



## HISTORY 497.01E: THE SALEM WITCH TRIALS COURSE SYLLABUS: SUMMER I 2014



T. H. Matteson, *The Trial of George Jacobs, August 5th, 1692* (1855)  
Peabody and Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts

**Instructor:** Associate Professor John H. Smith

**Class Location/Time:** Ferguson Social Sciences 124 / Mon.- Thurs. 10:00-11:50 a.m.

**Office Location:** Ferguson Social Sciences 117

**Office Hours:** Monday-Wednesday, 1:00-4:00 p.m., or by appointment

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## COURSE INFORMATION

**Course Prerequisites/Co-requisites: None**

**Materials – Textbooks, Readings, Supplementary Readings:**

*Textbooks Required:*

Richard Godbeer, *The Salem Witch Hunt: A Brief History with Documents*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2011. ISBN13: 978-0-312-48455-2

Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974. ISBN10: 0-674-78526-6

Carol F. Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1987. ISBN10: 0-393-31759-5

Mary Beth Norton, *In the Devil's Snare: The Salem Witchcraft Crisis of 1692*. New York: Vintage Books, 2002. ISBN10: 0-375-70690-9

*Supplemental Materials:*

Xeroxed handouts

Various items posted to eCollege's "Doc Sharing" section

**Course Description:**

No event in the history of colonial America is more controversial or magnetic as the Salem Witchcraft Trials (1691-93), prompting historian Mary Beth Norton to refer to it as “the 800-pound gorilla” of colonial American history. However, the strangeness of the event does not come from our present-day assumption of early modern ignorance and Puritan superstitions, but rather from the fact that it was a strange event for the late seventeenth century itself—an anomaly. Through the study of the trial transcripts and related documents of the investigation, as well as a few of the landmark scholarly works on the events of 1691-93, students will learn about the Puritans’ worldview and the socio-political milieu that shaped their reactions to the events leading up to the trials, become intimately familiar with the dynamics of the episode from beginning to end, and assess the historiography of the Salem witch trials in both monographs and articles.

**Student Learning Outcome:**

Students will demonstrate an understanding of the ways religious, diplomatic, political, and social factors combined in a unique way to create the crisis precipitating the Salem witch trials.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

**Instructional / Methods / Activities Assessments**

This course consists of a series of activities and assessments to assist students in achieving the outcomes/objectives for the course and instructional units/modules. Each week students will work on various combinations of readings, discussions, and research.

Participation: (100 pts., 25% of course grade)

Student Learning Outcome: Students will demonstrate an understanding of the ways religious, diplomatic, political, and social factors combined in a unique way to create the crisis precipitating the Salem witch trials.

Participation in class discussions is intended to allow students to discuss substantively issues pertaining to the topics at hand, and will serve to inform the Instructor about how well students are absorbing course content. Facility in oral communication will thus be developed through these activities.

Readings Quizzes: (100 pts., 25% of course grade)

Student Learning Outcome: Students will demonstrate an understanding of the ways religious, diplomatic, political, and social factors combined in a unique way to create the crisis precipitating the Salem witch trials.

The readings quizzes are designed to test students' comprehension of the readings for each particular day a quiz is administered, testing the depth of their knowledge of the topic(s) at hand and their analytical skills. Administration will be random, and each quiz will take up no more than 10 minutes of class time at the beginning of each class period. Grading will be on a 0-10 point scale for each quiz, with a running average maintained through the semester that will be adjusted to a score from 0-100 at the end of the semester.

Final Exam: (100 pts., 25% of course grade)

Student Learning Outcomes: Students will demonstrate an understanding of the ways religious, diplomatic, political, and social factors combined in a unique way to create the crisis precipitating the Salem witch trials.

The final exam, to be administered via eCollege, will be an open-book examination wherein students will be required to write substantive analytical essays in response to a series of questions within a two-hour time period. Students will be required to utilize their absorption of the course content, supplemented by their use of the course texts as evidentiary support, in order to compose fulsome responses to questions that test their understanding of the course content.

Research Paper: (100 pts., 25% of course grade)

Student Learning Outcome: Students will demonstrate an understanding of the ways religious, diplomatic, political, and social factors combined in a unique way to create the crisis precipitating the Salem witch trials.

The research paper will be a case analysis of one accused witch provided for you by the Instructor. Using the documents found in *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunts*, you will be provided with photocopies of all transcribed primary sources pertaining to the progress of your individual's accusation, trial, and outcome (execution, conviction and reprieve, or acquittal) in the form of a dossier. Then, using the course texts and whatever other sources you wish to consult, you will write a detailed narrative of the circumstances surrounding your individual's case, including an analysis of why s/he was accused, tried, and what the outcome for him or her was. Students will gain further instruction in the art of researching and writing academic essays.

