REL 3073

Western Occult Traditions

Section: RVC

Internet/Fully Online

Spring Term 2027

Course Time Zone: Eastern Time (ET). Course due dates and times are according to this time zone.

Course Prerequisites

Course prerequisites, if any, are listed below.

Course Description

Western esotericism encompasses a diverse body of religious, philosophical, and practical traditions associated with claims to special knowledge, correspondences between the human and cosmic orders, and the transformation of the self and the world. These traditions have

developed within—and across the boundaries of—Christianity, Judaism, Islam, modern science, and other religious and intellectual cultures. Once largely neglected, in the last few decades the study of the Western occult traditions has grown into a significant field of research. In this course we will examine the development of these traditions from antiquity to the present, paying close attention to their influence on the larger culture. We will read representative texts from the various traditions. We will also consider the nature and value of current research paradigms employed in the academic study of esotericism and the occult. Particular attention will be given to the transmission, reinterpretation, and reinvention of esoteric knowledge, and to the historical and methodological problems involved in studying it.

Textbook and Course Materials

Western Esotericism

Subtitle: A Concise History

Required/Recommended: Required

Authors: Antoine Faivre

Publisher: SUNY Press

Publication Date: 2010

Copyright Date: 2010

ISBN 10: 1438433783

ISBN 13: 978-1438433783

Chapters/Pages: 136

Western Esotericism

Subtitle: A Guide for the Perplexed

Required/Recommended: Required

Authors: Wouter Hanegraaff

Publisher: Bloomsbury

Publication Date: 2013

Copyright Date: 2013

ISBN 10: 1441136466

ISBN 13: 978-1441136466

Chapters/Pages: 224

Panther Book Pack

Get all required course materials for $22 per undergrad credit hour through Panther Book Pack. You'll be charged automatically unless you opt out within 3 days after the add/drop deadline.

For more details, to compare costs, and to learn how to access your course materials, visit the Panther Book Pack information page on FIU OneStop.

Student Learning Outcomes/Objectives

- • trace the major development of Western occult traditions from antiquity to our day
- • describe and discuss the major analytical paradigms employed in the academic study of esotericism and the occult
- • analyze and interpret primary and secondary sources in

the history of Western esotericism; • recognize and articulate ways in which esoteric traditions have shaped and been shaped by Western and non-Western historical development

- • distinguish documented historical transmission from later claims of continuity, recovery, or ancient origins

Expectations of this Course

This is an online course, which means most (if not all) of the course work will be conducted online. Expectations for performance in an online course are the same as a traditional course. In fact, online courses require a degree of self-motivation, self-discipline, and technology skills, which can make these courses more demanding for some students.

Students are expected to:

- **review the Getting Started page** located in the course modules;
- **introduce yourself to the class** during the first week by posting a self-introduction in the appropriate discussion;
- **take the practice quiz** to ensure that your computer is compatible with the learning management system, Canvas;
- **interact online** with the instructor and peers;
- **review and follow the course calendar** and weekly

outlines;

- **log in** to the course **X times** per week;
- **respond to discussions** by the due date specified;
- **respond to emails** within **X days**;
- **submit assignments** by the corresponding deadline.

The instructor will:

- **log in** to the course **X times** per week;
- **respond to emails** within **24 hours**;
- **grade assignments** and/or provide feedback within **X days** of the assignment deadline.

Assignments & Assessments

You are responsible for completing the following assignments.

Infographic Project: You will create a visual graphic organizer that highlights a major idea discussed in class this semester. The type of organization is up to you (e.g. timeline, organizational chart or initiatic lineage, main ideas of one school or tradition, etc.) and you may propose your own topic, but all topics must be approved by me. You should strive to present the information in a concise and visually appealing manner.

Examinations: There will be a midterm and a final examination. Both exams will be based on the readings and the lectures and will consist of 50 multiple choice questions. You will have 50 minutes for each exam. The final exam is not cumulative: it covers only material from the second half of the semester.

Research Paper: You will write a term paper on any topic (person/place/

time/thing) relating to the course that interests you. The topic may further develop an aspect of something discussed in the course or it may introduce something left out. In either case, the topic must be approved by me. You will submit a one-paragraph topic proposal identifying your subject, provisional research question, and preliminary sources in Week 5; and an annotated bibliography of at least five sources (including at least three scholarly sources) in Week 9. Each annotation should briefly summarize the source and explain its relevance to your paper. You should distinguish primary sources from scholarly analyses and consider the reliability of historical claims. These submissions are required stages of the research paper, not separate graded assignments. Paper length should be 8-10 pages, excluding bibliography.

