

The class I have planned here is designed to be a 400 level course for English majors, and welcoming to a bit of a crossover with history students. The majority of the work is done via (sometimes) intense reading, class discussion, and two papers. Students will be expected to be operating at a reasonably independent level by the time they take a class like this, and to be prepared to confront not only complex theory and a rather complex course focus – not only the idea of the picaresque, but then something else operating *inside* of that idea – but to be mature while dealing with potentially inflammatory concepts. I want to emphasize close and thoughtful reading practices as well as productive, helpful class discussions that will employ our close reading tactics as a group. My goal is to foster an environment of exploratory thought, where students feel comfortable to talk about very uncomfortable things, to take risks in their observations, and to experiment in their writing. We are trying to look at a very familiar figure in a new way – to stare at what we've seen a thousand times before until its features become fuzzy, its outlines blur, and it shifts into something unsettlingly unrecognizable. The figure and the space we are exploring is *about* that uncanny, eerie, haunting disconnect.

My own writing usually seeks to pair literary reading with historical and materialist perspectives, and I'm following that impulse with the assigned readings here. I feel like that approach offers the necessary context, complicates how we read, and provides room for new and productive insights. Providing this context is necessary in part due to what this course seeks to explore – the rather shocking gaps in how we are taught and how we explain American history.

We are going to explore the figure of the witch as a parallel to the midwife and the female abortionist: sub-marginal technicians of life and death and subjectivity in the Atlantic world. The Picaresque genre will be a guiding force in this class. We'll explore how even in novels about the resistant, bodily peasant that spits, starves, and tricks at the lowest dreges of society, we can glimpse another, deeper current of labor, knowledge and individuals bubbling up from the bottom. By reading in these margins, we will look at characters like Moll's "Dear Friend," Circe from *Song of Solomon*, Pablo's mother from *El Buscon*, Dr. Merkle from *Summer*, among others, and see how they provide insight into a feminine underclass that traffics in the work of birth and death and challenges modern conceptions of self. We'll read these picaresque novels with a focus on the supporting characters who do the abortions and lead the thieving rings, and whose characters are constructed by the scandalized, scandalous narrator. While two of these novels are "traditionally" conceived of as Picaresque novels, the other two – *Summer* and *Song of Solomon* – are less likely to be mentioned in the genre, although I argue that they definitely follow the conventions of the mode and complicate it in new ways.

Occupying a strange space between the "real" and the "not real," tracking the witch gives us critical insight into Atlanticism, and the development of subjectivity and social realities in the united states in the 17th century, as composed and shaped by a cosmopolitan and viciously violent world that still intrigues, fascinates, and haunts us. We will cross borders, move back and forth across time, and use multiple texts to investigate how this veiled figure provides a model for challenge, resistance, and secret power. By approaching the order in which we read texts and how we perceive them in linear time, we can challenge the colonial impulses that are

sometimes diffused through college history and literature courses. It will be useful to use this class as a way to talk about diversity in reading lists, the pitfalls of tokenism, and the simultaneous necessities of reconceiving American literature as a strange current of texts, folklore, music, legends, ballads, poetry, and ghosts that come from Cherokee traditions as well as Scottish ones, African literature as well as European literature, and the resulting mixtures and conflagrations and the spaces in between.

We won't use the figure of the abortionist and midwife to question the politics of abortion, but to explore the role of birthing, birthers, doctors, devils and the places where life and people begin. These characters are distressing and disruptive – they are disparaged by the lowliest of criminal narrators, and yet they also maintain a font of unsurpassable resilience and resistance against an unjust society. One of my goals with this class is to teach students about the history of the abortion and anti-abortion movements in the United States. This subject is not only fiercely ignored and willfully disregarded in K-12 education, as well as easily avoidable in college, but it is enormously erased, disfigured, and misconstrued in contemporary political discourse. I believe it is important to learn this misunderstood history literarily in order to see how the boundaries of life, death, personhood, subjectivity, autonomy, and human rights are far less constant – even in American ideologies of the past one hundred years – than we may be led to believe. Additionally, looking at the history of medicine, bodily care, childbirth, and bodies in literature from a feminist critical perspective is essential, but also, often not attended to in literature classes.

