

# HST125 History of Magic

Fall 2021  
Schedule: T R 13:30-14:45

Professor: Clare Griffin  
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Online Office Hours: By Arrangement



An early modern European engraving of a man conducting a magic ritual. Image from Wellcome Collection  
<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/jst9ydr>

**Course Description:**

Belief in magic and divination has been common to many societies. This course introduces students to the long history of magic, starting in the ancient world and working through medieval and early modern magic to end with modern forms of magic including stage magic, drawing comparisons between different societies on the basis of similar beliefs and practices. This is a primary source focused course, drawing upon documents that have been published as well as online materials. The historiography of magic will be introduced in lectures, whilst essential readings will be taken almost exclusively from historical documents on the practice and the prosecution of magic. Students will learn to read these documents in a sensitive and culturally relativistic way, producing source analysis papers in which they will develop their skills of close reading and analysis of historical documents.

**Course aims**

- 1) To provide students with a basic knowledge of the history of magical and divinatory practices and their prosecution.
- 2) To introduce students to the wide range of primary source material that has been made available on the history of magic, and teach them how to approach both traditional sourcebook publications as well as online databases of historical sources.
- 3) To familiarize students with the major scholarly debates surrounding topics in the history of magic, and the ways in which scholars have used sources from the history of magic to understand the social, political, and cultural histories of the societies producing those sources.
- 4) To enhance students' critical thinking and writing abilities, in particular with regards to interpreting and analysing a wide range of primary source materials.

**Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs):**

- 1) Display a knowledge of historical magical and divinatory practices and the historical prosecutions of magical practitioners, and use the relevant terminology correctly. [A1, A2]
- 2) Demonstrate an ability to analyze primary materials, and draw connections between them and between primary sources and historiographical material presented in lectures in order to complete source analysis assignments. [B1, B2, B3, B4, B5]
- 3) Organise themselves and others to take selective and purposeful notes on essential readings, complete take-home assignments in a timely fashion, and collaborate with classmates to complete in-class groupwork. [B6, C2, C3]

4) Appreciate and value different points of view on the reality and advisability of magic and divination. [C4]

## **Class Policies:**

### **Students with Disabilities:**

NU is committed to inclusive education, including making sure that students with both visible disabilities (such as the need to use a wheelchair) and invisible disabilities (such as chronic illnesses and learning disabilities) are given the best chance to succeed. If you have any requests that would improve your ability to succeed in this course, email your instructor at the start of the semester and they will do what is possible to make reasonable accommodations. Any conversation on this issue will remain strictly confidential. To learn more about NU's commitment to accessible and inclusive education, go to the following page: <https://nu.kz.libguides.com/DisabilitySupport/>

### **Policy on Deadlines and Extensions:**

Homework will be completed every week before Thursday's class. You will write two source analysis papers (deadlines below in the schedule). You are strongly recommended to try and hand in the assignments when recommended, as otherwise you will get behind on the course and will struggle to submit assignments before the final deadline.

LATE SUBMISSION: The recommended deadline for source analysis paper 1 is Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> September, but you can submit it by 26<sup>th</sup> September without penalty. If you submit it after that you will lose 2 marks for each day that you are late, unless you have received an extension from me. You should try and ask for an extension before the deadline, but I will still consider such requests after the deadline.

FINAL DEADLINE: Grading needs to be finished by a specific point in order for grades to go to the registrar on time. For source analysis paper 2, you *\*must\** ask for an extension, but the extension will only be for a few days.

## **Assignments and Grading:**

### **Assignments as percentage of grades:**

Attendance/class replacement exercise – 10%

Groupwork marking a mock source analysis paper – 10%

Weekly homework - 20%

Source analysis paper 1 - 30%

Source analysis paper 2 - 30%

**Grading (also called marking):**

These are the general grading criteria applicable to all assignments.

