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Conjure Americana (RELG 93) Syllabus

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RELG 93 Conjure Americana; the Magic Book

This course rethinks the category of “magic” as a subset of “Religion” by looking at sources and materials from African American spiritual traditions that have historically efface these distinctions. Owen Davies said that “books of magic are *magical* books.” But in reviewing digital resources and library collections it is clear that there is a dearth of electronically archived sources on this topic, particularly those sources from within the American context. What I want to consider is the idea of the “magical book” as historical object, and even their uses as religious artifacts and ritual items. By studying the intersections between these categories by examining primary sources, we will build an electronic image and text archive that foregrounds the material and cultural production of books related to a variety of magic, occult, and esoteric traditions in the United States. In so doing we will also learn the basics of data compilation and annotation, scanning, and processing for the end product, a co-created digital archive that utilizes the Omeka platform to organize and manage our materials.

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