



**LNDN THTR 3314**

## **WITCHCRAFT AND MAGICAL PERFORMANCE IN LONDON**

### **CAPA LONDON PROGRAM**

#### **Course Description**

*Witchcraft and Magical Performance in London* will chart the representation of the occult in the city from the Early Modern period to the present day. Focusing particularly on the performance and presentation of occult and magical phenomena and its reception by the general public and social elites during specific time periods, the course will offer students the opportunity to understand why magic has fascinated us and continues to do so. Class study will be combined with site visits to venues such as the Society for Psychical Research or the British Magic Circle, and a live performance of the magical or ghostly in London.

#### **Course Aims**

The course will explore topics as diverse as witchcraft and its representation on the Early Modern stage; the rise of magic and magical performance in the eighteenth century; the growth of female mediumship in the Victorian period; Escapology and the presentation of the magical body on the stage. These topics will be investigated using a range of analytical methods, including Freud's concept of The Uncanny and modern anthropological theories regarding death, burial and liminal states of being. Class work and field work will combine to offer a rich educational experience of this fascinating and growing area of scholarly research.

#### **Requirements and Prerequisites**

The course is appropriate for undergraduates from a wide range of disciplines. There is an emphasis on performance and the dramatic and artistic representation of the occult that would appeal to students of theatre arts (although no practical performance is required by the student!) and art history, whilst the use of contemporary documents of the various periods will certainly interest students of literature and history. The construction of witchcraft and mediumship will appeal to the student of cultural or gender studies. This is by no means an exhaustive list, and all that is ultimately required is an interest in the subject and desire to explore it via class-based discussion and exploratory field study.

#### **Learning Outcomes**

- a Students will understand the idea of magic in a number of different time periods
- b Students will use a selection of analytical tools (psychoanalytical, anthropological) to understand the presentation of the magical and occult
- c Students will experience a number of performance forms and genres and be able to appreciate how and why they present the magical and occult
- d Students will have encountered a variety of practical presentations of the magical and occult, understanding such presentations in their appropriate context
- e Students will understand how ideas of the magical contend with, and often overlap, those of the scientific

### Developmental Outcomes

Students should demonstrate: responsibility & accountability, independence & interdependence, goal orientation, self-confidence, resilience, appreciation of differences.

### Class Methodology

The class will comprise of a series of lectures, field studies, student-led presentations inspired by the texts and events we encounter, small-group problem-solving exercises, films and class discussions. Final assessment will occur via class participation, a class presentation and written response, and a paper comprising a written response to a published prompt statement.

### Field Components

CAPA provides the unique opportunity to learn about the city through direct, guided experience. Participation in field activities for this course is required. You will actively explore the Global City in which you are currently living. Furthermore, you will have the chance to collect useful information that will be an invaluable resource for the essays/papers/projects assigned in this course.

### The assigned field component(s) are:

A visit to a play that uses magic or illusion (ie The Woman in Black or a live magic show)

A visit to a London cemetery

A meeting/demonstration by an actor involved in a show with magic or a working magician

Students are also strongly encouraged to participate in **co-curricular** program activities, among which the following are suggested:

Additional visits to London shows and theatre tours listed on the My Education calendar

### Mid-Term & Final Exams

The **mid-term exam** consists of:

An examination based on class notes and readings from classes 1-5

The **final exam** consists of:

A class presentation on the history of a magical performance or illusion (ie Hamlet's Ghost, the Witches in Macbeth, the performance of Ariel in The Tempest or a Victorian illusion) and its contexts.

A 2000 word paper response to a prompt statement issued in week 9 of the semester. Example question: 'To what extent is Freud's concept of the Uncanny relevant to modern presentations of the 'haunted house'.

### Assessment/Grading Policy

Descriptor	Alpha	UK	US	GPA
Excellent	A	75+	93+	4.0
	A-	70-74	90-92	3.7
Good	B+	66-69	87-89	3.3
	B	63-65	83-86	3.0
	B-	60-62	80-82	2.7
Average	C+	56-59	77-79	2.3
	C	53-55	73-76	2.0
Below Average / Poor	C-	50-52	70-72	1.7
	D+	46-49	67-69	1.3
	D	40-45	60-66	0.7 1.0

Fail	F	<40	<60	0
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### Grade Breakdown and Assessment of Learning Outcomes

Assessment Task	Grade %	Learning Outcomes	Due Date
Class participation	10%	a, b, c, d, e	Weekly
Mid-term exam Based on class lecture notes and readings	20%	a, b, e	Week 6, based on Weeks 1-5
Presentation Task Based on an aspect of the course/performance or illusion	20%	b, c, e	Week 12
Final Paper (2000 words) Response to a published prompt statement	50%	a, b, c, d, e	Week 14

### Dress Code

Students will be advised regarding the dress code for the field visits

### Course Materials

Excerpts from texts and articles on the various topics will be supplied in class. It is not necessary to purchase additional text books for this course. Online resources will be made available where appropriate via CAPA's online learning facility CANVAS.

