interpretative problems these events raise for historians remain the same: what was witchcraft? Why did people believe in it and how did it give meaning to their worlds? What functions did witchcraft have in society? Who were most vulnerable to accusations?

In order to these questions, we will read a selection of records from witchcraft trials in British North America alongside related primary texts (sermons, diaries, letters) and a broad array of social history documents (tax, probate, town, and church records; vital statistics and genealogies). In addition, course participants will evaluate scholarly books and articles that assess Anglo-American witchcraft from a variety of methodological perspectives, including theology, social history, psychology, gender studies, legal history, and popular culture studies. During the second half of the



semester, students will have an opportunity research witch-hunting in comparative Atlantic world or global history perspectives.

I anticipate that this course will appeal to students interested in the history of witchcraft, popular magic, demonic possession, and supernatural hauntings during the early modern period, as well as those seeking a behind the scenes look at the process through which scholars have interpreted these unique religious phenomena.

### Course Procedures and Requirements

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Although RELG 358/AMST 391 has no prerequisites and assumes no prior knowledge of the subject, it nonetheless is an advanced seminar. The readings are challenging and the course assignments emphasize persuasive writing, independent thinking, and intellectual risk taking. Our weekly class meetings will consist primarily of student-driven discussions. I expect that you will spend *an average of six to eight hours preparing for each class and roughly two hours per page for written assignments.*

Attendance is mandatory. I will evaluate the quality of your participation in our seminar discussions after each class using the following scale: 5 (multiple informed/insightful comments), 3 (moderate contributions), 1 (minimal participation), and 0 (absent). *Please do not email me to explain class absences other than those involving approved University of Richmond events/activities.*

I strongly encourage students to annotate their readings before class and take notes during our seminar discussions.

During the semester, each student will write three short position papers and three essays, one of which will involve an oral presentation. For assignment guidelines, see Blackboard.

Final grades for the semester will be calculated as follows:

Class Attendance and Informed Participation	30%
Position Papers (3 of 4 @ 2 pages)	15%
Midterm Case Analysis Paper (8–10 pages)	20%
Critical Book Review Essay (5–7 pages)	15%
Critical Book Review Presentation	5%
Final Paper (4–6 pages)	15%

### Required Texts

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The following books are available for purchase in the campus bookstore, or from major internet distributors. Readings on the schedule of assignments are keyed to author's last name.

1. Breslaw, Elaine G., ed. *Witches of the Atlantic World: A Historical Reader & Primary Sourcebook*. New York: New York University Press, 2000. ISBN: 0814798519.

2. Demos, John Putnam. *Entertaining Satan: Witchcraft and the Culture of Early New England*, Updated Ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004. ISBN: 0195174836.
3. Gaskill, Malcolm. *Witchcraft: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. ISBN: 9780199236954.

In addition, we will be reading scholarly articles and other documents that are available on Blackboard (see Bibliography below). You will need to download and print copies of these texts and bring them with you to class.

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### **Disability Accommodations**

Students with disabilities for whom accommodations have been formally granted by a University of Richmond Disability Advisor must present a copy of their “Disability Accommodation Notice” to each professor within the first week of the academic term. Accommodations must be negotiated in advance for each assignment. Students should plan to consult with me *at least one week prior* to any scheduled deadline.

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### **Auditing & Pass/Fail Restrictions**

Students may not audit RELG 358/AMST 391 or enroll in the seminar for Pass/Fail credit.

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### **Cell Phones & Laptops**

While in class, please disable all cell phones and other communication devices. In addition, I ask that all students refrain from using iPads and laptop computers, which may create distractions that will disrupt our discussions.

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### **Grade Scale**

Final grades will be assigned based on the following grade scale: A+ (98–100); A (93–97); A– (91–92); B+ (88–90); B (83–87); B– (81–82); C+ (78–80); C (73–77); C– (71–72); D+ (68–70); D (63–67); D– (61–62); F (60 and below).

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### **Class Schedule**

**August 27**                      **Puzzling through Witchcraft**

**September 3**                      **Witches of the Atlantic World**

- Demos, *Entertaining Satan*, 1–15.
- Winiarski, ed., “Bermuda Witch-Hunt,” pp. 1–36 (Blackboard).
- Breslaw, ed., *Witches of the Atlantic World*, pp. 37–41 (Hopkins); 365–368 (Dalton); 369–374 (Perkins).

**September 10**

**The Usual Suspects**

- Hall, ed., “One Man’s Many Accusers,” pp. 115–133 (Blackboard).
- Demos, *Entertaining Satan*, pp. 36–94.
- Breslaw, ed., *Witches of the Atlantic World*, pp. 77–88 (Weisman).

POSITION PAPER ASSIGNMENT A DUE IN CLASS.

**September 17**

**Social Dimensions of Witchcraft**

- Winiarski, ed., “Documents Relating to the Witchcraft Case of Elizabeth Garlick,” pp. 1–12 (Blackboard).
- Demos, *Entertaining Satan*, pp. 213–245, 275–312.
- Browse the *Records of the Town of Easthampton* (Blackboard).

**September 24**

**Witchcraft & Gender**

- Demos, ed., “Sinner Cast Out,” pp. 262–282 (Blackboard).
- Hall, ed., “Anne Hibbins,” pp. 89–91 (Blackboard).
- Trask, “Abstracts of the Earliest Wills,” pp. 283–284 (Blackboard).
- Breslaw, ed., *Witches of the Atlantic World*, pp. 296–299 (Mather); 322–329 (Reis); 330–336 (Kamensky); 337–346 (Karlsen).

