

Relg 350-0 RELIGION AND MAGIC

Spring 2003

Richard Kieckhefer

TTh 9:30-10:50, Parkes 222

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Readings (available at Norris Center Bookstore):

Richard Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites: A Necromancer's Manual of the Fifteenth Century* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998).

Lee Siegel, *Net of Magic: Wonders and Deceptions in India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

T.M. Luhrmann, *Persuasions of the Witch's Craft: Ritual Magic in Contemporary England* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989).

Plus photocopy book (available at Quartet Copies, 818 Clark). *Bring to class.*

Schedule of lectures, discussions, and reading

Apr. 1st: Introduction: classical theories of religion and magic

A. Religion and magic in Asia

Apr. 3rd: Magic in early India: the Atharvaveda. Read photocopy book, texts 1-21.

Apr. 8th: Weather-magic from Tibet to Central Asia. Read Siegel, pp. 1-146.

Apr. 10th: Trials for magic in Asia. Read Siegel, pp. 147-316; photocopy book, text 22..

Apr. 15th: Magic in modern India: discussion. Read Siegel, pp. 317-444.

B. Religion and magic in Graeco-Roman antiquity and in the Middle Ages

Apr. 17th: Curse tablets and magical papyri in the ancient Mediterranean (Jan. 21st). Read photocopy book, texts 23-37.

Apr. 22nd: Miracle and "magic" in early Christianity. Read photocopy book, texts 38-47.

Apr. 24th: Magic from late antiquity through the late Middle Ages. Read photocopy book, texts 48-69.

Apr. 29th: Demonic magic in late medieval Europe. Read Kieckhefer.

May 1st: From magic to witchcraft in late medieval Europe. Read photocopy book, texts 70-97.

C. Magic and witchcraft in tribal cultures

May 6th: Religion and magic in tribal cultures. Read photocopy book, texts 98-99.

May 13th: Johannes Harnischfeger. Reading to be provided.

D. Cultural exchange: magic in Judaism, Islam, and Christianity

May 15th: Jewish and Muslim influences. Read photocopy book, texts 100-10.

May 20th: Christian Hermeticism and Cabala: Marsilio Ficino, Giovanni Pico della

Mirandola, and Johannes Reuchlin. Read photocopy book, text 111.

F. Modern ritual magic

May 22nd: Early modern magic. Read Luhrmann, pp. 3-121.

May 27th: The rise of Neopaganism. Read Luhrmann, pp. 122-266.

May 29th: The rationality of magic. Read Luhrmann, pp. 267-356.

Visitor. On May 13th we will have a visit by a German scholar named Johannes Harnischfeger, who has studied (and indeed had experience from the inside as a member-observer in) a Christian anti-witchcraft cult in Nigeria. He has videos and other materials to show. In addition to his appearance in class, he will be presenting a movie (Monday evening, May 12th, time and place to be announced) and leading further discussion on witch-hunting in contemporary Africa (Tuesday afternoon, May 13th, 4:00, in the Religion Department seminar room). The movie shows how a militia fights against alleged witches and uses computer animation to simulate occult forces (e.g., to show how sorcerers use magic to become bullet-proof or invisible). *Participation at these events is expected for students enrolled in this class.*

Reaction papers. For every class period students should write reaction papers of half a page to a full page. These should discuss the assigned readings, raising questions and making observations about matters of interest.

Term papers. Each student will write a paper of approximately 5,000 words on a topic approved by the instructor. This paper is due at the end of final exam week. Examples of possible topics:

The role of monks in Asian magic

The relationship between miracle and magic in the New Testament

Comparison of late medieval European witch-hunting and contemporary African witch-hunting

T.M. Luhrmann's conception of the rationality of magic

But these are merely topics, and ideally the starting point for a term paper should be not so much a topic as a problem or question. Thus, for example:

How has the character and structure of Buddhist monasticism affected the role of monks in the practice of magic?

What are the strengths and weaknesses of three major works on the relationship between miracle and magic in the New Testament (e.g., those of Morton Smith, Howard Clark Kee, and John M. Hull)?

How does the role of secular and ecclesiastical authorities in late medieval European witch-hunting compare with the role of authorities in contemporary African witch-hunting?

How does T.M. Luhrmann's conception of the rationality of magic relate to modern philosophical notions of rationality?

Grades. Grades for the course will be based on class participation (33%), reaction papers (33%), and term papers (33%).