

**DEPARTMENT OF MODERN LANGUAGES
AND CULTURAL STUDIES**

www.mlcs.ca

2015-2016 MLCS 299 A1 (Fall Term)

Folklore and Film

Instructor: Natalie Kononenko

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Class Time: MWF 12-1250

Place: Humanities Centre 2-21

Office Hours: MW 11-1150

or by appointment

Course Website: On e-Class

Course Prerequisite: none

Course-based Ethics Approval in place regarding all research projects that involve human testing, questionnaires, etc.?

Yes No, not needed, no such projects approved

Community Service Learning component

Required Optional None

Past or Representative Evaluative Course Material Available

- Exam registry – Students' Union
<http://www.su.ualberta.ca/services/infolink/exam/>
- See explanations below
- Document distributed in class
- Other (please specify)
- NA – New course

Additional mandatory Instructional fees (approved by Board of Governors)

Yes No

Witchcraft in Folklore and film: Most folklore and film courses focus on fairytale films and this is what I have also done in the past. Because witchcraft beliefs in film have not been explored, filmic witchcraft is the subject of this course.

Witches do appear in folktales and fairytales and the films based on them. Most of these witches are cute rather than sinister. At the same time, there have always been beliefs in magic and its manipulation, sometimes for positive purposes and sometimes to do harm. The people who use magic are called witches, at least in the West. In folklore, including contemporary folklore, beliefs about magic and witches are expressed in legends. Witchcraft is also the subject of some very serious and very good films. It is these films and the legends and folk beliefs behind them that are the subject of this course.

The geographic area of focus is Europe and the Americas because most well-known witchcraft films are made in the United States. This does not preclude students from working with witchcraft films and beliefs in other parts of the world. Please consult with your instructor.

Course Objectives: Folklore is so much a part of human thinking that it is difficult to recognize. Yet, precisely because it is so central to the way people construct the world, it is imperative to understand what folklore is, how it governs thought, and how it can be used to convey ideas.

Course goals include:

- 1) To acquire the ability to identify folklore and folk belief
- 2) To understand how folklore works – often the same motif or structure can be used to convey multiple meanings
- 3) To learn how to analyze film in terms of folklore; this will require looking at both folk motifs and folk structures and how they are used
- 4) To understand intertextuality by comparing films that use folklore, not only to the lore itself, but also to each other; to understand the oral, print, and filmic forms of expression

Resource Texts: Lynne S. McNeill, *Folklore Rules* Utah State Univ. Press, 2013
Michael D. Bailey, *Magic and Superstition in Europe*, Rowman and Littlefield, 2007.
Jane Barry and Hasan El-Shamy, eds. *Archetypes and Motifs in Folklore and Literature: A Handbook*. M. E. Sharpe Publishers, 2004 – available as an electronic resource

In addition to the background readings above, students will select and read one or more specialized books. List of specialized books is given at the end of this syllabus

Films: Rosemary's Baby, Carrie, Exorcist, Blair Witch Project, The Witches of Eastwick, Eyes Wide Shut, The Craft, The Messenger: The Story of Joan of Arc. Other films to be selected based on student interest.

Course plan: This is a new course and so my plans are tentative. My preliminary plan is as follows:

Week of Sept. 2 and Sept. 7: During the first two weeks we watch Rosemary's Baby and Carrie and discuss two opposing views of witchcraft. In Rosemary's Baby, magical power is actively sought for personal gain. In Carrie, the title character has telekinetic powers, but they are powers that she has spontaneously and does not want. Some cultures distinguish these 2 phenomena as learned witchcraft and born witchcraft. As we watch the films, we take time to discuss and compare.

Week of Sept. 14: I give the folkloric background. I lecture on current definitions of folklore and folklore genres – the differences between legends, the usual source of stories about witchcraft, and other genres of folklore. Please see *Folklore Rules* for a quick and accessible overview of contemporary approaches to folklore.

Week of Sept. 21 and weeks following: We break into two groups. One group concentrates on learned witchcraft, the conscious efforts to master magical powers. The other group concentrates on born witchcraft, people who seem to naturally possess magical abilities. From this point on, I meet with one group on Mondays and the other group on Wednesdays. During our split meetings,

the group that I meet with and I discuss appropriate films and readings. On Fridays we all meet together, that is, both groups come to class and we compare findings.

Each week we will select one or more films for each group to watch. If we select more than one film per group, some members of the film will watch one film and others will watch the other film or films. You will also start on your readings. There is a list of books at the end of the syllabus. Additional selections are possible. Each person will be assigned at least one book. More than one person can read any particular book, as in several people can work on a single selection.