POSITION PAPER ASSIGNMENT B DUE IN CLASS.

**October 1**

**Magic, Wonders & Divine Providence**

- Demos, ed., “Ipswich Tailor,” pp. 59–69 (Blackboard).
- Winiarski, ed., “Witchcraft in Virginia,” pp. 1–18 (Blackboard).
- Breslaw, ed., *Witches of the Atlantic World*, pp. 89–95 (Hall); pp. 126–31 (Kittredge); pp. 132–142 (Godbeer).

POSITION PAPER ASSIGNMENT C DUE IN CLASS.

**October 8**

**Demonic Possession**

- Breslaw, *Witches of the Atlantic World*, pp. 235–245 (Knapp); 246–255 (Goodwin Children).
- Winiarski, “Sermon Notebook of John Lake,” pp. 1–10 (Blackboard).
- Godbeer, “Sin, Suffering, and Countermagic,” pp. 85–121 (Blackboard).

POSITION PAPER ASSIGNMENT D DUE IN CLASS.

**October 15**

**No Class—Fall Break**

**October 22**

**Mid-Term Case Analysis**

- Hall, ed., “Two Grandparents, One Grandson, and a Seaman,” pp. 230–259 (Blackboard).
- Winiarski, ed., “Letter from Samuel Phillips,” pp. 1–5 (Blackboard).
- Demos, *Entertaining Satan*, pp. 132–210.

October 29

**Critical Book Review Research (Week #1)**

CLASS MEETS IN BOATWRIGHT LIBRARY. DETAILS T.B.A.

November 1

**Hallowmas Celebration! Film Screening of *Fantasia & The Witch***

CLASS MEETS IN JEPSON HALL 118 AT 7:30 P.M.

MID-TERM CASE ANALYSIS PAPER DUE IN MY OFFICE MAILBOX (RELIGIOUS STUDIES DEPARTMENT, WEINSTEIN HALL 102) BEFORE 4:00 P.M. ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 2.

November 5

**Critical Book Review Research (Week #2)**

November 12

**Critical Book Review Research (Week #3)**

- Breslaw, ed., *Witches of the Atlantic World*, pp. 1–11.
- Gaskill, *Witchcraft*, pp. 1–123.

November 19

**Critical Book Review Research (Week #4)**

November 26

**Critical Book Review Presentations**

CRITICAL BOOK REVIEW ESSAY DUE IN MY OFFICE MAILBOX BEFORE 4:00 P.M. ON FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 30.

December 3

**Final Paper Preparation**

- Winiarski, “Witchcraft in the White Mountains,” pp. 1–2 (Blackboard).
- Demos, *Entertaining Satan*, pp. 368–400.
- Breslaw, *Witches of the Atlantic World*, pp. 516–524 (Butler).
- Jortner, “Witches as Liars,” pp. 66–87 (Blackboard).

FINAL PAPER DUE IN MY OFFICE MAILBOX BEFORE 12:00 NOON ON TUESDAY, DECEMBER 11.

**Blackboard Bibliography**

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- Demos, John, ed. “An Ipswich Tailor.” In *Remarkable Providences: Reading on Early American History*, rev. ed., 59–69. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991.
- . “A Sinner Cast Out.” In *Remarkable Providences: Reading on Early American History*, rev. ed., 262–282. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991.
- Godbeer, Richard. “Sin, Suffering, and Countermagic.” In *The Devil’s Dominion: Magic and Religion in Early Modern New England*, 85–121. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Hall, David D., ed. “Anne Hibbins.” In *Witch-Hunting in Seventeenth-Century New England: A Documentary History, 1638–1693*, 2d ed., 89–91. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1999.
- . “One Man’s Many Accusers.” In *Witch-Hunting in Seventeenth-Century New England: A Documentary History, 1638–1693*, 2d ed., 115–133. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1999.

- . “Two Grandparents, One Grandson, and a Seaman.” In *Witch-Hunting in Seventeenth-Century New England: A Documentary History, 1638–1693*, 2d ed., 230–259. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1999.
- Jortner, Adam. “Witches as Liars: Witchcraft and Civilization in the Early American Republic.” In Edward Bever and Randall Styers, ed., *Magic in the Modern World: Strategies of Repression and Legitimization*, *Magic in History*, 66–87. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2018.
- Records of the Town of East-Hampton, Long Island, Suffolk Co., N.Y.*, vol. 1. Sag-Harbor, N.Y.: John H. Hunt, 1887.
- Trask, W. B. “Abstracts of the Earliest Wills on Record in the County of Suffolk.” *New England Historic Genealogical Register* 6 (1852): 283–284.
- Winiarski, Douglas L., ed. “A Bermuda Witch-Hunt, 1653: Selected Documents.” Unpublished ms., 2003.
- Winiarski, Douglas L., ed. “Documents Relating to the Witchcraft Case of Elizabeth Garlick, Easthampton, New York, 1657.” Unpublished ms., 2000.
- Winiarski, Douglas L., ed. “A Letter from Samuel Phillips Relating to the Witchcraft Case of Elizabeth Morse (May 25, 1680).” Unpublished ms., 2006.
- Winiarski, Douglas L., ed. “The Sermon Notebook of John Lake, August 28, 1688.” Unpublished ms., 2007.
- Winiarski, Douglas L., ed. “Witchcraft in the White Mountains, 1795.” Unpublished ms., 2018.
- Winiarski, Douglas L., ed. “Witchcraft in Virginia: Selected Documents.” Unpublished ms., 2003.