Grade	Grade Range	Short Definition	Grade Description
A	95%-100%	Excellent, exceeds the highest standards in the assignment or course	A- class work will be distinguished in some or all of the following ways: originality of thought or interpretation; independence of judgement; wide-ranging reading, often beyond that required; intelligent use of primary sources; historiographical awareness and criticism; clarity and rigor of argument and structure; clarity and elegance of style; unusual and apt examples; comparison e.g. with themes and topics covered in other modules.
A-	90%-94.9%	Excellent; meets the highest standards for the assignment or course	
B+	85%-89.9%	Very good; meets high standards for the assignment or course	B-class work will be distinguished in some or all of the following ways: clarity and rigor of argument and structure, well directed at the title; thorough coverage of recommended reading; intelligent use of primary sources; historiographical awareness; well-chosen examples; comparison e.g. with themes and topics covered in other modules; clarity of style.
B	80%-84.9%	Good; meets most of the standards for the assignment or course	
B-	75%-79.9%	More than adequate; shows some reasonable command of the material	
C+	70%-74.9%	Acceptable; meets basic standards for the assignment or course	C-class work will have some of the following features: some evidence of knowledge and understanding, but limitations in clarity and rigor of argument and structure; restricted coverage of reading; restricted use of primary sources; weaknesses of style; failure to address the title set.
C	65%-69.9%	Acceptable; meets some of the basic standards for the assignment or course	
C-	60%-64.9%	Acceptable, while falling short of meeting basic standards in several ways	
D+	55%-59.9%	Minimally acceptable	D-class work will have some of the following features: very limited knowledge and understanding; confusion in argument or structure; insufficient reading; confused style; failure to address the title set.
D	50%-54.9%	Minimally acceptable; lowest passing	
F	0-49.9%	Did not satisfy the basic requirements of the course	Work with very serious deficiencies that falls below the required standard, failing to address the literature with the

			seriousness required and with an inadequate grasp of the subject matter and analysis
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### **Information on Assignments:**

#### **Attendance/class replacement exercise: [10% of final grade]**

Every week you should EITHER attend the live class OR hand in the replacement paper responding to a prompt that will be posted that week. If you attend the live class you must be present for at least 40 minutes of the session otherwise you will be counted as absent. Excluding week one, you will get 1 point per week for attendance, up to a maximum of 10 points (so, you can miss 3 weeks of class without it affecting your grade). If you have a medical excuse for a period you will not be counted as absent for that period; if you miss more than 3 weeks of class for some other reason, speak to me about it and we can discuss if a replacement exercise is appropriate to make up the missing points.

#### **Groupwork marking a mock source analysis paper: [10% of final grade]**

In your study groups, you will be given a mock source analysis paper (written by the professor) that analyses a text you have seen during the course. You will also be given the same marking guidance that the professor will use to mark your paper. As a group, you should consider both the strong and weak points of the paper, decide on a grade, and write a short report explaining why you gave it that grade.

Marking:

10 marks – submission of a report of at least 200 words that gives the mock paper a grade and clearly justifies that grade using the marking guidance provided

6 marks - submission of a report of at least 200 words that gives the mock paper a grade but only makes a limited attempt to justify that grade, such as not referring specifically to the marking guidance in deciding the mark or referring to it inaccurately

4 marks - submission of a report that gives the mock paper a grade but does not justify that grade using the marking guidance provided

0 marks – assignment not submitted

#### **Weekly group homework: [20% of final grade]**

At the start of the course you will be put into a small group. Every week you will complete a task before the Thursday class, such as discussing a source, finding an item in a museum, or writing a short text. This discussion will take place in a Moodle forum for your group which I will have access to. You will then be asked to give an informal presentation on what you did to the rest of the class on Thursday, with one or more group members taking the role of “spokesperson” for the week. Groups will usually receive marks as a group, but if I discover one or more members of the group are not participating in the activities then I may reduce their grade accordingly, including giving them a 0 if they do not participate at all.

Marking:

Groups will receive one point per completed weekly Moodle forum, and one point per informal presentation, up to a maximum of 20 points. So, you can miss several of these and have it not affect your grade. If you get very behind as a group or as an individual you can write to me and request a make-up exercise.

