RN 242/ HI 306

Magic, Science, and Religion from Plato to Voltaire Spring 2010

Instructor:
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Texts

Requirements

Schedule

Office hours

Illustration accompanying Maimonides' letter on astrology in the 15th-century Italian Hebrew manuscript known as the Rothschild Miscellany

Assignments:

Reading Responses

Final Project

Due Dates:
proposal: 3/25
project: 4/29

Links to reference material and research aids for medieval European religious history

This course explores the ways in which boundaries defining and separating magic, science, and religion emerged in western thought and culture from late antiquity through the European Enlightenment, when the definitions generally recognized in western culture today were delineated. We will consider the nature of "magic," "science" and "religion" in historical context, the relationship between learned and popular thought and practice, and the interplay of disciplines we would define oppositionally (e.g., astrology and astral magic with astronomy, medicine and healing), while exploring underlying assumptions about God, Nature and natural forces.

Required Texts:

•Francis Bacon, *New Atlantis and The Great Instauration*, revised ed., Jerry Weinberger, ed.

•Richard C. Dales, *The Scientific Achievement of the Middle Ages*

•Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*

•Steven Shapin, *The Scientific Revolution*

•Voltaire, *Candide, Zadig and Other Stories*

Also: a set of readings available in pdf format on a blackboard site and a number of documents linked to the syllabus here

Please bring reading materials to class on the day(s) they are assigned, including printouts of web documents or a laptop for viewing them.

Course Requirements

Students are expected to attend and participate in every

class. <u>All reading is to be completed before the class for which it is assigned.</u> <u>Students are required to post responses to the readings (one to two pages) on Blackboard five times over the course of the semester.</u> The class participation grade will be based on attendance, the level of your preparedness and involvement in discussion, and the posted responses.

Other graded work for the class will consist of a final research paper (10-12 pages) or equivalent project, a midterm exam, and a final exam. The grading for the course will be as follows: 20% for class participation, 20% for the paper, 30% for the midterm exam and 30% for the final.

If you know that you will miss class because you are sick or are away from school for an emergency, please try to let me know ahead of time, if possible, via **phone** or **e-mail**. More than three unapproved absences during the semester may result in a lowered overall grade in addition to an unsatisfactory class participation grade.

Please note that students must complete all written work in order to receive a passing grade for the class.

Schedule:

Th January 14 Introduction: **Magic, Science, and Religion as Cultural Constructs**

T January 19 Science and Religion in Greek and Roman Antiquity

Excerpts from Plato's *Republic* and *Timaeus*, Aristotle's On the Heavens, Ptolemy's *Almagest*, Galen's *Therapeutic Method*, and Pliny's *Natural History* [Blackboard]

Th January 21 Magic and Miracle in Late Antiquity

G. Luck, *Arcana Mundi: Magic and Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds*, 109-121, and 135-147 [Blackboard]

T January 26 Magic and Miracle in Late Antiquity

Biblical Texts on Sorcery, Magic, and Miracle; The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles Peter and Paul

Th January 28 Paganism, Christianization and Magic in the Early Middle Ages

Valerie Flint, *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe*, 240-253 and

301-328 [Blackboard]; Gregory of Tours, Eight Books of Miracles

T February 2 Paganism, Christianization and Magic in the Early Middle Ages

R. Kieckhefer, *Magic*, Ch. 3; Anglo Saxon Charms: Field Remedy Ritual ; Lacnunga Elf Charms ; Leechbook, Book 3 Elf Charms

Th February 4 Learning, "Science," and the Church in the Early Middle Ages

R. C. Dales, *The Scientific Achievement of the Middle Ages*, Introduction and Ch. 1; Richer of Rheims' Journey to the School at Chartres (10th century)

T February 9 Twelfth Century Learning and Arabic Science: The Islamic World

A. Ede and L. Cormack, eds., *A History of Science in Society*, 57-73 [Blackboard]Excerpts from Al-Ghazali, "Incoherence of the Philosophers" and Maimonides, "Guide of the Perplexed" [Blackboard]; Baghdad in the eleventh-century