The reading might be rather difficult at times, but I have attempted to balance hefty texts with more accessible ones. I also think it's important to look at films, as they provide an enormous catalogue of popular cultural imaginings of witchy figures and undercurrents. I think it's great to end with a *very* contemporary look back at puritan times through a potentially quite problematic feminist lens, and to begin with a campy, fun, weird, 1990s culty-pop hit, *The Craft*. Starting with something pretty easy to ingest like *The Craft*, we can then use that film as a touchstone through the rest of the quarter on which to project, try, and use more complicated theory and ideas.

The class moves into a more theoretical direction at the end, where I hope that we can take all of the strange new ideas we've had and use them to deal with more abstract, deconstructionist theory from Barbara Johnson and Judith Butler. By getting there at the end, I hope we will have prepared our reading skills as well as complicated our ideas, so we might read these two fantastic chapters with valuable insight. Also, I think they will bring us back to the Susan Howe chapter that I started the class with. Whereas at the beginning, it was kind of hanging around as a vague notion that might shape our thoughts, hopefully by this time the notions of submarginalia, captivity/possession and reading from below will have flourished and sprouted anew.

I've tried to bake flexibility and some room into the syllabus, so if I've over-estimated or gone bonkers in regards to reading material, there's space in which to sort it out. I think that this

class would be challenging and rewarding, and I would be so excited in the future to actually get to teach it somewhere. Please find below further analysis of the texts I've chosen, as well as the syllabus with assignment details, schedules, essays, and expectations. I hope you enjoy reading!

- Kimberly Fanshier

Texts

From *The Birth-Mark: Unsettling the American Literary Wilderness* by Susan Howe, “Introduction: Submarginalia.” Pg. 26-39

Susan Howe's brief, poetic essay provides a model for reading that we will follow throughout the course. Her methodology of “reading from the margins” and reading like a library cormorant provides a theoretical foundation of “how to read” from which I extend the project of this class. It provides a model that we can follow to assist with the goal of re-conceptualizing minor characters, minor plots, and the marginalized classes in which their subjects oscillate. It situates us

In a recognizable historic Atlantic world of the 17th century eastern seaboard, but simultaneously pushes on preconceptions of the boundaries of that historical world, while opening up the subject of religion and wilderness as important oppositions.

Watch: *The Craft*

This 1990s goth classic provides an exhilarating intervention opportunity into witch stereotypes. With its focus on young women, sexuality, bodies, violence, and the idea of people who *don't* have power suddenly getting it, this is a great and engaging way to draw students into the dialogue. A relatable, accessible text like *The Craft* can be used throughout the term to conceptualize and ground more complicated criticisms, historical ideas, and theory.

Read: “The Myth of the Picaro” by Louis Blackburn

Blackburn's analysis of the historical myth of the picaro, and how myths, concepts, and modes of writing distinguish themselves from one another provides an excellent initial introduction to the picaresque mode. While the picaresque is more a guiding influence in this class than the *central* subject matter, Blackburn contextualizes the picaresque tradition in a critical manner. By pairing this literary history with readings from and on the *Malleus Maleficarum*, we can

introduce parallels and connections between witch and midwife archetypes and the picaresque mode.

Read: “The Malleus Maleficarum and the Construction of Witchcraft” Hans Pieter Broedehl

A short introduction to the construction of witch craft and some of the myths surrounding it in the 15th century in Europe, Broedahl’s essay provides foundational knowledge for exploring the strange, liminal spaces witchcraft holds in history, fantasy, and scholarship. It is essential to have some knowledge of the *Maleficarum*, the “Witch’s Hammer,” a famous manual for witch hunters by Heinrich Kramer and Jacob Sprenger. This text is quoted and used repeatedly in witch scholarship, and while I don’t think it’s necessary to read in its entirety, it’s necessary to have a grasp on its content and place – historically and critically.