The research paper should be printed double-spaced, with 12-point Times New Roman font. Margins for the pages should be 1 inch on all sides and the style should conform to some standard (preferably the *Chicago Manual of Style*). You may use either footnotes or endnotes. No cover page is necessary.

Grading

Assignment	Weight
Infographic Project	20%
Midterm Examination	25%
Final Examination	25%
Research Paper	30%
Total	**100%**

Letter	Range (%)	Letter	Range (%)	Letter	Range (%)
A	95 or above	B	83-86	C	70-76
A-	90-94	B-	80-82	D	60-69
B+	87-89	C+	77-79	F	59 or less

Proctored Exams

Please note that the information contained in this section applies only if your course requires a proctored exam.

Through a careful examination of this syllabus, it is the student's responsibility to determine whether this online course requires proctored exams. Please visit our Student Proctored Exam Instructions webpage for important information concerning proctored exams, proctoring centers, and important forms.

Schedule of Topics

MODULE I — FOUNDATIONS: KNOWLEDGE, COSMOS, AND ESOTERIC INTERPRETATION

Week 1 — INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION

Read: Faivre, Intro.; Wouter J. Hanegraaff, "Occult/Occultism," *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism* (Brill, 2006), 884-889; Hanegraaff, *Western Esotericism*, Chap. 1; Egil Asprem and Julian Strube, "Esotericism's Expanding Horizon: Why This Book Came to Be," *New Approaches to the Study of Esotericism* (Brill, 2021), 1-19.

Week 2 — HERMETISM, GNOSTICISM, AND LATE ANTIQUITY

Read: Faivre, Chap. 1; Dylan Burns, "Receptions of Revelations," *New Approaches to the Study of Esotericism* (2021), 20-44; "Poimandres," *Hermetica* (CUP, 2000); Epiphanius, *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis*, I.26-27; selections from the *Apocryphon of John*.

Week 3 — MEDIEVAL TRANSMISSIONS: KABBALAH, ASTROLOGY, AND ALCHEMY

Read: Hanegraaff, *Western Esotericism*, Chap. 4; Liana Saif, "'That I

Did Love the Moor to Live with Him': Islam in/and the Study of 'Western Esotericism,'" *New Approaches to the Study of Esotericism* (2021), 67-87; *Sefer Yetzirah*, Chaps. 1-2; *Picatrix*, Book I, Chaps. 1-2; *Emerald Tablet*.

Week 4 — RENAISSANCE HERMETISM AND NATURAL MAGIC

Read: Faivre, Chap. 2; Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, selected theses on magic and Cabala from the *900 Conclusions* (1486); Henry Cornelius Agrippa, Chaps. 1-6 and 10-15, *Occult Philosophy* (Llewellyn, 2017).

MODULE II — TRANSFORMATION: ESOTERICISM AND THE MAKING OF MODERNITY

Week 5 — ROSICRUCIANISM AND FREEMASONRY

Read: Nevill Drury, *Stealing Fire from Heaven*, Chap. 2; Henrik Bogdan, *Western Esotericism and Rituals of Initiation*, Chap. 4; *Fama Fraternitatis* (1614); Hanegraaff, *Western Esotericism*, Chap. 6.

Submit: RESEARCH PAPER TOPIC PROPOSAL.

Week 6 — ENLIGHTENMENT, ROMANTICISM, AND THE OCCULT REVIVAL

Read: Faivre, Chaps. 3-4; Emanuel Swedenborg, *Heaven and Hell*, §§ 29-40; Eliphas Lévi, Intro. and Chap. 1, *The Doctrine and Ritual of High Magic* (Weiser, 1990); H. P. Blavatsky, "Practical Occultism" (1888).

Week 7 — THE GOLDEN DAWN

Read: Bogdan, Chap. 6; Drury, Chap. 3; Resurgam, "Some Thoughts on the Imagination," *Ritual Magic of the Golden Dawn* (Destiny, 1997); Sub-Spe, "Essay on Clairvoyance and Travelling in the Spirit Vision," ibid.; N.O.M., "The Aims and Means of Adeptship," ibid.

MODULE III — MODERN OCCULTISM: SCIENCE, CONSCIOUSNESS, AND TRANSFORMATION

Week 8 — DISENCHANTMENT AND MODERN OCCULT

CULTURE

Read: Hanegraaff, *Western Esotericism*, Chap. 7; Alex Owen, Intro. and Chap. 8, *The Place of Enchantment* (Univ. of Chicago Press, 2004).
Take: MIDTERM EXAM.