Th February 11 Twelfth Century Learning and Arabic Science

Kieckhefer, 116-119; R. C. Dales, *Scientific Achievement* Ch. 2; Excerpt from Peter Abelard, *Sic et Non*

T February 16 NO CLASS: BU ON MONDAY SCHEDULE

Th February 18 The Rise of Universities and Control of Knowledge

E. Grant, *The Foundations of Modern Science in the Middle Ages*, 33-53 [Blackboard] ; Stephen of Tournai, An Invective Against the New Learning ; Jacques de Vitry's description of students

T February 23 MIDTERM EXAM

Th February 25 Observing the Natural World: Experimental Science

R. C. Dales, *Scientific Achievement* Ch. 3; Roger Bacon, On Experimental Science

T March 2 The Medieval Cosmos

E. Grant, "Cosmology" [Blackboard] Genesis 1:1 ; review excerpts from Plato's Timaeus [Blackboard] and Aristotle's On the Heavens

Th March 4 Astronomy, Astrology, and Astral Magic

Kieckhefer, 120-133; Dales, *Scientific Achievement,* Ch.7 and also Ch.8, pp. 139-146; 151 (last two lines on page)-157; Marsilio Ficino: Three Books of Life

T March 9 SPRING BREAK

Th March 11 SPRING BREAK

T March 16 Medieval Medicine & Healing

Excerpt from N. Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine* [Blackboard] ; The case of a woman doctor in Paris [Blackboard]; Abu Ali al-Hussain Ibn Abdallah Ibn Sina on Medicine

Th March 18 Alchemy and Alchemists

Kieckhefer, 133-139; R. P. Multhauf, "The Science of Matter"; Roger Bacon, excerpts from *Radix mundi* (*Root of the world*), in Stanton J. Linden, The Alchemy Reader, 111-122 [Blackboard]

T March 23 Common Magic: Thirteenth-Fifteenth Centuries

Kieckefer, Ch. 4; Stephen of Bourbon's account of the cult of the Holy Greyhound (St. Guinefort)

Th March 25 Learned Magic: Thirteenth-Fifteenth Centuries

Kieckhefer, 140-144 and Ch. 7; Honorius of Thebes, The Sworn Book

T March 30 Legal Processes Against Magic

Kieckhefer, Ch. 8; Documents from the trial of Tempel Anneke [Blackboard]

Th April 1 From Magus to Scientist: The Yates Thesis

Kieckhefer, 144-150; F. Yates, "The Hermetic Tradition in Renaissance Science," *Art, Science and History in the Renaissance*, C. S. Singleton, ed., 255-274 [Blackboard]; Excerpt from the Hermetic corpus,[Blackboard]

T April 6 Scientific Revolution

Steven Shapin, *The Scientific Revolution*, pp. 1-8 and Ch. 1 [Blackboard]

Th April 8 Copernicus, Brahe, Kepler, Galileo and the new Cosmos

Copernicus, Dedication of the *Revolution of the Heavenly Bodies* to Pope Paul III; Excerpts from Galileo's Letter to Duchess Christina of Tuscany

T April 13 The Great Instauration: The Promise of New Learning

Francis Bacon, *New Atlantis and The Great Instauration*, 35-83; Bacon, Aphorisms

Th April 15 Isaac Newton and the Meaning of Science

John Henry, "Newton, Matter and Magic" [Blackboard] ;Isaac Newton, Excerpts from *Principia (1687)* and *General Scholium*, published as an appendix to the

second edition of the *Principia* (1713).

T April 20 The Enlightenment Invention of the Scientific Revolution

[Voltaire: Letters on Descartes and Newton](#)

Th April 22 MONDAY SCHEDULE: NO CLASS

T April 27 The Enlightened Rationalist in a Superstitious World

Readings: Voltaire, *Zadig*

Th April 29 Final paper/projects due: presentations

> **Final Review Session: Friday, April 30, 10:00-11:30 AM**
> **Religion Department Seminar Room (Room 404 at 145 Bay**
> **State Rd.)**

Final Exam: Thursday, May 6 9:00-11:00 AM

[Deeana Klepper Home](#)

[Religion Department Home](#)