

620:188:19 Seminar in Literature:
The Salem Witch Trials in Literature and History
Fall 2005

Instructor: Dr. Anne Myles
Time: MWF 11:00-11:50
Room: Lang 111

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My home phone: 833-7094 (OK for weekends or emergency, before 10:30 p.m.; I'd prefer you to contact me via my office phone or e-mail otherwise)

Office hours:

Available Wednesdays 9:30-10:30, Fridays 1:30-2:30 (or later if needed). If this doesn't fit your schedule, please contact me and I'll be happy to arrange another time. I am often in my office at other times besides scheduled office hours; feel free to knock anytime you see my door cracked open.

Course Description:

An eminent scholar once asserted that the events around Salem in 1692, far from essentially characterizing the history of Puritan New England, were more like a blip on the radar, casting little light on broader cultural and historical developments. Whether or not this is true, the complex crisis of the trials and their intense evocation of the "invisible world" of witches and devils has fascinated historians, authors, and common readers for centuries. This seminar will devote equal attention to the Salem witch trials in history and to their rich legacy within American literature. The first half of the semester will concentrate on historical materials, as we trace the religious, social, and ideological underpinnings of witchcraft accusations in 17th-century New England, and apply these to both the original transcripts of the Salem trials and key associated works for and against the proceedings. In the second half, we will examine works of fiction, drama and film from the 19th to 21st centuries that either directly portray or draw inspiration from the Salem events, considering how the trials serve as a continually shifting, developing site of cultural meaning. In the final weeks of the course, you will choose one additional literary text to work on with a group for presentation to the class.

Required Texts:

Available at Bookstore (or online):

- Bernard Rosenthal, *Salem Story: Reading the Witch Trials of 1692*
- Carol Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England*
- Arthur Miller, *The Crucible*

Available used on Amazon.com or elsewhere online (but not in bookstore):

- Esther Forbes, *A Mirror for Witches*

You will be required to purchase one of the following texts for group work at the end of the semester – groups will be formed within the first few weeks. These books are all available used or new on Amazon.com; those marked * are also available at the bookstore.

- Maryse Condé, *I Tituba, Black Witch of Salem* *
- Jodi Picoult, *Salem Falls*
- Nicole Cooley, *The Afflicted Girls* *
- Ann Rinaldi, *A Break with Charity*
- Ann Petry, *Tituba of Salem Village*

Numerous other required course readings are online on the web or on Electronic Reserve at Rod Library. You can find direct links to all digital readings on the course homepage, [http://fp.uni.edu/myles/Salem Witch Trials.htm](http://fp.uni.edu/myles/Salem_Witch_Trials.htm)

Required Work:

- 1. Weekly quizzes.** Every Friday for most of the semester there will be a quiz or other in-class assignment (for example, a one-page written response to an open-ended prompt question) at the beginning of class. These will draw on your familiarity with some or all of the readings for assigned for that week. The quiz/question(s) are not intended to be difficult if you have done the reading. There will be 11 quizzes total, worth 10 points each, and I will drop your two lowest quiz scores. If you miss class you get a 0 for the quiz, however, and it cannot be made up.
- 2. Paper 1.** Your first paper, approximately 10 pages in length, will draw on the primary texts and secondary scholarly studies pertaining to the historical Salem Witch Trials. There are two options for this paper:
Option A. Early in the semester, everyone will choose one accused witch to become an expert on. For this paper, you will write a study of the accusation, trial, etc. of this ‘witch,’ telling the story of what happened to her/him, analyzing what can be deduced from the trial records, and considering the interpretive insights into this case offered by the work of at least three different scholars of New England witchcraft.
Option B. You may instead choose to focus on the historical film *Three Sovereigns for Sarah*, using primary and secondary sources to analyze its accuracy and the interpretation(s) it brings to bear on one or more sections of the trials. This would be a good option for someone with a particular interest in educational media.
- 3. Paper 2.** Your second paper, also approximately 10 pages in length, will focus on one of the literary representations of Salem/witchcraft studied in the course. I presume most of you will want to write your paper on the text you work on independently with your group at the end of the semester—it will be in effect an expansion of work you do for the group presentation (below). But you are also welcome to write about one of the texts that we consider together as a class.