Read: excerpts from *Malleus Maleficarum*: “Why It Is That Women are Chiefly Addicted to Superstitions,” “That Witches Who are Midwives in Various Ways Kill the Child Conceived in the Womb and, and Procure an Abortion, or if they Do Not Do This, Offer the Children to Devils,” and “How Witch Midwives Commit Most Horrid Crimes where they Either Kill Children or Offer Them to the Devil in Various Ways” pp. 289 – 295 in *Witches of the Atlantic World*.

These sections produce ideologies of abortion/birth and labor that bridge the **Read: From**

Jeffrey Burton Russell’s *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages*, “The Meaning of Witchcraft,” pg. 1-27 and “Witchcraft in History,” 28-43.

A short Poem from the Atlantic world: Sir Walter Raleigh, (maybe)

Russell, and authority on the history of witchcraft in Western Europe from the 5th to the 15 century, opens his expansive book with this fantastic chapter on what exactly we MEAN when we say witchcraft. He argues that the study of witchcraft is “of fundamental significance in the history and sociology of ideas, in the study of folk religion, in the history of social protest, in the history of the church and . . . religious suppression,” and that his book is in conversation with other effort in the “sociology of knowledge.” Russell historicizes and theorizes on the spectre of the witch as a purveyor of “low magic” and as a mutable, shifting presence of protest, argument, perversion and resistance emerging in response to the upsurge of Christianity in Europe in the middle ages in a particular way, and that has echoes in China, the American Southwest, and Vietnam in other moments. But he also presents tangible, material historical facts regarding the actual humans who were pulled into witchcraft trials, who led them, and who recorded them. The witchcraft that Russell studies is bound up in the study of the

development of individual and social psychology in a fascinating and unique way. It rumbles and oscillates on, what I feel, are similar frequencies to that of the picaresque perspective, but in a space that is one step removed – one step more veiled. Russell's analysis leads us to a place where we can understand the witch as a partner of the picaro: a pre-modern figure that is disfigured by modernity, but persists; a question mark in the face of 18th century enlightenment, and a challenge to the modern dominating drive of subjectivity.

(He also explains Montague Summers and the chapters of witchcraft history propelled into the 20th century by people who *still believe in witches in the way that the inquisitors did*, which is important)

Concepts: natural magic in the renaissance and prior, “low magic,” the history of knowledge

technicians of such work to satanic fantasy. Also, they illustrate an obsession with fascinatingly contradictory feminine bodies, as frail and vulnerable and simultaneously invigorated with carnality, lust, and vigor. These pages demonstrate a peculiar association of feminine vulgar embodiment that evokes a mirror of the picaresque.

Lecture about Atlanticism in the 17th century onward

- how it parallels (sort of) the rise of the novel. Talk about colonialism and violent orientalism and how the echoes of imperialism shape how we teach and think about the flow of history, but that it is our job to disrupt that. While understanding that the push of colonial forces violated and interfered with colonized peoples and lands more so than those people messed up the colonizers, we also can't repeatedly ignore how the traditions/literary cultures etc. of Native Americans (as distinct peoples, not a homogenous group), West Africans, et al were formative in the production of American culture. We have to recognize the shape of how we learn things, and register that when we continue to learn in the shape of manifest destiny, we reproduce its violences.

Listen: Dolly Parton's “These old Bones” from *Halo and Horns*

- <https://youtu.be/LgfGyUwgcJ0>
- Parton's 2002 album continued her early 21st century experimentation with revisiting and expounding on bluegrass/mountain hill music – the musical traditions of her childhood, in Tennessee's smoky mountains, as well as the roots of country music and a particular mixing place of Appalachian folk tradition. “These Old Bones” tells the story of an “old conjure woman,” an

Appalachian Granny Witch archetype, who occupies a simultaneously honored and marginalized position in her local society. She is privy to secret knowledge about her social world and is consulted by everyone in the area for advice etc, but her child is taken away from her as she is called “crazy.” The song is song in two voices, switching between the first person narration of the old woman and the narrative of the girl who has gone to see her. It turns out (of course) that the girl is the child of the conjure woman who was taken away years ago. This song’s plot runs parallel to the plot of *Summer*, though it perhaps romanticizes what Wharton fetishizes. That romanticization, however, also serves to enrich the insider cultural knowledge of the women of hill culture, who Wharton rather problematically demonizes.

