

Witches and Witchcraft in Early English Drama (Spring 2021)

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In this course, we will read well-loved early modern English plays featuring spells, potions, prophecies, and pacts with the devil, such as Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* (1594) and William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (c. 1605) and *The Tempest* (1611). Our dramatic readings will also include witchcraft plays by other early modern dramatists: John Marsden's *Sophonisba, or The Wonder of Women* (1605), Thomas Middleton's *The Witch* (1612), and Thomas Dekker, John Ford, and William Rowley's *The Witch of Edmonton* (1621).



Image: Witches dancing with devils in *The History of Witches and Witchcraft* (1720), London, The Wellcome Library (<https://publicdomainreview.org/essay/woodcuts-and-witches>)

As we read and watch these early modern plays, we will analyze them alongside contemporary records of witch trials and other pre-modern texts about witchcraft, including King James VI of Scotland/James I of England's *Daemonologie* (1599) and Heinrich Kramer's *Malleus Maleficarum* (1487).

The performance of these plays and the staging of witches and witchcraft on the early modern stage will be a major focus of class discussions and assignments. As a class, we will view and discuss stage productions or film adaptations of at least three of our plays. In one essay for the course, students will analyze theatrical elements of a production, considering the use of the theater space, lighting, sounds, props, and costumes to depict witches and witchcraft in early modern English drama.

BOOKS

The following four books are required. I require that you purchase this edition of *Doctor Faustus* because it allows the reader to compare variants between the two versions, and the text will be significantly different if you use another edition. The witchcraft plays are not readily available anywhere other than the collection below. You can use different editions of Shakespeare as long as they have line numbers, but I recommend the Folger Shakespeare Library editions because they are cheap and include copious notes on the facing page. It will also be slightly easier to follow along in class if you get the Folgers.

- Marlowe, Christopher. *Doctor Faustus*. Ed. Michael Keefer. Second edition. Broadview, 2007. ISBN: 9781551112107.

- Shakespeare, William. *Macbeth*. Ed. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine. Folger Shakespeare Library. Simon and Schuster, 2013. ISBN: 9780743477109.
- ---. *The Tempest*. Ed. Mowat and Werstine. Folger Shakespeare Library. Simon and Schuster, 2016. ISBN: 9780743482837.
- *Three Jacobean Witchcraft Plays*, ed. Peter Corbin and Douglas Sedge (Manchester University Press, 1986), ISBN: 9780719019531.
- All other readings will be available via a link or PDF on Blackboard.

Recommended reading to accompany the Bottesford Witches Game session (taking place March 10): Tracy Borman, *Witches: James I and the English Witch Hunts* (Vintage, 2014). ISBN: 978-0099549147.

If you cannot attend the two class Amazon watch parties (Wednesday nights at 8:00pm), you will have to rent the required versions of *Doctor Faustus* and *The Tempest* in order to complete the posts those weeks.

ASSIGNMENTS

Undergraduate Requirements (ENGL 4713 / WGS 4003)	Deadline	Percentage of final grade
Attendance	ongoing	10%
Participation (contributions during class)	ongoing	6%
OED journals (12) <i>Oxford English Dictionary</i> journal entries: • 3 words per entry, around 5 sentences per word selected • include act, scene, and line number for the word (page number, too, if needed) • cite the OED definition by number and letter when referenced • comment on the significance of the definition to the meaning of the passage in the play	Submit via Blackboard by 4:30pm each Wednesday for 12 weeks (see schedule below for deadlines)	12% (1% each)
Performance papers (2) (2.5–3 pages each) We will all watch a stage adaptation or modern film version of two of our plays, <i>Doctor Faustus</i> and <i>The Tempest</i> . I will hold an Amazon or Netflix watch party on two Wednesday nights at 8:00pm (see schedule below). The watch parties are optional, but if you cannot make it to the watch party, you will have to watch (and pay to rent) it on your own. You will have several days between our	1) Sun., Jan. 31, 11:59pm 2) Sun., Apr. 4, 11:59pm	14% (7% each)

final class on the play and when the performance papers are due. See the Theatrical Elements of Play Productions handout for a guide to the specific aspects of a dramatic performance that you might analyze in your posts.		
Omeka exhibit entries (3) Throughout the semester, as a class all students will contribute entries to an Omeka (online digital) art exhibit focusing on depictions of witches and witchcraft. Each entry should feature an image you find in a database or in the real world, and you should caption the image with a description of about 5–7 sentences. You should include commentary on the historical and cultural context of the image, the significance of the content depicted, and any other details relevant to cultural perceptions of witches and witchcraft.	1) Sun., Jan. 24, 11:59 pm 2) Sun., Feb. 21, 11:59pm 3) Sun., Apr. 18, 11:59pm	9% (3% each)
Literary analysis (5 pages) As a literary analysis, this paper should be grounded in close readings of one of the first three plays we read in class.	Sun., Mar. 7, 11:59pm <i>On Feb. 24, bring notes and quotes for the paper to class.</i> <i>On Mar. 3, bring a draft of the paper to class for peer review.</i>	15%
Bottesford Witches Game and Paper (select your own play and film)		
• As a class, we will play the Bottesford Witches (1618) Game, created by Dr. Averill Earls.	Wed., Mar. 10, 4:30–7:10pm <i>Don't miss this class!</i>	Required for writing assignment
• Reflection and analysis paper (2.5–3 pages) After playing the game, you will write a paper that both reflects on your experience playing the game and incorporates analysis of historical sources on witchcraft, including, for example, the assigned readings on the Bottesford witch trials of 1618 and excerpts from other witchcraft pamphlets.	Sun., Mar. 28, 11:59pm	8%
Final research project		
• Proposal (1 page), plus bibliography of 3 potential secondary sources and the play that is the focus of your paper	Sun., Apr. 11, 11:59pm <i>On Apr. 7, bring ideas for a brainstorming session.</i>	4%
• Progress report and outline	Sun., Apr. 25, 11:59pm	2%