### Textbooks and Recommended Readings

Freud, S., trans. McLintock, D. *The Uncanny*

McGarry, M. *Ghosts of Futures Past* (California)

Oppenheim, J. *The Other World* (Cambridge)

Owen, A. *The Darkened Room* (Chicago)

Parker-Pearson, M. *The Archaeology of Death and Burial* (Sutton)

Thomas, K. *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (Peregrine)

### Course Calendar

#### Week 1: The Happy Dead

In this first class, we will examine the key terms of the course and consider its broad overview. We'll share our hopes for the course, then focus on the first of the analytical tools we'll be using during the next few weeks: Rites of Passage. What does this mean, and how can we see it demonstrated? How do we honour those who have 'passed' – and make sure they don't want to come back for a visit?!

Reading: *On Rites of Passage* by Victor Turner

*The Archaeology of Death and Burial* by Mike Parker-Pearson

#### Week 2: Haunted Places, Haunted Subjects

Here we will discuss the significance of Freud's work *The Uncanny*, and begin to apply it as an analytical tool. The most popular location for spirits is, of course, the 'haunted house', but why is it houses that are haunted, and why does the domestic location lend itself so regularly to invasion by the supernatural?

Film: *The Haunting*, Dir. Robert Wise (excerpt)

Reading: *The Uncanny* by Sigmund Freud

**Field Study THE WOMAN IN BLACK** at 8pm at the Fortune Theatre, Russell St. Covent Garden. You'll be attending this stage version of Susan Hill's extraordinary ghost story.

### **Week 3: Boundaries and the Liminal**

Our focus this week is on the presentation of the ghost in the Early Modern period, with a particular focus on Shakespeare's presentation of the ghostly and the undead. What did audiences in the seventeenth century make of the Ghost in *Hamlet*, and how did his appearance challenge Protestant orthodoxies offered by the period's ideological elites? We'll also take some time to discuss THE WOMAN IN BLACK!

Text: *Murder Most Foul: Hamlet Through The Ages* by David Bevington (Chapter 2).

Film: *Hamlet*, Dir. Laurence Olivier (ghost scenes)

Reading: *Religion and the Decline of Magic* by Keith Thomas (Chapters 14 & 15).

### **Week 4: Field Study Two: HIGHGATE CEMETERY**

For this class, we'll meet at one of the most atmospheric venues in London: Highgate Cemetery. We will take a tour of the East Cemetery, which contains a range of beautiful and bizarre mausoleums, venturing deep into London's 'necropolis'. We'll consider evidence of Victorian grief and mourning culture, and hear what's been termed 'a modern work of folklore': *The search for the Vampire of Highgate!*

### **Week 5: Witchcraft and Witch-finding**

What was witchcraft, and how did it come to be, literally, demonized? How did simple, rural practices designed to assist nature and gain divine favour morph into the 'maleficium' of the English witch trials of the Civil War period? We'll look at an early English play to understand the complex relationships of magic and faith.

Text: *The Second Shepherds Play* (excerpt: Mak's spell)

Reading: *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare

A test will take place in the final 45 minutes of this class, based on the readings so far.

### **Week 6: Magic and Malice**

The witch: an image that has haunted the western imagination since the *Medea* of Euripides. Usually a woman, the witch 'does harm remotely'. But how did witchcraft come to be gendered, and were there male witches, too? The idea of what a witch happened to be was far from stable, and in the work of Reginald Scott, we find a definition of the witch that appears extraordinarily perceptive...

Text: *The Discovery of Witchcraft* by Reginald Scott (excerpt)

Film: *The Pendle Witch Trials*

A test based upon the readings and powerpoints so far will be held in the second half of this class.

### **Week 7: SEMESTER BREAK**

### **Week 8: Magic, Science or Sorcery?**

Marlowe's Dr Faustus and Shakespeare's Prospero offer us very different images of the powerful mage operating upon the boundary between science and magic. In this class, we'll consider the importance of the mage and the origins of the 'natural scientist'. What exactly did the development of science owe to magic and occult practice?

Film: *Doctor Faustus*

Reading: *Ghosts of Futures Past* by Molly McGarry (Chapter 1); *The Darkened Room* by Alex Owen (Chapter 2).

### **Week 9: Mediumship: Tea and Table-Turning**

This week, we will look at the astonishing case of the Fox Sisters, American teenagers who invented quite possibly by accident, a new religion: Spiritualism. Exporting the religion to London, the 'séance' became a social event for adventurous Londoners. Far from the sinister activity of modern horror movies, the original séance was a means of reconnecting the living and departed family via Tea and Table-Turning!

Text: *Report on Spiritualism by the London Dialectical Society* (Accounts of Home and the Davenportes)

Reading: *The Other World: Spiritualism and Psychical Research in England* by Janet Oppenheim (Chapters 1 and 2)

### **Week 10: Mesmerism and Materialisation: Victorian Ghosts**

During the late-Georgian and Victorian periods, the ghost became a staple in novels, short-stories and plays of the period. But what was this new ghost like, and how did it reflect anxieties about philosophy and science? At what point did science purge itself of 'the supernatural' to the point where interested scientists 'lost caste' by researching in this field?