Read: *Summer* by Edith Wharton, Ch. 1 – 10

Edith Wharton’s odd novel of hill country in rural New England follows the inauspicious birth, life, seduction, and almost-downfall of Charity Royall. A strange picaresque figure, she is aided and hurt by two older women – her own mother, from whom she is estranged since birth, and Dr. Merkle, a vivid abortionist based on the real-life Madame Restell.

From *Edith Wharton’s Brave New Politics* by Dale M. Bauer, Ch.1, “*Summer* and the Rhetoric of Reproduction.”

This essay situates *Summer* within the context of eugenics, feminism, and the reproductive rights discussion at the turn of the century, and contemplates how *Summer* links those discourses. The novel represents the failure of the maternal instinct as the supposed signpost for the downfall of western civilization, and demonstrates how Charity Royall is Wharton’s counterexample to both the New Woman and the Mother figure. Bauer argues that Wharton subtly asserts her concern for the legislation of private morality and that other, polarized critics, who see Charity and Royall’s marriage as either sick or wonderful, miss *Summer*’s “more profound cultural work” (35), which ushers Wharton into her “career’s next phase of cultural engagement and revision” (35). In Bauer’s reading, Charity offers a mode of symbolic and physical limited resistance, where she is not solely a helpless victim or a compliantly feminine product of her environment. Bauer also historicizes and examines the role of female doctors in the early 20th century, post-Comstock laws, and how Dr. Merkle acts in the text as a stand-in for the real Madame Restell – a huge figure in terms of abortion and national ideology in the late 19th century. Bauer’s psychoanalytic analysis combined with her thorough examination of the role of doctors and midwives in the real New England hill country in the early 1900s provide a through line between the picara figure of Charity Royall and the witch-figures that radiate

around the corners of the texts (Charity's birth mother and Dr. Merkle), dealing in the muck of life and death.

Read: “Indian Shamans and English Witches” by Alfred Cave

Cave’s essay is a historical investigation into how early European settlers of Massachusetts conflated spiritual and religious practices of Pequot and other local tribes with their conceptions of “witchcraft” and “devil worship.” Establishing that the accusation and perceived threat of witchcraft is racialized, Cave’s essay helps us read Wharton’s descriptions of ethnically-ambiguous, denigrated, impoverished mountain folk as racialized subjects. It also provides an entry into reading the native ghosts in the gaps in this text – which are plentiful.

I would prefer to have a text from a Cherokee author examining the conflagrations of euro-american settlers re-constructing Cherokee traditions into witchcraft and racializing the devil, but I haven’t found one yet.

Moll Flanders: first 1/3

Daniel Defoe’s brilliant and elusive picara, the indefatigable Moll, provides a fantastic link between the feminized underclass and the questioning, buzzing role of the picaresque. We will give special consideration to how Defoe uses Moll’s body to fuel her pursuits, Moll’s disguised forays into the trappings of older and more and more veiled women, and of course, the centrally marginalized relationship between Moll and her “dear friend” -the midwife, abortionist, and gang leader of pickpockets and vagabonds.

Read: Smith-Rosenberg, Carroll. *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America*. New York: Oxford UP, 1985. Print.

Smith-Rosenberg’s collection of essays examines social and economic changes in Victorian America related to gender and explores how women engaged in behaviors that disrupted social norms. The chapter “The Abortion Movement and the AMA, 1850-1880” describes how the legality of abortion became a public political debate in those years. She traces perceptions and misconceptions of abortion and questions what “factors led the medical profession in the 1850s and 60s to begin a systematic attack upon America’s time honoured permissive attitudes toward abortion” (223), concluding that the answers lie “in the complex interaction between long-term social and economic change and the wide-ranging effects such change had on the bourgeois birthrate, [and] on relations between bourgeois women and men” (223). Smith-Rosenberg’s historical analysis

informs how to read the use of abortion, reproductive rhetoric, prostitution, the female physician, sexuality and the fear of pregnancy in *Moll Flanders*, while also inviting the reader to question historical legend presented as natural historical fact. How does Smith-Rosenberg's history of abortion in America compare to the English world Defoe presents us with in *Moll*? How can we use feminist reading techniques to read Defoe's rendering of how abortion works, how women think about it, the figure of the child and babies, etc, critically?

