Background:
Belief in witchcraft seems to be almost universal in human societies. In early modern Europe, this belief led to widespread persecutions in which thousands of Europeans, both women and men, were executed as witches. Ever since, historians have been trying to explain why.

This course will examine European witchcraft belief and the early modern witch-craze in comparative perspective. We will look at the origins of belief in witchcraft, reasons for believing that particular individuals were witches, and the causes and consequences of the waves of trials and executions that disrupted families and villages.

Through this class, we will address specific questions relating to witchcraft as a historical phenomenon: Were there really witches? Were witchcraft persecutions motivated by misogyny? Can we use trial records, evidence obtained by torture, and other biased sources to understand “what really happened”? Can one explanation really account for centuries of persecution, or were witch-crazes complex phenomena with multiple causes? Our examination of witchcraft will also raise some fundamental questions in the study of history: How do historians know about the past? How do they choose and interpret sources? Can modern science and psychological theory be used to understand the past? Why do historians choose particular events to study?

Seminar meetings will focus on exploring these questions through discussion of common readings; the course will be devoted to inquiry, not to presentation of fixed conclusions. Several short papers will allow students to practice the art of history and develop their own conclusions about the witch-craze and its causes. As a history seminar, this course should teach not only the history of witchcraft but also the craft of historical study.

Course Goals:
During the past forty years, books and articles about witchcraft have revealed a great deal about Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe. Indeed, virtually every major historiographical trend in early modern studies has been displayed in recent work on witchcraft. In many cases, the scholarship on witchcraft has driven these historiographical developments. There have been community studies, gender studies, anthropological studies, and psychological studies of witchcraft. There have been studies of witchcraft in relation to theology, popular culture, and folk traditions. There have been legal histories, medical histories, environmental histories, and semiotic analyses of witchcraft. There have been studies of early modern witchcraft focusing on race and ethnicity. Nor is this scholarly outburst showing any signs of abating. The last twenty years have seen the publication of at least a dozen major works on witchcraft, not to mention an unending stream of non-scholarly books aimed at a popular audience.

In this course, you will have the opportunity to sample some of the best, most interesting, and most influential studies published during the past forty years. Along the way,
you will yourself join the scholarly conversation by writing your own multi-disciplinary interpretation of the history witchcraft.

Beyond those content goals, I also expect to assess the growth and development of the following historical skills:

- **Understanding** human actions and thoughts in the context that produced them. The historian’s cardinal sin is anachronism, which means a confusion of time. Every human society, past and present, has its own values and ways of thinking, and they are often very different from our own. Avoiding anachronism means understanding the past on its own terms.

- **Exercising** critical judgment about what you read and hear. “Critical judgment” does not mean always being negative. Rather, it means that you should always weigh and consider the validity of what you have been told, in light of the source’s possible biases and the strength of its argument. Historical sources are like legal testimony and argument: they are not always true or convincing. The historian, like a judge, has to weigh and consider his or her sources and decide whether they are reliable.

- **Knowing** how to use sources—texts and objects—as evidence to make an argument about what happened in the past. History is imagination disciplined by evidence. Historians want to know not only what happened in the past, but also why it happened and what its consequences were. Historical sources are the building blocks of historical explanation, but they must be interpreted.

**Course Requirements:**

1. **Participation:**
   
   Since a graduate course involves discussion, attendance and participation are crucial. I expect you to attend and actively participate in our class work. Missing more than one class may seriously affect your grade. Missing an assigned presentation (see below) will harm your partner and the rest of the class, so if you miss one you will likely see a severe drop in your class grade.

2. **Precis: (300 words-ish):**
   
   Each class, we will read and discuss selected readings touching on early modern European witchcraft. To help us all out in that task, each of us will prepare **NO LATER THAN 24 HOURS BEFORE** class a short, critical summary of the reading you have chosen. These “precis” will be posted on the course site **prior** to our meetings. In these short essays, be sure to address the following questions:

   - What is the author’s thesis?
   - What kinds of historical evidence does the argument rely upon (e.g. letters, court records, diaries, governmental reports) and how does this kind of evidence shape the historian’s conclusions?
   - How does this work relate to others you have read this semester for this course?
   - What do you see as the major strengths and weaknesses of this work?
   - Do you see any important omissions, errors of fact or logic?

   The précis should read like a book review, that is: aimed at someone who has not read the work and in a essay format (i.e., not disconnected answers to a series of implied or specified questions).
3. Secondary source critique/Book Review:
Over the course of the course, you will write one short (two-three page) critique of a secondary source. At the end of the course, you will include a revised version in your course portfolio.

4. Primary source analysis:
Over the course of the class, you will write one short (two-three page) analysis of a primary source. At the end of the course, you will include a revised version in your course portfolio.