Film: *The Stone Tape* (BBC Film)

Text: *The Darkened Room: Women, Power and Spiritualism in Late-Victorian England* by Alex Owen (Star Mediums).

### **Week 11: WORKSHOP: HOME AND HOUDINI, A MAGIC MASTERCLASS WITH ILLUSIONIST DARREN LANG (tbc)**

In this class, we welcome one of the UK's finest magicians and designers of illusions, Darren Lang, to class at CAPA. Darren has performed a wide-range of magic acts and also designed theatrical illusions for shows in London's West End and in the regions. He will show us some classic illusions originating from the French magician Houdin and help us to understand how magicians create the impossible, and what compelled them to do so in the first place.

### **Week 12: The Ghosts of Modernity**

In the twentieth century, the Victorian fascination with providing spaces for the dead receded, and Modernism sought to de-clutter spaces and put the dead back where they belong. But an idea is difficult to bury entirely, and in the cinema of the twentieth century, the ghostly returned with a spectacular and complex vengeance. Using Cocteau's extraordinary film *Orpheus* as our central text, we will examine the journey of the ghost in Modernity.

Film: *Orpheus* by Jean Cocteau

Your presentations will take place in this class.

### **Week 13: A Modern Haunting**

In this class, we'll look at the creation of modern forms of folklore. Using the stories we learned about The Highgate Vampire, we'll examine how the folk story is alive and kicking. We'll set that story alongside the telling of a more recent one, London's: Enfield Poltergeist. How does popular culture interact with personal experience and reportage to create modern myths and fables?

Film: *The Enfield Poltergeist* (excerpts)

TV: BBC Nationwide (1977) *The Enfield Haunting*

#### **Week 14: Is Anybody There?**

In this class we will draw together the strands of our study in the presentation of the occult and the magical and consider how ideas of remote power and the ghostly continue to fascinate us in the age of quantum physics and the Hadron Large Collider. Is the occult simply science we don't yet know, or does our interest in it say something more emotionally revealing about our need for belief in something greater than ourselves? Finally, we'll consider one of the great works of the modern popular occult: **Harry Potter!**

Your final paper is due in this class.

#### **Attendance, Participation and Student Responsibilities**

**Attendance:** CAPA has a mandatory attendance policy. Attendance is taken at the beginning of every class. Unauthorized absence from class will result in a reduction of the final grade and potentially a failure for the course.

**Missing classes for medical reasons:** If you need to miss a class for medical reasons or for a family emergency, **you must send an e-mail** to let the Associate Director of Academic Affairs (ADAA) know at least one hour in advance of your class or meeting at the following e-mail: [excused.absence@capa.org](mailto:excused.absence@capa.org). Note that calling the CAPA Centre (0207 370 7389) is acceptable only if you do not temporarily have access to the internet. An e-mail is still required as quickly as you can get access to the internet again. You will need to provide evidence of the reason for your absence. Unexcused absences will result in a grade reduction. In the event of a missed class or field trip, it is your responsibility to contact your instructor and make up any missed assignments.

**Class Participation:** Students are expected to participate actively and critically in class discussions, and the participation portion of the class will be graded accordingly. Students must read assignments BEFORE the class, and come in on time.

Participation is a vital part of your grade: students are expected to participate orally in seminars and in online forums and discussions in a critical and evaluative manner; to interact with the faculty and fellow students with respect and tolerance; and to actively engage in discussion. Derogatory or inflammatory comments about the cultures, perspectives or attitudes of others in the class will not be tolerated.

**Academic Integrity:** A high level of responsibility and academic honesty is expected. Because the value of an academic course depends upon the absolute integrity of the work done by the student, it is imperative that a student demonstrates a high standard of individual honor in his or her scholastic work and class behavior. Plagiarism and cheating will result in dismissal from the program. See the Handbook of CAPA Academic Policies for more information and resources on plagiarism.

**Use of electronic equipment in class:** All devices such as laptops, i-pods, i-pads, netbooks, notebooks and tablets, smartphones, cell phones, etc. are **NOT** allowed unless you have express permission from the faculty or you have been instructed to do so. If you require an accommodation to use any type of electronic equipment, inform the Associate Director of Academic Affairs at the beginning of Term.

**Use of Electronic Translators:** In Language courses students are NOT allowed to use electronic translators for writing texts in the target language: those submitting compositions and texts of whatever kind translated in such a fashion will receive a final F grade for the course.

**Late Submission:** Late submission of papers, projects, journal entries, pieces of homework and portfolios is only permitted with prior approval. A request must be made to the relevant Faculty member no later than two days prior to the due date. Late submission without prior approval will result in a full alpha grade penalty. In either case, work cannot be submitted after feedback has been provided to the rest of the class on the relevant assessment or one week after the due date whichever comes first, after which point a grade of F will be given for the assessment.

**Behaviour during Examinations:** During examinations, you must do your own work. Unless specifically instructed by the lecturer or instructor, talking during an exam is not permitted, nor may you compare papers, copy from others, or collaborate in any way. Any failure to abide by examination rules will result in failure of the exam, and may lead to failure of the course and disciplinary action.