CLE343 Supernatural Beings and Demons of Ancient Egypt

CL-M79 Ancient Egyptian Demonology

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Joint undergraduate level 3 and graduate MA level
Introduction

Ancient Egyptian textual and non-textual evidence bespeaks a wide-spread belief in an indeterminate range of demonic beings that influenced the world of the living and of the dead. This module explores the nature of these liminal entities—both hostile and beneficial—that filled the zones between human, animal, and god, and the methods used by religious scholars to study them. The sources will include texts (such as Coffin Texts, literary texts, spells), representations (on artifacts and tomb walls), and objects (such as ivory wands and apotropaic figurines). The Egypt Centre provides an opportunity to engage with the evidence directly. We will also have a field trip to another collection.

Dynamics

This is a seminar module, not lecture, so a good class depends on you. The first class which will be an introductory lecture on supernatural beings and the study of them, along with examples of how to use the evidence. As seminars can be deadly without a lively dialogue, it is important that each of you express opinions, as well as question, challenge, and engage your colleagues. Every week you will pick a supernatural being or type to explore, and use a different dataset relating it to the theme of the week and the case-study. For class, bring your notes so you can report and discuss your findings. Some of the classes will feature guest speakers (stay tuned!).

** Books **

Required Bibliography (you should purchase)

- Raven, Maarten J. (2012). *Egyptian Magic: The Quest for Thoth’s Book of Secrets*. Cairo: American University of Cairo. (Note: While I have assigned readings for this, it is even more useful if you read the whole thing as soon as possible.)
- Readings will be available on Blackboard & in the library as well
Highly Recommended to Read

- Archiv für Religionsgeschichte, 14, is dedicated to the topic of Ancient Demonology (including Ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, Classical Greece and Rome).
- Further bibliography for the sources you will be using in the module is on Blackboard.
- An extensive bibliography is on http://www.demonthings.com/bibliography/

** Syllabus **

IMPORTANT: Readings are below. Bring all your readings and notes with you to class. This could be done via printout, notes (handwritten or on your computer) or online on your computer/tablet/etc. You have to be able to refer to these texts throughout the class. All readings for lectures should have been read beforehand (including the one for session 1) so that you will be able to participate. Also check the weekly folders on Blackboard for the tasks.
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**Readings (check folders on Blackboard)**

Week 1 **Introduction:** Definitions; Sources & Evidence; Methodologies & Approaches

☐ Raven 2012: Chapters 1 & 2

Week 2 **Definitions & Exploring the Evidence**


Hornung 1996: Chapter 2

Exploring the Evidence

Week 3  Names & Combinations; textual descriptions

Raven 2012: Chapter 3


Hornung 1996: Chapter 3


Individual gods (Schaeqq) & working with magical spells

Week 4  Depiction & Manifestation; structural approaches

Raven 2012: Chapter 4 Practice of Magic


Hornung 1996: Chapter 4


Manifestations of Bes- or Ipet-image & images (wands)

Week 5  Characteristics; functional approaches; limits of power; locomotion; emotions

GUEST LECTURE

Raven 2012: Chapter 5 Books of Magic

Lucarelli, Rita. (2012). The so-called vignette of Spell 182 of the Book of the Dead. In R. Lucarelli, M. Müller Roth & A. Wütrich (Eds.),
Herausgehen am Tage. Gesammelte Schriften zum altägyptischen Totenbuch (pp. 79-91). Wiesbaden: Harassowitz.

Hornung 1996: Chapter 5


**Functional Approaches - Coffin Texts**

**Week 6 Human-Demonic Interaction I**

- Raven 2012: Chapter 6 The Social Security System
- Hornung 1996: Chapter 6

**Presentation of the Dead: Magical vs Literary sources**

**Week 7 Human-Demonic Interaction II**  **GUEST LECTURE**

- Raven 2012: Chapter 8 A Magical Funeral Insurance, 9 Eternal Life

**Gate-Keepers in the Book of the Dead**

**Week 8 Classification**

- Hornung 1996: Chapter 7

**Demons wherever you look - Oracular Amuletic Decrees**

**Week 9 Divine-Demonic Interaction**  **GUEST LECTURE**


**Guarding the Divine Here & Beyond - Royal Books of the Afterlife**
Week 10 Ancient Near East & Mediterranean Interactions

- Raven 2012: Chapter s 10-11 Changing worlds...
**Assessment**

For all the assessments you will choose a demonic being or category  
(see examples below)

Formal Assessment for Level 3 students:

13 March 40% Presentation (Individual)
12 May 60% Research Paper

Presentation - 40%

You have only 15 minutes to tell the committee (i.e. your classmates and examiner) the essentials of what they need to know about these entities. What do they look like? What do they do? Where are they found? Include a brief bibliography of main sources for those interested in learning more as one of your slides.