**Source analysis papers: [30% of final grade for each paper]**

You will write two source analysis papers for this course, each of which will be worth 30% of your final grade. Each paper will be a minimum of 1,300 words and will answer all the questions set out in the source analysis paper guidance document.

Letter Grade	Mark out of 30	Grade Description
A	28.5-30	An excellent source analysis paper that meets the minimum word requirement, addresses all the questions in the guidance, and makes insightful remarks as to the value of the source for historical analysis, noting both how it is useful and how it is limited. Papers receiving this grade will have a substantial and considered answer to the question regarding the significance of the source for the history of magic, showing a thorough knowledge of the source and of the issues of the history of magic discussed in the course.
A-	27-28.4	As for grade "A" but with a weaker answer on the significance of the source for the history of magic.
B+	25.5-26.9	A good source analysis paper that meets the minimum word requirement, addresses all the questions in the guidance, and makes insightful remarks as to the value of the source for historical analysis, noting both how it is useful and how it is limited. Papers receiving this grade will make a good attempt to answer to the question regarding the significance of the source for the history of magic, but with a more limited consideration of how the source fits into broader trends in the history of magic than for "A" grade papers.
B	24-25.4	A good source analysis paper that meets the minimum word requirement, addresses all the questions in the guidance, and makes reasonable remarks as to the value of the source for historical analysis, noting both how it is useful and how it is limited. Papers receiving this grade will make some attempt to answer to the question regarding the significance of the source for the history of magic, but with a more limited consideration of how the source fits into broader trends in the history of magic than for "B+" grade papers.
B-	22.5-23.9	As above, but with weaker answers across all questions

C+	21-22.4	Submission of a full-length paper that answers all questions and has one of the following issues: a large number of small factual errors or several substantial errors; very limited answers to questions 5-7; makes an unsuitable comparison for question 5.
C	19.5-20.9	Submission of a full-length paper that answers all questions and has at least one of the following issues: a large number of small factual errors or several substantial errors; very limited answers to questions 5-7; makes an unsuitable comparison for question 5.
C-	18-19.4	Submission of a full-length paper that answers all questions and has at least one of the following issues: does not answer one or more questions; multiple small factual errors or a single substantial error; somewhat short and limited answers to questions 5-7 that show little insight into the question; makes an unsuitable comparison for question 5.
D+	16.5-17.9	Submission of a paper with at least two of the following issues: under the word count by more than 200 words; does not answer one or more questions; multiple small factual errors or a single substantial error; short, limited answers to questions 5-7 showing little insight into the questions; makes an unsuitable comparison for question 5.
D	15-16.4	Submission of a paper with at least three of the following issues: under the word count by more than 200 words; does not answer one or more questions; multiple small factual errors or a single substantial error; short, very limited answers to questions 5-7 or answers that show a misunderstanding of the question; makes an unsuitable comparison for question 5.
F	0-14.9	Paper not submitted or submission of a plagiarised paper.

### **Academic misconduct policy**

Academic and personal misconduct by any student in this course will be dealt with according to the requirements and procedures in the Student Code of Conduct for Nazarbayev University. Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated. Students should be familiar with the university's official statement on plagiarism:

Plagiarism is intentionally or carelessly presenting the work of another as one's own. It includes submitting an assignment purporting to be the student's original work which has wholly or in part been created by another person. It also includes the presentation of the work, ideas, representations, or words of another person without customary and proper acknowledgement of sources. Plagiarism occurs when a person:

1. Directly copies one or more sentences of another person's written work without proper citation. If another writer's words are used, you must place quotation marks around the quoted material and include a footnote or other indication of the source of the quotation. This includes cut and paste from the internet or other electronic sources;
2. Changes words but copies the sentence structure of a source without giving credit to the original source, or closely paraphrases one or more paragraphs without acknowledgement of the source of the ideas, or uses graphs, figures, drawings, charts or other visual/audio materials without acknowledging the source or the permission of the author;
3. Submits false or altered information in any academic exercise. This may include making up data for an experiment, altering data, citing nonexistent articles, contriving sources, etc.;
4. Turns in all or part of assignment done by another student and claims it as their own;
5. Uses a paper writing service, has another student write a paper, or uses a foreign language translation and submits it as their own original work.

