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Magic: Theory And Practice (RELG 102) Syllabus

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RELIGION 102 MAGIC: THEORY AND PRACTICE

The Intersection of Magic and Religion in America
SPRING 2020, Mondays 1:15-4:00pm
Professor Yvonne Chireau

The primary goal of this class is for you to achieve a greater understanding of "Magic" through creative engagement in written and discussion-based outlets. This goal can be met by producing intellectually engaging responses to the readings and providing informed and well-researched questions about the source material at hand for our discussion section.

The second goal is to engage with scholarship, literature, and other media to attain a general understanding of American Magic, its forms, material traditions, practices, and practitioners. This goal can be met by showing, through your participation, a developing knowledge of these topics from a variety of perspectives - including that of Religious Studies.

The final goal of this course is that you produce original scholarship on this subject by working on a project that interests you. This goal will be met through the production of contributing materials for the digital archive (as part of our co-curated final research assignment on magic and materiality), and through required papers and written assignments.

Class Requirements: weekly response and reflection papers (25% of the final grade each) biographical essay (25% of the final grade), attendance and participation in all sessions (20% of the final grade); curating project for digital archive (30% of the final grade)

Course schedule by week

1. Defining Magic - Magic versus Religion
Categories that define the other; term that defines the other; theories of magic

2. Magic and Religion and Magical Religions
Historical sources from the middle ages to the Enlightenment

3. Practice and ritual
healing magic

5. Folk Magic in local cultures of the “Folk”
Pennsylvania colonial magic to the present; forms and values in the German Dutch tradition
6. Magic digital lab #1

7. Contemporary styles and practices of magic in the US

8. Science and Magic

9. Magic and material culture; architecture; sigils

10. Magic digital lab #2

Readings - all books on Honors Reserve at McCabe Library