PR: at least one paragraph, identifying any issues you are experiencing with the paper, including finding secondary sources.		
Outline: at least five body paragraph ideas.		
• Final paper (8–10 pages)	Wed., May 5, 4:30pm	18%
Requires at least six secondary sources cited within the body of the paper. See assignment sheet for more details.	<i>On Apr. 28, bring a draft of the paper to class for peer review.</i>	
• Final presentation	Wed., May 5, 4:30–7:10pm	2%

Graduate requirements (ENGL 5413)

- Final paper will be 14–15 pages and require at least eight secondary sources.
- An additional paper and presentation will be required. The assignment is a comparative analysis (5 pages) and recorded presentation (10 minutes) that analyzes one play and at least one early modern historical source (like a pamphlet) on witchcraft. The paper is due Sun., Apr. 18, and the presentation is due Sun., Apr. 25.
- For graduate students, there are several modifications to the weight of the assignments listed above. I will create a Google Doc for each of you to keep track of your current grade since the Blackboard gradebook will not exactly reflect how your grade should be weighted.
 - Each performance paper counts for 5% of the final grade, each Omeka entry for 2%, and the Bottesford Game reflection for 5%.
 - The comparative analysis counts for 7% and the recorded presentation for 3%.

COURSE SCHEDULE

- Jan. 13 **Cunning folk, charms, and beliefs about witchcraft**
- Averill Earls and Sarah Handley Cousins, “‘Wicked Practices and Sorcery’: Cunning Folk, Witch Trials, and the Tragedy of Joan Flower and Her Daughters,” podcast, [link](#)
 - Introduction to Tracy Borman’s *Witches* (PDF on BB)
- Jan. 20 **Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus* (1592–93), pp. 73–171 (full text)**
- OED Journal 1 due by 4:30pm
 - Entry 1 to Omeka exhibit due by Sun., Jan. 24
- Jan. 27 **Marlowe, *Faustus*, cont.; skim comparison to B version, pp. 173–237**
- OED Journal 2 due by 4:30pm
 - Watch party of *Doctor Faustus* at 8:00pm (optional, but must watch for paper)
 - Performance paper 1 due by Sun., Jan. 31
- Feb. 3 **William Shakespeare, *Macbeth* (1606?), Acts I–III (pp. 7–115)**
- OED Journal 3 due by 4:30pm

- Feb. 10 **Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, Acts IV–V (pp. 119–191)**
 • OED Journal 4 due by 4:30 pm
- Feb. 17 **Thomas Middleton, *The Witch (1612)*, Epistle and Acts I–II, pp. 86–110**
 • OED Journal 5 due by 4:30 pm
 • Entry 2 to Omeka exhibit due by Sun., Feb. 21
- Feb. 24 **Middleton, *The Witch*, Acts III–V, pp. 111–42**
 • OED Journal 6 due by 4:30 pm
 • *Bring to class*: notes and quotes for literary analysis
- Mar. 3 **History of witch trials and pamphlets about witchcraft**
 • Reading: selections from witchcraft pamphlets in PDF on BB
 • *Bring to class*: draft of literary analysis
 • Literary analysis due Sun., Mar. 7
- Mar. 10 **The Bottesford Witches (1618) Game session** (created by Dr. Averill Earls)
 • Required reading: [website](#) on the Bottesford witchcraft case of 1618
 • Recommended reading: Tracy Borman’s *Witches* (2014)
- Mar. 17 Spring Break, no class
- Mar. 24 **William Shakespeare, *The Tempest (1611)*, Acts I–II, pp. 7–87**
 • OED Journal 7 due by 4:30 pm
 • Reflection on Bottesford Game due Sun., Mar. 28
- Mar. 31 **Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, Acts III–V and Epilogue, pp. 91–171**
 • OED Journal 8 due by 4:30 pm
 • Watch party of *The Tempest* at 8:00pm (optional, but must watch for paper)
 • Performance paper 2 due Sun., Apr. 4
- Apr. 7 **William Rowley, Thomas Dekker, and John Ford, *The Witch of Edmonton (1621)*, Prologue and Acts I–II, pp. 144–71**
 • OED Journal 9 due by 4:30 pm
 • *Bring to class*: ideas for brainstorming session on final research paper topics
 • Proposal for final research paper due Sun., Apr. 11
- Apr. 14 **Rowley, Dekker, and Ford, *Witch of Edmonton*, Acts III–V, pp. 171–208**
 • OED Journal 10 due by 4:30 pm
 • Entry 3 to Omeka exhibit due by Sun., Apr. 18
 • *Graduate students only: comparative analysis due by Sun., Apr. 18*
- Apr. 21 **John Marston, *Sophonisba (1606)*, Prologus and Acts I–II, pp. 34–56**

- OED Journal 11 due by 4:30 pm
- Progress report, including outline, for final research paper due Sun., Apr. 25
- *Graduate students only: recorded presentation on comparative analysis due by Sun., Apr. 25*

Apr. 28

Marston, *Sophonisba*, Acts III–V, pp. 56–84

- OED Journal 12 due by 4:30 pm
- *Bring to class*: draft of final paper for peer review
- *In class*: viewing and discussion of collaborative Omeka exhibit

May 5

Meeting for final project presentations

- Final research paper due by 4:30pm
- Final presentations from 4:30–7:10pm