(Nazarbayev University Student Code of Conduct)

## **Essential Readings and Other Resources**

### **Readings:**

Students are required to complete all the weekly readings. All weekly readings will also be provided on the Moodle page for this course.

### **Resources:**

You will find a glossary (a list of useful terms) and other resources you may find helpful here:

<https://routledgetextbooks.com/textbooks/9781138808102/>

## Schedule

This is the planned schedule of work for this course. As far as is possible, I will try to stick to this, but I may make changes to this if I feel they are necessary. Any changes will be announced as soon as possible.

Week	Topic	Readings	Assignments
<b>Week 1</b>	<b>Introduction to Magic</b>		
		1. Introduction lecture 2. <a href="https://www.historyextra.com/period/ancient-history/magic-history-witchcraft-shamanism/">https://www.historyextra.com/period/ancient-history/magic-history-witchcraft-shamanism/</a> 3. Syllabus 4. live class over Zoom Thursday 19 <sup>th</sup> August OR class replacement exercise	HOMEWORK: Syllabus quiz
<b>Week 2</b>	<b>Reading the Sources</b>		
		1. Guide to reading primary sources 2. Lecture on how to analyse a source 3. "A Sorcery Trial from the Second Century CE," from Levack, B.P., 2015. <i>The witchcraft sourcebook</i> . Routledge. 4. live class over Zoom Thursday 26 <sup>th</sup> August OR class replacement exercise	HOMEWORK: Small group discussions of the text
<b>Week 3</b>	<b>Astrology, Divination and Necromancy</b>		
		1. Lecture on divination 2. <a href="https://www.bl.uk/a-history-of-magic/articles/whats-my-thai-horoscope">https://www.bl.uk/a-history-of-magic/articles/whats-my-thai-horoscope</a> 3. "Personal Daily Horoscope" on <a href="https://www.astro.com/horoscopes">https://www.astro.com/horoscopes</a> 3. Sections from "Necromancy," from Ogden, Daniel. <i>Magic, witchcraft, and ghosts in the Greek and Roman worlds: a sourcebook</i> . Oxford University Press, USA, 2002. 4. Live class over Zoom Thursday 2 <sup>nd</sup> September OR class replacement exercise	HOMEWORK: Small groups analyse an assigned section of the reading

<b>Week 4</b>	<b>Shang Dynasty Bone Oracles</b>		
	Shang Dynasty Bone Oracles	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. "Chapter One: East Asia to 1045 BC," from Schneewind, Sarah. <i>An Outline History of East Asia to 1200</i>. eScholarship, University of California, 2020.</li> <li>2. Eno, Robert. "Deities and ancestors in early oracle inscriptions." <i>Religions of China in practice</i> (1996): 41-51.</li> <li>3. "Oracle-Bone Inscriptions of the Late Shang Dynasty," from <i>Sources of Chinese Tradition</i>, compiled by Wm. Theodore de Bary and Irene Bloom, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., vol. 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 8, 11-12.</li> <li>4. <a href="http://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-CUL-00001-00155/4">http://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-CUL-00001-00155/4</a></li> <li>5. Live class over Zoom Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> September OR class replacement exercise</li> </ol>	SOURCE ANALYSIS: Groupwork marking of mock source analysis papers
<b>Week 5</b>	<b>Ancient Jewish Magic</b>		
		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lecture on Jewish Magic</li> <li>2. <a href="https://jnir.div.ed.ac.uk/primary-sources/biblical/jewish-aramaic-incantation-bowls/">https://jnir.div.ed.ac.uk/primary-sources/biblical/jewish-aramaic-incantation-bowls/</a></li> <li>3. <a href="http://humanities-research.exeter.ac.uk/vmba/">http://humanities-research.exeter.ac.uk/vmba/</a></li> <li>4. Levene, Dan. "Calvariae Magicae: The Berlin, Philadelphia and Moussaieff Skulls." <i>Orientalia</i> 75, no. 4 (2006): 359-379.</li> <li>5. Live class over Zoom Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> September OR class replacement exercise</li> </ol>	HOMEWORK: Small groupwork analysis of individual magic bowls or skulls
<b>Week 6</b>	<b>Medieval European Magic and Illusions</b>		
		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lecture on Medieval European Magic</li> <li>2. Chapter 3, Kieckhefer, Richard. <i>Forbidden rites: a necromancer's manual of the fifteenth century</i>. Penn State Press, 1998.</li> <li>3. Live class over Zoom Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> September OR class replacement exercise</li> </ol>	HOMEWORK: Small groups analyse an assigned section of the reading  Source Analysis Paper 1