5. Two peer critiques:
Over the course of the summer, you will write two brief (one-page) peer critiques of your fellow students’ secondary source critiques and primary source analyses. At the end of the course, you will include these in your course portfolio.

6. Final Project:
At the end of the course, you will hand in an final project. The goal for this requirement is to have each of you work on a topic of your choice, one that interests you, and conduct intensive research on that area. Research allows you to learn about an area in an rigorous way as well as helps you learn ‘how to learn’ about new areas of study. You will discuss your essay topic and sources with me during office hours; in the penultimate week of class you will make a brief presentation of your research to the seminar.

Grading for the course
You will receive detailed instructions and grading criteria for each assignment and a grade for each assignment. Just as a pre-warning, it will generally take me about 1 week to return any formal writing piece to you. Here is how your final course grade will be determined:

1. Participation (Requirement #1) 30% of final grade: Your participation grade will be based on two factors:
   A. Your in-class additions to our conversations about our readings, which includes your Precis posted to the course site.
   B. Your Two class sessions where you team lead our discussions of our readings.

2. Precis: (Requirement 2): While technically ungraded, I will review them and your classmates (and you) will utilize them for their class presentations. They also form part of your class participation grade.

Preliminary Research Bibliography: 5%: Due March 18: Reviewed and Discussed
Submit a preliminary bibliography on the (approved) topic of your choice with at least 13 scholarly entries, 7 of which must not be listed on the class syllabus, including at least 5 articles and 6 books. There should be at least 2 primary sources in your bibliography (using more will result in a higher grade). Include, at the beginning, a brief paragraph describing the topic that you are researching, including what you hope or expect to find, along with any difficulties that
you anticipate encountering. Include 2-3 sentences on each source, explaining its relevance. This will be the basis of your Final Project, below.

You must add all of your research (including this assignment’s) into our Zotero Group.

Annotated Outline: 5%: Due April 8: Reviewed and Discussed
Submit a detailed outline of your planned topics and arguments for your Final Project. This should be 6 or so pages or so in length and include brief summaries of sections, sources, struggles and ideas. The goal is to show your progress to date, along with the critical thinking you’ve done thus far on your topic.

Final course portfolio: 60%: Due May 9th consisting of:
• Best Two Precis (with Reflection) (requirement #2) 10%
• Primary source analysis (requirement #3) 10%
• Secondary source critique (requirement #4) 10%
• Two peer critique (requirement #5) 10% (5% each)
• Final Project (requirement #6) 25%

Your final project can take 2 (maybe 3) forms:
1. Research Paper (approximately 10 pages.).
   In your paper, you should:
   • argue an original thesis concerning your topic in early modern European culture
   • discuss the historiography that is relevant to your topic
   • base your argument on evidence from sources
   • conclude by discussing how further research on this topic might proceed.
2. Unit Plan (approximately 10-12 pages.)
   Your topic should involve a considered unit that you would teach to either secondary or college students (there’s a difference and your plans should reflect that). The Unit should have the elements required for a standard Unit plan. The Unit should contain 5-7 lesson plans, each of those plans having their required elements. Benchmarks and examples of both Unit plans and Lesson plans will be posted on our Course Blog.
3. Digital Project: Choosing this option allows for the widest possible “product” to be produced. Any student interested in pursuing this as their final project MUST see me before attempting it.

Regardless of the track you choose, your topic must be approved by me.
If you begin having any questions about this aspect of the course, contact me.

Zotero:
All will be explained . . . But before our first class, got to http://www.zotero.org and download the software and register on the Zotero site. This will be become part of our class discussions along with a way to manage your research for our class.
Notes on Grading:
In my grading system, here’s the breakdown. These comments should be read as a whole in order to feel out the shifts in grades noted below. My experiences as a professor at the graduate level and as a graduate student have reinforced in me the idea that these are common criteria and you may already know them. You will note that the central focus of the steps in this is the degree, quality and amount of critical engagement with a reading. Undergraduates may summarize what they read, a graduate student engages with that material, using previous readings, relying on best historiographical tools and noting personal approaches. Thus:
A+= 98 - 100. This is a perfect student. Every single moment of their class work is breathtaking and startling in its beauty, command of the source material and uniquely powerful in its insights. These are rare and wonderful students.
A= 94 - 97: a small step down from the Olympic heights of the A+ student, still in every moment showing signs of brilliance but having small pieces of work be more “normal.” Their focus is analysis rather than mere summary and there are flashes of brilliance to their work.
A-= 90 - 93: The distinguishing mark between the A student and A- student is the reliance on summary rather than analysis: the student has awareness of the material but not ‘command.’
B+= 88-89: While the mixture of work now shades into total summary here, there is also less real engagement in the class work and material. Less intellectual engagement at all levels of the course work.
B= If you receive a “B” grade, it reflects that the quality of the work produced is at an advanced undergrad level, rather than at a graduate level.
And Finally: The Readings
Required readings for each week are listed in the calendar, below. I did not order books because I expect that many of you will wish to buy only the books that particularly interest you and that you’ll borrow the others. Please make arrangements as early as possible to get the books you want, and allow extra time to read reserve copies of those you don’t want.
A book that you will find valuable for doing research in this course are:
If you find that the readings or discussions introduce a lot of unfamiliar terms, you should take a look at the following books: THESE ARE NOT REQUIRED:
, Early Modern Europe: An Oxford History, Eaun Cameron, ed., Oxford University Press: Oxford (2001)(0-19-820760). This is a good survey of the period and topics we will (mostly) be
covering. If you haven’t taken a history class is a while or simply need some grounding in the period, this is a good reading source.