Read: Introduction to the second edition and excerpt from *Witches, Midwives and Nurses*

Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English's history of medicine as practiced by women in Europe and early America is a polemic text of feminist history; their introduction to the new edition theorizes on the significance and exigency of their work in the 1970s, corrects some of their mistakes, and tells the story of witchcraft resurging in critical academic circles as well as being an excellent source.

Excerpts from *The Faerie Queen*: Duessa, Phaedra, etc.

"Nightmares of desire: evil women in 'The Faerie Queene.'"

Sydney's use of Duessa is a literary example of the conflict between "witchcraft" and 16th century religious domination that Russell introduces us to. Building on Russell's analysis, we can read Duessa and Phaedra in *The Faerie Queene* with more complexity, and look at Sydney's visions of colonialism and the New World as a way to bridge our reading back into the American side of the Atlantic.

Song of Solomon

Toni Morrison's Atlantic epic of history, memory, and self follows the life of what I would argue is the picaro figure Milkman from his strange, feminized and magical birth and childhood to his coming of age, and then struggles into adulthood travelling in search of a hidden treasure and his hidden past. As Milkman journeys backwards in time into ancestral memory and finds the old house his family used to live in, he finds it is now occupied only by a woman named Circe and her herds of hunting hounds. Circe is the witch figure. Broken feminine witch heritage reflects the fractured heritage of American people from mixed race backgrounds, and the erasure, disconnection, lost histories of lineage and memory.

Read: From *Sula*: Toni Morrison and the idea of Africa: "Introduction: Finding The Elusive but Identifiable Blackness"

El Buscon

This classic of the picaresque genre provides us with the opportunity to intervene into a canonized picaresque work with an eye for a totally bypassed and forgotten character. Pablo's mother is a passionate technician of life and death, and closely attending to her role in the novel could vastly alter our perceptions of it.

“The Economic Basis of Witchcraft” from *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman* by Carol F. Karlsen, pg. 77-117

Explores the reality of New England witch craft trials, accusations, and their relationship to economic social realities from a historical materialist perspective.

Read: *Bodies that Matter*, Introduction (this is long and hard)

As our class reaches its end, I want to bridge our historical witch research into contemporary queer theory. Butler's introduction to *Bodies that Matter*, while challenging, provides a chance to press on the limitations of materiality, bodies, gendered bodies, and the webs of gender that perforate our existences.

From *Witchcraze* by Anne Llewellyn Barstow, “Controlling Women’s Bodies: Violence and Sadism” (this is very short and easy – maybe optional?)

Barstow's history explores the sexuality of torture, and her interpretations of the sadistic, ritualistic spectacles enacted on women's bodies during witch trials. I think this would pair interestingly with Butler.

Read: From Barbara Johnson's *A World of Difference*: “Apostrophe, Animation and Abortion”

Continuing our final press into theory for our last tough week of class, Barbara Johnson's life-changing criticism of Gwendolyn Brooks, the concept of Apostrophe, life, and the address of women. This essay, while difficult, opens up incredible space for interrogating literature in a new way, and I think it's a great essay to read together as a class, if we only work on teasing out its more subtle complexities together, as an introduction to more challenging deconstruction work that students will continue to encounter.

To conclude, Read: from Barbara G. Walker's *Crone*, Ch. 4, “The Terrible Crone”

It's half hippy nonsense and half really great theorizing about crones, orientalizing, and the devouring mother, but I love it. Kali-Ma!