In addition to the topics of seeking magical powers and possessing powers naturally we need to cover:

- 1) people's susceptibility to belief in magic (Blair Witch Project and other films)
 - 2) beliefs in possession (a person is not born with magical powers and does not want them, but these are forced on him or her (Exorcist)
 - 3) accusations of witchcraft, leveled whether or not a person has magical power (The Messenger)
- In addition to films that explore these topics, there are readings that fit all of them.

Grade distribution. From each of you I will want:

- 1) a book review of the book or books you chose to read. This should have a summary of the book contents plus an evaluation. More detailed instructions will be posted on eClass. This will be 3-5 pages long and worth 10% of the grade. Tentative due date: Oct. 2
- 2) a film review. Again, a plot summary plus an evaluation. More details on eClass. This will be 3-5 pages long and worth 10% of the grade. Tentative due date: Oct. 16
- 3) a film comparison. Here you will take a set of at least 3 films which treat the same topic in different ways and compare and evaluate. This will be 3-5 pages long and worth 10% of the grade. Tentative due date: Nov. 6
- 4) active participation in the discussions we have each week– 20% of the grade; some of your discussions will be mini-presentations leading up to.
- 5) a formal presentation of your research. This will be analogous to a paper presentation that one would give at a professional meeting. It should be 10-15 minutes long – 20% of the grade; see the dates below
- 6) a formal research paper. This will be your major course project and it will be worth 30% of your grade. In the project I will expect you to explore a set of films treating a related topic. For example, this might be a set of films that have “witch Sabbath” scenes and people trying to conjure up spirits and gain power from them. Or it could be a set of films that tell the story of Joan of Arc. You will look to see what traits the set of films share and also the differences between them – how they treat the same topic differently. Appropriate readings should be included in this discussion. Again, more detailed instructions will be posted on eClass. Firm due date: Dec. 18

While there are no exams in this course, the due date of the paper is based on the University examination schedule. The Fall / Winter Exam Planner for the 2015-2016 academic year can be found at the following site:

<http://www.registrarsoffice.ualberta.aca/en/Examinations/Fall-2015-Winter-2016-Exam-Planner.aspx>

Nov. 27 through Dec. 7 –student presentations. Formal oral presentations using either a PPT or a Prezi. This is the time that I am budgeting for your presentations. We may need to modify slightly.

Your formal research papers are due Dec. 18. The write-up should be a formal 10 page paper. Detailed instructions will be on eClass. Submit in my office, ARTS 441-C, by 2PM.

Required Notes:

“Policy about course outlines can be found in Section 23.4(2) of the University calendar.”

Academic Integrity:

“The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Code of Student Behaviour (online at <http://www.governance.ualberta.ca/en/CodesofConductandResidenceCommunityStandards/CodeofStudentBehaviour.aspx>) and avoid any behaviour which could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University.”

Learning and Working Environment:

The Faculty of Arts is committed to ensuring all students; faculty and staff are able to study and work in an environment safe and free of discrimination and harassment. It does not tolerate behaviour that undermines that environment. The Department urges anyone who feels this policy has been or is being violated to:

- Discuss the matter with the person whose behaviour is causing concern; or
- If that discussion is unsatisfactory, or there is concern that direct discussion is inappropriate or threatening, discuss it with the Chair of the Department.

For additional advice or assistance regarding this policy you may contact the student ombudservice (<http://www.ombudservice.ualberta.ca>).

Information about the University of Alberta Discrimination and Harassment Policy and Procedures is described in UAPPOL at <https://policiesonline.ualberta.ca/PoliciesProcedures/Pages/DispPol.aspx?PID=110> .

Academic Honesty:

All students should consult the information provided by the [Office of Judicial Affairs](#) regarding avoiding cheating and plagiarism in particular and academic dishonesty in general (see the [Academic Integrity Undergraduate Handbook](#) and [Information for Students](#)). If in doubt about what is permitted in this class, ask the instructor.

Students involved in language courses and translation courses should be aware that on-line “translation engines” produce very dubious and unreliable “translations.” **Students in languages courses** should be aware that, while seeking the advice of native or expert speakers is often helpful, **excessive editorial and creative help** in assignments is considered a form of “cheating” that violates the code of student conduct with dire consequences.

An instructor or coordinator who is convinced that a student has handed in work that he or she could not possibly reproduce without outside assistance is obliged, out of consideration of fairness to other students, to report the case to the Associate Dean of the Faculty. See the [Academic Discipline Process](#).