**Brief Suggestions for Doing Well**
Graduate level history is not an “easy” adventure, though it can be both fun and enriching. If you keep a few simple points in mind, it will be a lot easier. What follows are really aspects of one overarching principle: TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR OWN EDUCATION.

* Read the syllabus carefully, and write down in [insert whatever you use] the dates on which assignments are due. This will help you budget your time for the weeks when there is more work than normal.
* Talk to me before anything gets BAD, wrong or otherwise abnormal. Problems always come up but problems are generally easily solved UNLESS you ignore them.
* Develop a comfortable friendship with perseverance and a tolerance for frustration. Some of the greatest challenges— and therefore, real learning— in history (especially at this level) lie in necessary trail-blazing. Many important topics in early modern history are only vaguely understood and remain largely unanswerable questions that require further work.

**SCHEDULE**

* A zen master once wrote that “in the beginning is all.”
* I offer that little piece of wisdom with the recommendation that will begin our first steps together by doing each assignment when it is assigned. That way you’ll be prepared for the next class.

**Week I: January 28**
**Introduction: some historiographical considerations**
Witchcraft and the Limits of Interpretation, David Hall (pdf on course site)
Henry Goodcole, *The Wonderful Discoverie* (1621) and take a look:
http://witching.org/throwing-bones

**Week II: February 4**
The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe
Brian Levack
Longman; 3rd edition (May 22, 2006)
978-0582419018

**Week III: February 11**
*Contra-Pointe*
Malcolm Gaskill, *Witchcraft, Politics and Memory* (pdf on course site)
Thomas Cooper, *Mystery of Witchcraft* (1617) (pdf on course site)
*Teacher Workshop 1: Creating a Lecture*
*Secondary Source/Book Review Due*
Week IV: February 18
Witches and Neighbors: The Social Construction of Witchcraft
Robin Briggs
Penguin (1998)
978-0140144383
Peer Review of Secondary Source/Book Review Due

Week V: February 25
Contra-Pointe
Stuart, Clark, Inversion, Misrule & the Meaning of Witchcraft (give this one some time . . .) (pdf on Course site)
Anon, The tryal, condemnation, and execution of three Witches (1682) (pdf on course site)

Week VI: March 4
Devil in the Shape of a Woman
Carol Karlsen
W. W. Norton & Company (1998)
Primary Source Analysis due

Week VII: March 11
Spring Break - No Class

Week VIII: March 18
Contra-Pointe
Christina Larner, “Was Witch-hunting women hunting?” (pdf on Course site)
E.J. Kent, “Masculinity and Male Witches in Old and New England: 1593-1680” (pdf on Course site)
Teacher Workshop 2: Creating a Syllabus
Peer Review of Primary Source Analysis due
Preliminary Research Bibliography Due

Week IX: March 25
Reading Witchcraft
Marion Gibson
Routledge (1999)
978-0415206464

Week X: April 1
Contra-Pointe
Midelfort, Madness and the Problems of Psychological History in the Sixteenth Century (pdf on Course site)
B. Carnochan, *Witch-Hunting and Belief in 1751: The Case of Thomas Colley and Ruth Osborne* (pdf on Course site)

**Week XI: April 8**
Witch Craze: Terror and Fantasy in Baroque Germany
Lyndal Roper
Yale University Press (October 31, 2006)
978-0300119831
Annotated Outline Due

**Week XII: April 15**
*Contra-Pointe*
Edward Brever, *Women, Aggression and Power in the Early Modern Community* (pdf on course site)
Teacher Workshop 3: Facilitating Discussion in-class

**Week XIII: April 22**
The Trial of Tempel Anneke: Records of a Witchcraft Trial in Brunswick, Germany, Peter A. Morton
University of Toronto Press, Higher Education Division (2005)
978-1551117065
Or
The Bewitching of Anne Gunter
J. A. Sharpe
Routledge (June 2001)
978-0415926928

**Week XIV: April 29**
Ditto

**Week XV: May 6**
CLASS PRESENTATIONS OF FINAL PROJECTS & Wrap Up

*Note: We will use our final exam time/class period for any makeup or other work we need to do.*