Think of this as a “show and tell,” exercise, a rare opportunity to provide a session on everything you wanted to know about xyz but were afraid to ask. To help you prepare to engage the public, you will also write an engaging one page article that might be published in Inscriptions, the Friends of the Egypt Centre newsletter. The presentation, research poster, and article are required, but further creativity is encouraged! Your audience is fellow level 3 and MA students.

The Committee will give you feedback, but the final decision (in other words, your grade) is fully in the hands of the Lords of All (that would be me and the 2nd marker). While this should be fun, it is also a serious exercise, and you will receive the feedback from everybody as guidance to help you in future presentations and in your research paper.

Please let me know in advance if you need any audio-visual equipment. Only part of the grade is based on the presentation—the poster, article, and notes count as well.

Please read the marking criteria carefully.

To bring to class (there will be two 2-hour sessions scheduled):
- Presentation (if using PowerPoint, Keynote, or Prezi, bring it on a flashdrive. There will be a Mac and a PC available).
- Poster (they will be posted around the room. In the summer they will be posted in James Callaghan and online)

To upload to Turnitin:
- Poster (PDF)
- Handout or notes
- 1-page (maximum) article
- Bibliography

Research Paper - 60%

The research paper should be designed as a persuasive argument for the significance of your being (3,000 words). Your audience is readers of scholarly journals such as the Journal of Egyptian Archaeology or the Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt. All the usual guidelines for a research paper apply.

Remember, the committee is particularly interested in the following:
- the reason that you have chosen these beings above all others
- a structural analysis
- a functional analysis
- an essential analysis
- the main sources: include a representative sample
- geographical & temporal context
- anything else that will strengthen your case

Formal Assessment for MA students:

Weekly 30% Weekly Data Reports (average of best 5)
TBD 20% Seminar Expert (presentation)
12 May: 50% Research Paper

Weekly Data Reports - 30%

Every week you will pick a supernatural being or type to explore, and use a different dataset relating it to the theme of the week and the case-study. You need to submit, via the Assignments section of Blackboard, a succinct analysis and summary based on the given question and one of the case-study readings given for your topic (you are encouraged to do all the readings!). Do include at least one question associated with the readings and/or your research. They will be due by Noon on the Sunday before the class for which they are assigned. A sample format is on Blackboard.

Your best 5 will count towards your final assessment (each is worth 6 points). This does not mean that you should only submit five. You should be sure to carry out this exercise every week to ensure that you are prepared for each seminar.

Seminar Expert - 20%

One week you will be the expert in charge and will lead the seminar for 45 minutes. Your presentation should last no more than 20 minutes and focus on an introduction to the topic as well as the results of your analysis. Don’t think of this as a lecture, but more of a workshop. You may wish to provide the rest of the class with questions or data set analyses to prepare in advance, or you may prefer to lead a workshop style session where we all work on the data together during the class session. There will be a section of the Blackboard site for you to control and use. You can post questions for the class, links, discussion boards, wikis, whatever you think would be most useful.

Your grade will be based on the presentation and the related notes (upload via Blackboard Assignments). Since is this your first time leading a seminar, student engagement will not be assessed, though feedback will be given. This assignment will give you needed experience and practice that you will use in any number of career or academic paths that you may later take. You will practice: leadership skills, peer assessment, accepting and giving constructive critiques, presenting analysis in an
understandable way, summarising, oral communication, presentation, use of information technologies, assessing others and of course, teaching!

**Research Paper - 50%**

The research paper should be designed as a persuasive argument for the significance of your being (4,000 words). Your audience is readers of scholarly journals such as the *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* or the *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt*. All the usual guidelines for a research paper apply.

Remember, the committee is particularly interested in the following:

- the reason that you have chosen these beings above all others
- a structural analysis
- a functional analysis
- an essential analysis
- the main sources: include a representative sample
- geographical & temporal context
- anything else that will strengthen your case

**Possible examples include demons:**

- with a particular visual appearance, either composite or complete:
  - Hippo
  - Dog
  - Bes-image
  - Rabbit
  - Turtle
  - Flaming torches
- engaged in a particular activity:
  - dancing
  - chopping
  - pulling out hearts
- with a particular distinguishing characteristic:
  - fire-breathers
  - loud-mouths
- associated with a specific location:
  - mountains
  - watery areas
- who cause particular problems:
  - plague
  - headaches
  - possession
- who prevent particular problems:
  - psychological disturbances
  - helpers to the gods
  - assaults on infants