- 4. Group Presentation:** In the final weeks of the semester, you will work in a group analyzing a modern literary work inspired by the Witch Trials, and preparing to teach it to the rest of the class (through presentation and through leading discussion of excerpt(s) from your work that will be circulated in advance). We'll work out the scoring so that everyone receives a combination of overall group points and personal points for the particular aspect of the work that group members agree you should receive credit for.

Grading:

Weekly quizzes:	90 points total (9 of 11 counted @ 10 points each)
Paper 1:	100 points
Paper 2:	100 points
Group Presentation	25 points
Attendance:	25 points
Participation:	15 points
Total	355 points

Your final course grade will be determined by calculating the number of points you receive overall as a percentage out of 355, according to the following standard scale. Excellent participation may tip you to a higher grade if your score for written work doesn't seem adequately reflect your overall course performance.

A	95%	B-	80%	D+	67%
A-	90%	C+	77%	D	64%
B+	87%	C	74%	D-	60%
B	84%	C-	70%		

Attendance:

This will be counted as part of your grade; I do regularly take attendance. In terms of scoring, you will start the semester with 25 points for attendance. For each unexcused absence, you will lose two points. If you lose all your points, I reserve the right to fail you in the class (although I will not automatically do so).

If you are unable to complete all the work by finals week and wish to receive a grade of I (Incomplete) you must request this of me specifically before the beginning of finals week. However, I will not give Is to people who have vanished for much of the semester and make a sudden late reappearance. According to University policy, the final date you may drop the class and receive a W on your transcript is Friday, October 28.

Legitimate reasons for missing class include your own illness; a death or medical emergency in your immediate family; your required attendance at an official University-sponsored event; or dangerous driving conditions. If one of these pertains to you, please

notify me by e-mailing me or leaving a message on my office voice-mail, if possible before the class you will miss.

In the event of bad weather, assume that class is being held so long as the University is open. If class is cancelled, I will let you know on the class listserv.

If a situation arises that will cause you to miss a number of classes, notify me as soon as you reasonably can so that we can discuss how we will handle it. If you are going through a personal or family crisis that wreaks havoc with your ability to participate in the class, I strongly urge you to withdraw from it. Every semester a few students have problems and ask for Incompletes: in my experience few of them ever complete their coursework later. You will spare yourself and me future headaches by not getting yourself into this situation. There is no stigma attached to withdrawing from a course.

Participation:

Participation will also be counted as a part of the course grade. This class needs to be a cooperative effort; I am not an expert on Salem or on the literary works we'll be discussing, and after the first week or two do not expect to be lecturing to you. Your thoughts, questions, ideas will be of central importance. If you seem engaged in the course material and contribute usefully to class discussion on most days, you will receive the full 15 points. If you seem prepared and attentive but rarely speak in class, you will probably receive around 10 points. If you often seem inattentive, unprepared (this includes a pattern of not having the assigned readings with you), or if you are absent too much to participate consistently, you are likely to receive fewer than 10 points.

If there is some situation in the class that you feel is making it difficult for you to contribute to discussion, please let me know so I can try to help so far as it's in my power. If you have ideas you want to share on the class listserv or with me privately outside of class, that's also fine, and will count towards my evaluation of your participation.

Deadlines:

Written work is due on the date specified. Papers are normally due at the beginning of class, but I will not penalize you so long as they are in by 5 p.m. on that day. (Do not skip class because you're having trouble with your printer, etc.) I will accept papers by e-mail (Word attachment preferred) if you can't make it to campus. There will be subtractions from your grade for late work, increasing with the length of time the paper is late. In those cases I will give the paper a "merit grade" which lets you know how I responded to the paper in itself, and the official "recorded grade" which factors in the lateness. I am willing to negotiate extensions requested at least one class in advance, preferably more. Even if a piece of work is very late, it is always better to turn it in that not; I won't refuse it and will always give you some credit. Quizzes, however, cannot be made up; if you miss a quiz date you get a 0 for that quiz.