			DEADLINE: 11:59, 22 <sup>nd</sup> September
<b>Week 7</b>	<b>Religion and Magic in Ethiopia</b>		
		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lecture on Magic and Religion in Medieval Ethiopia</li> <li><a href="https://blogs.bl.uk/asian-and-african/2017/12/a-handbook-of-ethiopian-magic-incantations-and-talisman-art-.html">https://blogs.bl.uk/asian-and-african/2017/12/a-handbook-of-ethiopian-magic-incantations-and-talisman-art-.html</a></li> <li><a href="https://blogs.bl.uk/asian-and-african/2020/08/magic-and-divination.html">https://blogs.bl.uk/asian-and-african/2020/08/magic-and-divination.html</a></li> <li><a href="https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/heal/hd_heal.htm">https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/heal/hd_heal.htm</a></li> <li>Derillo, Eyob, "Case Study, Traveling Medicine: Medieval Ethiopian Amulet Scrolls and Practitioners' Handbooks," in <i>Toward a Global Middle Ages: Encountering the World Through Illuminated Manuscripts</i>.</li> <li>Live class over Zoom Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> September OR class replacement exercise</li> </ol>	
<b>FALL BREAK</b>	<b>FALL BREAK</b>	<b>FALL BREAK</b>	<b>FALL BREAK</b>
<b>Week 8</b>	<b>Image Magic and Magic Objects</b>		
		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lecture: image magic and magical objects</li> <li><a href="http://journal.sciencemuseum.ac.uk/browse/issue-11/a-history-of-amulets-in-ten-objects/">http://journal.sciencemuseum.ac.uk/browse/issue-11/a-history-of-amulets-in-ten-objects/</a></li> <li><a href="https://www.theguardian.com/books/2020/nov/06/the-brutish-museums-by-dan-hicks-review-colonial-violence-and-cultural-restitution">https://www.theguardian.com/books/2020/nov/06/the-brutish-museums-by-dan-hicks-review-colonial-violence-and-cultural-restitution</a></li> <li>Museum website assigned by group</li> <li>Live class over Zoom Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> October OR class replacement exercise</li> </ol>	HOMEWORK: Small groupwork – research a museum or library database and find interesting entries
<b>Week 9</b>	<b>Voodoo Dolls</b>		
		1. Lecture on the history of voodoo dolls	HOMEWORK:

		<p>2. Armitage, Natalie. "European and African figural ritual magic: The beginnings of the voodoo doll myth." <i>The Materiality of Magic: An Artifactual Investigation into Ritual Practices and Popular Beliefs</i> 85 (2015).</p> <p>3. <a href="https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/320053">https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/320053</a></p> <p>4. <a href="https://museumofwitchcraftandmagic.co.uk/object/poppet-curse-4/">https://museumofwitchcraftandmagic.co.uk/object/poppet-curse-4/</a></p> <p>5. Assigned museum group task</p> <p>6. Live class over Zoom Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> October OR class replacement exercise</p>	<p>Small groupwork – research a museum or library database and find interesting entries, write analysis of them</p>
<b>Week 10</b>	<b>Shamans in the Russian Empire</b>		
		<p>1. Lecture on Shamanism in the Russian Empire</p> <p>2. Franz, Marisa Karyl. "A Visitor's Guide to Shamans and Shamanism: The Kunstkamera's Russian and Asian Ethnographic Collections in the Late Imperial Era." <i>Sibirica</i> 19, no. 1 (2020): 41-56.</p> <p>3. Online search of the Kunstkamera collection <a href="http://collection.kunstkamera.ru/">http://collection.kunstkamera.ru/</a> OPTIONAL: Find the "virtual tour" on the Kunstkamera site and take a tour of a gallery</p> <p>4. <a href="https://www.amnh.org/exhibitions/permanent/northwest-coast/tlingit/tlingit-collection/shaman-s-equipment">https://www.amnh.org/exhibitions/permanent/northwest-coast/tlingit/tlingit-collection/shaman-s-equipment</a></p> <p>5. Live class over Zoom Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> October OR class replacement exercise</p>	<p>HOMEWORK: Small groupwork – find two objects from the Kunstkamera relating to magic and be ready to talk about them in class</p>
<b>Week 11</b>	<b>Scepticism</b>		
		<p>1. Lecture: premodern and modern scepticism</p> <p>2. "Scot: The Unreality of Witchcraft," from Levack, B.P., 2015. <i>The witchcraft sourcebook</i>. Routledge.</p> <p>3. Harry Houdini, "How I Unmask the Spirit Fakers", <i>Popular Science</i> (November 1925), 12-14 and 152-156.</p> <p>4. Harry Houdini, "How I Do My 'Spirit Tricks'," <i>Popular Science</i> (December 1925), 12-13 and 150-155.</p> <p>5. Live class over Zoom Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> November OR class replacement exercise</p>	<p>HOMEWORK: write a letter to Houdini by one of the mediums he unmasked</p>

<b>Week 12</b>	<b>Early Modern Witchcraft Trials</b>		
		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. LECTURE: witchcraft, trials and changing laws on magic</li> <li>2. Frias: "The Unreliability of Confessions" from Levack, B.P., 2015. <i>The witchcraft sourcebook</i>. Routledge.</li> <li>3. "A Russian witch-trial at Lukh, 1657," from Levack, B.P., 2015. <i>The witchcraft sourcebook</i>. Routledge.</li> <li>4. Live class over Zoom Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> November OR class replacement exercise</li> </ol>	<p>HOMEWORK:</p> <p>Small groupwork analysis of one of the two texts</p>
<b>Week 13</b>	<b>The Salem Trials</b>		
		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <a href="https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/a-brief-history-of-the-salem-witch-trials-175162489/">https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/a-brief-history-of-the-salem-witch-trials-175162489/</a></li> <li>2. <a href="https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/7x3jbgq/the-true-story-of-tituba-the-slave-at-the-center-of-the-salem-witch-trials">https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/7x3jbgq/the-true-story-of-tituba-the-slave-at-the-center-of-the-salem-witch-trials</a></li> <li>3. Interrogations of Tituba <a href="http://salem.lib.virginia.edu/n125.html">http://salem.lib.virginia.edu/n125.html</a></li> <li>4. "The Apology of the Salem Jury," 1697</li> <li>5. Live class over Zoom Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> November OR class replacement exercise</li> </ol>	<p>HOMEWORK:</p> <p>Small groupwork reply to the apology from the perspective of one of the accused witches</p>
<b>Week 14</b>	<b>Magic on Stage</b>		
		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lecture on stage magic</li> <li>2. Houdini "On Conjuring"</li> <li>3. <a href="https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/art-golden-age-magic-posters-180974304/">https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/art-golden-age-magic-posters-180974304/</a></li> <li>4. Moodle forum on stage magic</li> </ol>	<p>HOMEWORK:</p> <p>Moodle forum on stage magic</p>
<b>Exam Period</b>			
			<p>Source analysis paper 2 DEADLINE: 11:59, Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> December</p>

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