ENG 400: Witches, Midwives and Abortionists: Reading the Feminine Underclass in the Margins of the Picaresque

In the introduction to her formidable collection, *Witches of the Atlantic World*, which we will use in this class, Elaine Breslaw attends to an amusing problem that I encountered years ago when I first started trying to research “the history of witches.” She writes, “No one will learn how to be a witch from this collection of readings. Those currently involved in the newer cults will, however, become better acquainted with the heritage of witchcraft beliefs in the past.” An odd way to begin your book, you might think. But then again, such a warning wouldn’t be included in a collection of primary and secondary sources on the history of attorneys, shepherds, blacksmiths or prostitutes in medieval Europe, west Africa, and colonial America, because teenage girls don’t scavenge book stores and the unsorted corners of new age tarot shops for manuals on how to practice law or sex-work *now* as they did in 16th century England. Those trying to find source material on witches, however, are as mixed a bag as the library shelves where they’re looking.

That tense magnetism, and the fact that even in her serious scholarship, Breslaw wants to recognize it and speak to it, is what draws me to the figure of the witch. And while a broadly drawn, villainous queen character might immediately spring to mind when one considers this character, I am encouraging us to look instead into the margins and corners of literature, where we will find, I suspect, a hidden undercurrent of social knowledge, history, identity, and loss. By reading picaresque novels of the Atlantic region around the turn of modernity, and pairing these works of the (slightly more) mainstream canon with primary texts on witch-hunting, devil worship, and child-stealing, secondary works ranging from the deconstructionist theory of women’s bodies to the economic causes of witch-craze in 17th century Massachusetts, we will challenge canonized thought while reading for insuppressible resistance.

By narrowing our focus on the permanent state of feminized otherness ascribed to certain people in certain social roles, we can further explore the challenging, adapting, shifting narrative of the “picaresque,” as an eternally subjected, but likewise eternally misperceived, veiled, and hidden strata of social existence and power relationships.

Themes – constructions of female sexuality, feminine bodily reality, spectacle, power relationships/dynamics, the Atlantic world, queer time, history, feminist interventions, the novel, violence, mysticism, the occult

GOALS:

Understand the concept of Atlanticism and the Atlantic world as a sphere of multi-continental convergence, and disrupt historical imaginings of colonialism as a force with which Europe inflicts knowledge on the Americas and Africa.

Re-conceptualize the figure of the witch as a trans-historical figure. Challenge ideas of race, gender, bodies, and theology that contribute to this figure.

Grasp the strange trajectory of witch scholarship, and why its critical history is so special, so strange, and often so problematic.

Question the witch in terms of race and class, and apply this intervention to theories of subjectivity parallel to modernity/capitalism/the novel, etc.

Learn about the history of women in the medical profession in America, and the strange re-workings of abortion, birth, and the definition of life that have occurred since 1870. How is the figure of the witch and midwife connected?

Explore how the idea of an underclass/other-class effects narrative structure in the history of the novel – what does tracking what people in this position look like or how they are treated by the structure of the novel tell us about how novelistic structures mutate, adapt, grow, etc. from 17th “inventions” (if not older) into modernist and post-modern experiment?

Perform good close readings.

Experiment and take risks in writing, and complete solid interpretation.

Push our analysis skills.

Change our minds about something we thought we knew.

Practice dedicated listening.

TEXTS:

Summer

Moll Flanders

Song of Solomon

El Buscon

We also have a whole bunch of secondary and primary source reading material! We've come up with a rad reader for you that has all of these pieces included. It's available in the department office and costs 10\$, which is better than the crappy printing costs and all the time.

EXPECTATIONS:

We will have two big assignments in the class – two papers. There's a lot of challenging reading in here, and I want to encourage you to pay attention to that in order to facilitate the best class discussions, as well as spend time researching and developing your own projects, so there's not a lot of extra assignments. Depending on how things go, there's the possibility that we might have an extra short writing assignment if things need to get a little flexible. But largely, we're here to challenge each other theoretically, interpretively, and critically, while opening up a previously closed off subject and figuring out new ways to look at things. That said, it's obvious that we all need to maintain a preposterously high levels of decorum and respect for one another:

You can't interrupt people, you need to be aware and chill about taking up too much space in the classroom and making room for people who think and process at slightly different speeds (we'll talk about this on day 1). We're digging into some pretty deep stuff here and discussing issues that are hot topic stuff and deal with people's *deeply* held beliefs, about such stuff as sexuality, sexual violence, gender identity, genitalia, abortion, life, birth, death. This is a course that really requires a mature attitude and a good spirit. You can't get *mean* at people, even though you are allowed to passionately disagree. And please don't give anybody a hard time for being "too PC" or for discussing the idea of safe spaces – we are scholars, and we thus recognize that trauma and pain exist, even if we don't feel it ourselves, and that we have to establish a modicum of safety in order to speak freely and take risks. We will make one another comfortable as human beings so we can make one another *uncomfortable* as readers, scholars, thinkers, and writers.