Week 9 — NATURALIZING AND PSYCHOLOGIZING MAGIC

Read: Egil Asprem, "Magic Naturalized," *Aries* 8 (2008); C. G. Jung, "Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious," *The Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious* (Princeton University Press-Bollingen, 1996); Aleister Crowley, "The Initiated Interpretation of Ceremonial Magic," *The Goetia* (Weiser, 1995).
Submit: RESEARCH PAPER ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY.

Week 10 — ALEISTER CROWLEY

Read: Drury, Chap. 4; Hugh B. Urban, *Magia Sexualis*, Chap. 4; Aleister Crowley, *Liber AL vel Legis* (*The Book of the Law*), Chaps. 1-3; Crowley, Introduction to *Magick in Theory and Practice* (Weiser, 1997).

Week 11 — INDIA, TANTRA, AND THE OCCULT WORLD AFTER CROWLEY

Read: Gordan Djurdjevic, *India and the Occult*, Intro. and Chaps. 4-5; Julian Strube, *Global Tantra* (Oxford, 2022), Introduction; Peter J. Carroll, Liber Null, "Liber MMM" (1978; 1987 edition, pp. 13-26).
Submit: INFOGRAPHIC PROJECT.

MODULE IV — CONTEMPORARY ESOTERICISM: REINVENTION AND DIFFUSION

Week 12 — WITCHCRAFT AND WICCA

Read: Drury, Chap. 6; Bogdan, Chap. 7; Gerald Gardner, *Witchcraft Today* (1954), Intro. and Chap. 1; Ethan Doyle White, "The Creation of 'Traditional Witchcraft'" (2018); Robert Cochrane, "The Craft Today" (1964); and selections from Andrew D. Chumbley, "What Is Traditional Craft?" (1996).

Week 13 — SATANISM AND THE LEFT HAND PATH

Read: Drury, Chap. 7; Urban, Chapter 7; Anton LaVey, *The Satanic Bible* (1969), "The Book of Satan" (selections); Hugh Urban, "The Church of Satan and the Temple of Set" (2015); Kennet Granholm, "The Left-Hand Path and Post-Satanism" (2012); and selections from Aquino's The Book of Coming Forth by Night (1975).

Week 14 — THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Read: Drury, Chaps. 8-9; Kennet Granholm, "The Secular, the Post-Secular and the Esoteric in the Public Sphere" (2012); selected sections from Chris Miller, "How Modern Witches Enchant TikTok" (2022); and Lionel Obadia and Olivier Servais, "Digital Witchcraft 2.0" (2026).
Submit: RESEARCH PAPER.

Week 15 — EXAM WEEK

Complete: FINAL EXAM.

Course Communication

Communication in this course will take place via **the Canvas Inbox**. Check out the Canvas Guide to learn how to communicate with your instructor and peers using the Canvas Inbox.

I will respond to all correspondence within **X days**.

Policies & Resources

Before starting this course, please review the Policies & Resources Page in Canvas, which includes comprehensive information on various University and Course Level Policies, such as:

- University Policies

- Accessibility and Accommodations
- Online Etiquette
- Technical Requirements and Skills
- Computer & Digital Literacy Skills
- Course Technology Accessibility Statements and Privacy Policies
- Academic Integrity
- Copyright Statement
- Nondiscrimination Statement
- Panthers Care & Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)
- Fair Use Policy

Zoom Video Conference

Zoom is a video conference tool that you can use to interact with your professor and fellow students by sharing screens, chatting, broadcasting live video/audio, and taking part in other interactive online activities.

Zoom meetings can be accessed via the Zoom link in the course navigation menu. Once you click on the Zoom link, it will route you to join the meeting for the respective class session. You will also be able to view upcoming meetings, previous meetings that you have already joined, and meeting recordings. Before joining an actual class session:

- Reference the Zoom Student Tutorials to learn about the tool, how to access your meeting room, and share your screen.
- Access the Zoom Test Meeting Room to test out the software before joining an actual session.

If you encounter any technical difficulties, please contact the FIU Canvas Help Team. Please ensure you contact support immediately upon the issue occurring.

Nondiscrimination Statement

The **Office of Civil Rights (OCR)** is responsible for ensuring that FIU maintains a workplace and learning environment free from discrimination, where current and prospective faculty, staff, and students are treated equitably. If any student, employee, or applicant has a sincere and reasonable belief that they have been discriminated against or harassed based on age, color, disability, marital status, ethnic or national origin, race, religion, retaliation, sex, or any other protected category, they can report their concerns to the OCR team through report.fiu.edu.