Revision Policy:

Yes, you are welcome to revise your first paper if you are dissatisfied with the grade -- so long as there is time left in the semester to do so. If I give the revision a higher grade, it replaces the old grade. However, you need to meet with me first to go over my comments and your revision plans. I expect substantial rethinking/rewriting in a revised paper; except in special, mutually agreed-upon cases, I will return unmarked a revision that contains only mechanical or sentence-level changes. When you submit a revised essay, you must also attach the original copy of the first version along with my comments and grade sheet; I cannot evaluate your changes otherwise. Due dates for revisions are generally negotiable/flexible, but I will not accept revisions after the last week of regular classes (i.e., no last-minute revisions of earlier work accepted during finals week; I have too much to grade then as it is!). Quizzes cannot be revised, but remember that your two lowest quiz grades will be dropped.

If you are unhappy with your marks on written work you have submitted, please consult with me and we'll determine whether, and how, you might improve your score or your ultimate grade in the class. Obviously, the earlier in the semester we discuss this, the more opportunity there is for you to make a meaningful difference in your grade.

I am also always willing to look at rough drafts (though I make no promises about drafts shown me the day before the paper is due). It generally works best if you can e-mail me your draft as a Word attachment; that way I'll probably get it quickly and I can send it back to you with comments as soon as I've read it, or I'll have time to look at it before you come to meet with me, if you want to discuss it in person.

Format for Submitting Class Work:

All essays must be word-processed/typed in a plain, average-sized font, double-spaced, with approximately 1" margins on all sides, on 8 1/2" x 11" plain paper. I recommend Times Roman 12-pt. font (as in this syllabus) or something similar.

No separate title page is necessary. At the top of the first page of your paper (I don't care which corner[s]), include your name, the name of this course, and the date. Centered beneath that, give your paper a title that offers some idea what it is about -- do not use just the title of the work you are writing about. Double-spacing between the title and the beginning of the text makes it easier to read. Also, please number your pages -- do so by hand if you forget to do it on the computer.

In a separate page at the end of your paper, list all the texts you have used in the paper in correct MLA style. There are guides to MLA style in any writer's handbook and on countless websites. If you have a question, please ask.

All quotations from the text or direct references to passages in the text of the work(s) you are writing about must be followed by page references. I expect prose, poetry, and dialogue to be quoted in the correct form(s).

Proofread your paper carefully (spell-checkers help but won't do the whole job [*see?*]); numerous typos and other errors you could easily have fixed make you look careless or indifferent and will detract from your grade, probably more than one or two honest mistakes in syntax will.

Also, be sure to save all your work on a disk or flash drive, both completed papers and important writing in progress. On occasion papers get misplaced during the grading process – or your computer may crash. Don't let this become a crisis!

Academic Ethics:

All students are expected to abide by the University's official policy on academic ethics. You can review this policy at <http://www.uni.edu/pres/policies/301.html>. If you have any question about what would constitute plagiarism in relation to your use of a particular source, please consult with me or, if I am not available, with another faculty member. Keep a record of the sources you consult while doing research for a piece of writing; you should be able to retrieve all sources consulted if an issue should arise.

Any work you submit that appears intentionally plagiarized (you attempt to pass off language, ideas, or a complete text from another source as your own, assuming or hoping I won't be able to tell) will be graded F, and you will have to redo the assignment from the beginning on another topic, under close supervision. Final papers that are plagiarized cannot be redone. I reserve the right to automatically fail any student from the course for wholesale or repeated plagiarism. Notification of plagiarism cases is routinely sent to both the Department Chair and the Provost and remains in your permanent file.

Students with Disabilities:

If you have a disability requiring special accommodation in the classroom or for exams or other assignments, please contact me early in the semester so we can work out the appropriate adjustments. Please bring some kind of official documentation if possible; I should receive this directly from the university, but I may not have it at hand.