There's a lot of reading involved, and we expect you to do it well, to contribute in class, and to apply your reading to your own writing. I expect you to ask for help if you need it, make spirited revisions, and to challenge yourself to do good work.

ASSIGNMENTS

Paper Assignment #1:

6-8 Pages

Due – Week 7

Incorporate at least one outside source – literary criticism or history – in your paper's argument. You are free to choose a text that we've read so far in class, or one that you've read elsewhere.

Choose one of these topics, or come up with your own. If you want to explore your own topic, which is absolutely encouraged, please come talk to me about it by the beginning of week 6 (at least!)

Possible topics:

We are reading a lot of stuff *by* men *about* women, and a lot of stuff in which white men are shaping the identities of women of color. Choosing at least one novel and one secondary text, explore how power influences the shaping of identity in the Atlantic world.

Some of the witch-figures on our syllabus don't even have names. Focus on the power of names, namelessness, and identity in two primary sources or novels.

Perform a close reading of "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" by John Keats. Use primary sources (like the *Malleus Maleficarum*,) to cultural contextualize and challenge the romantic vision of destructive feminine power.

Find a contemporary article about abortion, midwifery, or birth, and use a historical source on the same subject to analyze how contemporary rhetoric has roots in attitudes of the past.

Choose your ooooown!

Paper Assignment #2: 8-10 pages, Due – Last day of Week 10

Either extend your first paper, or choose a new topic. This topic is up to you – unless you'd like to return to a paper idea offered for the first assignment. Whether you're building on your previous writing or starting a new project, this is a chance to get more in depth. In addition to performing close readings of at least one literary text and at least once piece of secondary criticism, I want you to ground your paper in some historical research of your own. Find a primary text we've read in class, or elsewhere, and use it to establish context, read your fictional works with greater depth, or bring a new opportunity for analysis.

If you're feeling stuck, feel free to come brainstorm! And if you're really stuck, here are some broader research topics that I've wanted to explore more in this syllabus:

How have native concepts of witch craft mixed with European ones? What has been colonized or lost, and what has persisted?

The figure of the "granny witch" in Appalachian folklore

The 19th century children's novel *Witch Perkins*

The fluctuations of the meanings of "sorcery" and "witchcraft"

Women healers in African-diaspora communities

Quizzes

I will randomly present three pop-quizzes over the course of the term. They will be really short and brief and easy if you did the reading. It's not to insult your choices and your ability to be responsible, but to recognize that sometimes we all need a little fire to keep it going when the reading gets tough.

ACADEMIC HONESTY:

Don't be ridiculous! We know the academic integrity policies of the university, and we also ought to know that there is literally nothing easier than figuring out if something is plagiarized. Also, I care not for criticism re: the use of "literally" here – we are ready and excited to address the instability and fluidity of language! I will by no means be nice about anybody flouting the aforementioned integrity policies. Not only is it extremely disrespectful to the work of other people, it is a disservice to and silencing of your own voice.

GRADES

Quizzes: 10%

Participation: 25%

Paper # 1: 25%

Paper # 2: 40%

MEETINGS!

Week 1

Day 1

Introduction! Discuss parameters and goals of class as stated above.

Watch: Trailers *The Witches*, *Practical Magic*, scene from *The Last Unicorn*:

<https://youtu.be/1Gw2BCCxL1U> (Mommy Fortuna Imprisons a Harpy/The Unicorn sets the Harpy free), *Sleeping Beauty*, *The Conjuring*, *Black Sunday*, *Sleepy Hollow*, *Pumpkinhead*

Perform brief initial close readings of clips as a class.

