



COURSE INFORMATION:

Title: Dealing with Demons and Death—Magic in the Ancient World



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- Meeting Times/Dates: Spring 2011 (Mar 2–Apr 6), Wednesdays 6:00–9:00pm
- Location: Room 216, UAF-CTC campus (604 Barnette St, Fairbanks)

- Department/Number: RELG-F193 (CRN 35735)
- Credits: 1 (one)
- Prerequisites: None

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION:

Name: Dr. Paul Korchin

Office Location: none (adjunct faculty)
Telephone: 907-374-8870 (before 10pm)

Office Hours: by appointment
E-Mail: pdkorchin@alaska.edu

COURSE READINGS / MATERIALS:

Course Textbook: *Reading Packet* (photocopied & provided by instructor)
Author: various
Publisher: various

Supplementary Readings: Primary texts, journal articles, media sources, and iconography will be provided via photocopied handouts and/or the internet.

Supplies Required: Personal computer with internet access.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

An exploration into ancient traditions of magic via Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Graeco-Roman, and Biblical texts as well as artifacts, focusing upon their rationales, methods, efficacy, and legitimacy for variously preventing, mitigating, or invoking dangerous forces such as demons, ghosts, illnesses and curses.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES / OBJECTIVES:

By the conclusion of this course, the diligent student will be capable of broadly sketching the functions and purposes of magic within core ancient cultures of the Near Eastern and Mediterranean worlds (Egyptian, Sumerian, Assyrian-Babylonian, Israelite, Greek-Roman). The attentive student will gain insight into the underlying notions of cosmology and causality that animated ancient magical rites. The dedicated student will also be able to reflect critically upon how the magical relates to the religious and the scientific.

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS:

Within the classroom, this course will be conducted in a lecture–discussion format, featuring presentations and questions by the instructor designed to engage the students in conversations about the material and topics at hand. Visual media will be incorporated (chiefly PowerPoint and photographs) to provide a more vivid context for reflection and engagement. Beyond the classroom, this course will maintain social networking and micro-blogging sites in order to foster a more sustained and vibrant intellectual dialogue about the subject matter. Postings will include (links to) relevant multimedia sources, class discussion threads, and course logistics.

COURSE CALENDAR:

**MAR 2: CLASS 1: LIVING AMID THE DEMONIC AND DEATHLY
 *Ancient causalities & coping strategies.***

Assignment:

Articles—

- R. Stark, *Reconceptualizing Religion, Magic, and Science* (2001)
- D. Hammond, *Magic: A Problem in Semantics* (1970)
- P. Raffaele, *Sleeping with Cannibals* (2006)

Online postings (+ comments)

**MAR 9: CLASS 2: REACTIVE MAGIC
 *Spells, potions, incantations, exorcisms.***

Assignment:

Texts—

- Egyptian—*snakes, scorpions, crocodiles*
- Mesopotamian—*Lamashtu, demons, sorcerers, dogs, evil eye, maladies*
- Graeco-Roman—*fractures, wounds, illnesses, exorcisms*
- Biblical—*Jesus and the demons*

Online postings (+ comments)
 Final Project assignment (**DUE 2 weeks after last class: 4/20/11**)

MAR 16: *SPRING BREAK—NO CLASS SESSION*

MAR 23: CLASS 3: MAGIC AMID THE DEAD

Caring, feeding, conjuring & containing of the deceased.

Assignment:

Texts—

- Egyptian—*navigating the underworld*
- Mesopotamian—*ghosts*
- Graeco-Roman—*restless dead, cenotaphs, haunted houses, necromancy, reanimation, ghosts versus demons*
- Biblical—*Saul, Samuel & the witch of Endor*

Article—

- A. Dafni, *Why are Rags tied to Sacred Trees of the Holy Land?* (2002)

Online—postings (+ comments)

MAR 30: CLASS 4: PREEMPTIVE MAGIC

Dreams, extispicy, lots, amulets.

Assignment:

Texts—

- Egyptian—*fending off deadly fauna*
- Mesopotamian—*discerning animal entrails, sleeping safely*
- Graeco-Roman—*protective & directive amulets*
- Biblical—*Joseph & Daniel versus the magicians*

Article—

- F. Rochberg, *Mesopotamian Divination as Science* (1999)

Online postings (+ comments)

APR 6: CLASS 5: AGGRESSIVE MAGIC

Curses, figurines, witchcraft, sorcery, shamanism.

Assignment:

Texts—

- Egyptian—*excretion texts/objects*
- Mesopotamian—*binding spells, figurines*
- Graeco-Roman—*poisons, murders, Kolossoi, curse tablets, drawing down the moon, evil eye*
- Biblical—*Moses, Pharaoh, and the plagues*

Articles—

- S. Kan, *Shamanism and Christianity: Modern-Day Tlingit Elders* (1991)
- M. Balzer, *Symbolism and Theory in Siberian Shamanism* (1996)

Online postings (+ comments)

COURSE POLICIES:

This single credit course is an elective, designed to appeal to students who are attracted to its subject matter and/or to fulfilling core academic requirements toward UAF Associate and/or

Bachelor degrees. For students who audit, the standards are ultimately self-imposed. For those who take this course for credit, consistent and prompt attendance is expected, as is timely completion of the assignments. The final project is also required, as well as a *bona fide* intellectual curiosity and respectfulness toward the subject matter and fellow class participants. Plagiarism and other academic dishonesty are intolerable, and will be forwarded to the appropriate college authorities for disciplinary measures.

EVALUATION:

Auditing is permitted. Letter grades for credit will be determined according to the following formula:

- 20% Course **Preparation**—readings/hearings/viewings of assigned materials; students will be provided with reflection topics/questions keyed to required sources.
- 30% Course **Participation**—attendance: promptness, consistency (10%); discussion: frequency, relevance, depth of in-class questions, comments, engagement with instructor & colleagues (10%); feedback: frequency, substance of online reactions & reflections about website postings (10%).
- 50% Course **Project**—a 6–8 page paper, double-spaced, 1-inch margins, proper grammar, spelling, citations. Students will have a choice from among a limited number of relevant topics/motifs provided and/or approved by the instructor. An unexcused late paper will be penalized 10% (one full letter grade, down from the grade earned) for each week it is late—up to a period of 3 weeks—after which a paper will receive a failing grade.

According to the following scale:

A+	98–100
A	94–97
A-	91–93
B+	88–90
B	84–87
B-	81–83
C+	78–80
C	74–77
C-	71–73
D+	68–70
D	64–67
D-	61–63
F	0–60

SUPPORT SERVICES:

UAF Community and Technical College Student Assistance and Academic Advising Center:
(phone) 907-455-2800; (toll-free) 877-882-8827; (e-mail) fytvc@uaf.edu

DISABILITIES SERVICES:

UAF has a Disability Services office that operates in conjunction with the College of Rural and Community Development campuses and UAF's Center for Distance Education (CDE). Disability Services, a part of UAF's Center for Health and Counseling, provides academic accommodations to enrolled students who are identified as being eligible for these services. If you believe you are eligible, please visit <http://www.uaf.edu/chc/disability.html> on the web or contact a student affairs staff person at your nearest local campus. You can also contact Disability Services on the Fairbanks Campus at 907-474-7043, fydso@uaf.edu