Recording of Lectures:

Audio or video recording of lectures, labs, seminars or any other teaching environment by students is allowed only with the prior written consent of the instructor or as a part of an approved accommodation plan. Recorded material is to be used solely for personal study, and is not to be used or distributed for any other purpose without prior written consent from the content author(s).

Attendance, Absences, and Missed Grade Components:

Regular attendance is essential for optimal performance in any course. In cases of potentially excusable absences due to illness or domestic affliction, notify your instructor by e-mail within two days. Regarding absences that may be excusable and procedures for addressing course components missed as a result, consult sections 23.3(1) and 23.5.6 of the University Calendar. Be aware that unexcused absences will result in partial or total loss of the grade for the “attendance and participation” component(s) of a course, as well as for any assignments that are not handed-in or completed as a result.

In this course, MLCS 299 students are expected to participate in discussions. Students should have their reading done ahead of time and be prepared to participate actively to help them master and retain the material. Questions and discussion during lecture are welcome.

Policy for Late Assignments:

Students who consult in advance with an instructor regarding contingencies preventing the timely completion of an assignment may, at the discretion of the instructor, be granted an extension. Otherwise, a 33%-per-class-day penalty (one third of a grade, e.g. from B+ to B) will be assessed for each subsequent class-day of lateness.

Student Accessibility Services:

If you have special needs that could affect your performance in this class, please let me know during the first week of the term so that appropriate arrangements can be made. If you are not already registered with Specialized Support & Disability Services, contact their office immediately (2-800 SUB; Email sasrec@ualberta.ca; Email; phone 780-492-3381; WEB www.ssds.ualberta.ca).

Grading:

Marks for assignments, tests, and exams are given in percentages, to which letter grades are also assigned, according to the table below (“**MLCS Undergraduate Grading Scale**”). The percentage mark resulting from the entire term work then produces the final letter grade for the course.

“MLCS Undergraduate Grading Scale”

Letter	%	Pts	Descriptor
A+	95-100%	4.0	Outstanding: Superior performance showing understanding and knowledge of the subject matter far exceeding expectations.
A	90-94%	4.0	Excellent: Superior performance showing comprehensive understanding of subject matter.
A-	86-89%	3.7	Very good: Clearly above average performance with complete knowledge of subject matter.
B+	82-85%	3.3	Very good
B	75-81%	3.0	Good: average performance with knowledge of subject matter generally complete.
B-	70-74%	2.7	Good
C+	66-69%	2.3	Satisfactory: Basic understanding of the subject matter
C	61-65%	2.0	Satisfactory
C-	58-60%	1.7	Satisfactory
D+	55-57%	1.3	Minimal Pass: Marginal performance; generally insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the subject matter.
D	50-54%	1.0	Minimal Pass: Marginal performance; generally insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the subject matter.
F	0-49%	0.0	Fail: Unsatisfactory performance or failure to meet course requirements.

Books I have read and can recommend without reservation:

Briggs, Robin, *Witches and neighbours: the Social and Cultural Context of European Witchcraft*
 Frankfurter, David, *Evil Incarnate: Rumors of Demonic Conspiracy and Satanic Abuse in History*

Hufford, David J. *The Terror that Comes in the Night: An Experience-centered Study of Supernatural Assault Traditions.*

Johns, Andreas, *Baba Yaga, The Ambiguous Mother and Witch of Russian Folktale*

Kivelson, Valeria, *Desperate Magic: The Moral Economy of Witchcraft in 17th century Russia*

Linguist, Galina, *Conjuring Hope: Healing and Magic in Contemporary Russia*

Macfarlane, Alan, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England*

Rieti, Barbara, *Making Witches: Newfoundland Traditions of Spells and Counter-spells*

Ryan, W. F., *Bathhouse at Midnight: Magic in Russia*

Worobec, Christine, *Possessed: Women, Witches and Demons in Imperial Russia*

For the books below – I have read the book review only:

Almond, Philip C, *The Witches of Warboys: an Extraordinary Story of Sorcery, Sadism and Satanic Possession*

Almond, Philip C, *The Lancashire Witches: a Chronicle of Sorcery and Death on Pendle Hill*

Mackay, Christopher S. (trans.) [*The hammer of witches: a complete translation of the Malleus maleficarum*](#)

Magliocco, Sabina, *Witching Culture: Folklore and Neo-paganism in America*

There are many other books as well. The above is a start. If you would like to explore something other than what is listed here, let me know and we will discuss the possible reading.