Read:

From *The Birth-Mark: Unsettling the American Literary Wilderness* by Susan Howe,
“Introduction: Submarginalia.” Pg. 26-39

Day 2

Watch: *The Craft*

Week 2

Day 1

Read: “The Myth of the Picaro” by Louis Blackburn

Read: “The Malleus Maleficarum and the Construction of Witchcraft” Hans Pieter Broedehl

Read: excerpts from *Malleus Maleficarum*: “Why It Is That Women are Chiefly Addicted to Superstitions,” “That Witches Who are Midwives in Various Ways Kill the Child Conceived in the Womb and, and Procure an Abortion, or if they Do Not Do This, Offer the Children to Devils,” and “How Witch Midwives Commit Most Horrid Crimes where they Either Kill Children or Offer Them to the Devil in Various Ways” pp. 289 – 295 in *Witches of the Atlantic World*.

Day 2

Jeffrey Burton Russell’s *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages*, “The Meaning of Witchcraft,” pg. 1-27 and “Witchcraft in History,” 28-43.

A short Poem from the Atlantic world: Sir Walter Raleigh (maybe)

Week 3

Day 1

Excerpts from *The Faerie Queen*: Duessa, Phaedra, etc.

“Nightmares of desire: evil women in ‘The Faerie Queene.’”

Day 2

Lecture about Atlanticism in the 17th century onward

Listen: Dolly Parton's "These old Bones" from *Halo and Horns*

<https://youtu.be/LgfGyUwgcJ0>

Read: *Summer* by Edith Wharton, Ch. 1 – 10

Week 4

Day 1

Summer cont'd, Ch. 11-20

From *Edith Wharton's Brave New Politics* by Dale M. Bauer, Ch.1, "Summer and the Rhetoric of Reproduction."

Day 2

Finish *Summer*, Ch. 21-27

Read: "Indian Shamans and English Witches" by Alfred Cave

Intro to *Moll Flanders*

Week 5

Day 1

Paper #1 Assigned

Moll Flanders: first 1/3

Day 2

Moll Flanders, cont'd.

Read: Smith-Rosenberg, Carroll. "The AMA Abortion Movement" *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America*. New York: Oxford UP, 1985. Print.

Week 6

Day 1

Moll Flanders, cont'd.

Read: Introduction to the second edition and excerpt from *Witches, Midwives and Nurses*

Watch in class – Clip from *The North and the South*, episode 4, 1:15 – 1:21

Day 2

Built in catch-up/research/workshop day

(optional reading – article on *The Blair Witch Project and the Haunted Wilderness*/watch *The Blair Witch Project*)

Week 7

Day 1

Song of Solomon

Read: From *Sula: Toni Morrison and the idea of Africa*: "Introduction: Finding The Elusive but Identifiable Blackness"

Day 2

Song of Solomon cont'd

From same, "Bandoki: Witches,"

"Banganga: The Specialists"

Week 8

Day 1

Song of Solomon cont'd

Read: "Words, Witches and Woman Trouble," by Jane Kamensky (optional)

Day 2

El Buscon

"The Economic Basis of Witchcraft" from *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman* by Carol F. Karlsen, pg. 77-117

Week 9

Day 1

Finish *El Buscon*

Read: *Bodies that Matter*, Introduction (this is long and hard)

From *Witchcraze* by Anne Llewellyn Barstow, "Controlling Women's Bodies: Violence and Sadism" (this is very short and easy – maybe optional?)

Day 2

Read: From Barbara Johnson's *A World of Difference*: "Apostrophe, Animation and Abortion"

Week 10

Day 1

Watch: *The Witch*

<https://youtu.be/iQXmlf3Sefg>

Day 2

To conclude, Read: from Barbara G. Walker's *Crone*, Ch. 4, "The Terrible Crone"

Brief (VERY informal!!!) presentations on papers – i.e. – just talk for a couple minutes and tell us what your paper was about, challenges you faced, interesting stuff you encountered.

Final thoughts