The paper must conform to the following physical parameters:

Processed using MS Word or WordPerfect in 12 pt. Times New Roman font  
1-inch margins all around, and double-spaced text  
12-15 pages in length (*not* including the bibliography)  
All sources must be cited using footnotes in the Turabian/Chicago style  
There must be a bibliography of works cited at the end of the paper  
All pages must be numbered

**Failure to meet most or all of the above requirements will result in an automatic F for the assignment. Failure to do the assignment at all will result in an F for the course.**

#### **Concerning Turnitin**

All groups will be required to submit the final draft of their paper to an eCollege dropbox, which will automatically run it through Turnitin ([www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com)), a web-based plagiarism detection program. It scours the Worldwide Web and its database of all submissions (over 135 million so far) for evidence of "lifted" material indicative of plagiarism. It generates a report that notes the percentage of material that appears in other places, and highlights all examples along with the sources from which they came. I do not employ this service based on a prior assumption of guilt or nefariousness on the student's part, but rather as an aid to students learning how to avoid committing overt and incidental plagiarism, and students are asked to trust me to know how to use this service wisely and without prejudice. Please see Turnitin's FAQ page for answers to how the service works, after which you may consult with me for further information and assurances.

#### **Grading**

Grading will be calculated using a standard 10-point scale, with course elements weighted accordingly:

90-100	A
80-89	B
70-79	C
60-69	D
0-59	F

Participation (100 pts.)	25%
Research Paper (100 pts.)	25%
Readings Quizzes (10 pts. each)	25%
Final Exam (100 pts.)	25%

#### **TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS**

As this course is conducted through eCollege, students will require the following hardware and software:

*Our campus is optimized to work in a Microsoft Windows environment. Windows XP or newer, and Internet Explorer 6.0 or newer is best.*

*Internet access/connection—high speed preferred (not dial-up).*

*Word Processor (preferably Microsoft Word 1997-2013 or newer).*

#### **ACCESS AND NAVIGATION**

This course will be facilitated using eCollege, the Learning Management System used by Texas A&M University-Commerce. To get started with the course, go to: <https://leo.tamuc-commerce.edu/login.aspx>.

You will need your CWID and password to log in to the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact Technology Services at 903.468.6000 or [helpdesk@tamuc.edu](mailto:helpdesk@tamuc.edu).

## COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

**Interaction with Instructor Statement:**

Office hours are given at the top of this syllabus, and are posted outside of my door. Arrangements can be made if a student cannot meet with me during regular office hours for consultations. Email is the most reliable method of reaching me outside of my office. Expect a reply within 24 to 36 hours. Students may also be able to reach me by phone during office hours. In the event that a student leaves a voicemail, do not leave a callback number, but rather send an email or wait to see me during office hours.

## COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

**Academic Honesty**

It is the policy of the University, the History Department, and the instructor that no form of plagiarism or cheating will be tolerated. Plagiarism is defined as the deliberate use of another's work and claiming it as one's own. This means ideas as well as text, whether paraphrased or presented verbatim (word-for-word). You are neither required nor expected to come up with original ideas about, or new interpretations of, American history. It is more important for students to understand why events unfolded in the ways they did, and what other scholars have said and written about them, so use proper citation in papers where appropriate (see paper assignment above). **However, anyone caught cheating or plagiarizing will automatically fail the assignment in question, may summarily fail the course, and could be subject to disciplinary action by the University.**

Likewise, no element of the course grade is negotiable or optional, meaning that failure to take the exams or to submit the research paper in the absence of compelling, documented circumstances **will result in automatic failure of the course.** *The instructor's evaluative judgment of tests and examinations is final, and will not be subject to revision except in cases of mathematical error.*

**Class Decorum**

All students must show respect toward the Instructor and the Instructor's syllabus, presentations, assignments, and point of view. Students should also respect each others' differences. If the Instructor determines that a student is not being respectful toward other students or the Instructor, or is otherwise behaving in an inappropriate manner, it is the Instructor's prerogative to remove the student from the class either temporarily or permanently, as the case requires.

**Note: Failure to comply with any of the Instructor's policies will result in immediate deregistration from the course.**

**University Specific Procedures:***ADA Statement*

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

**Office of Student Disability Resources and Services  
Texas A&M University-Commerce  
Gee Library 132  
Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835  
Fax (903) 468-8148  
[StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu](mailto:StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu)  
[Student Disability Resources & Services](#)**

### *Student Conduct*

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. (See *Code of Student Conduct from Student Guide Handbook*).

### **COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR**

#### **June 2-3: Introductions; The Origins of Puritan New England Society**

June 2: Introductions & The Founding of New England  
 June 3: Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith*, chaps. 1-2 (handout)  
 Edmund S. Morgan, *Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea*, chaps. 3-4 (handout)

#### **June 4-5: The “City on a Hill” in a World of Wonders**

June 4: Godbeer, *The Salem Witch Hunt* (pp. 5-11), document nos. 1-3  
 June 5: Godbeer, *The Salem Witch Hunt* (pp. 11-15), document nos. 4-9

#### **June 9: What Happened in Salem Village**

Godbeer, *The Salem Witch Hunt* (pp. 1-5, 15-30), document nos. 10-13, 14-27 (Sarah Good), 78, 81-83, 85-90, 92-94

#### **June 10-12: The Salem Witch Hunt as Socio-Economic Conflict**

June 10: Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, “Prologue” and chaps. 1-3  
 June 11: Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, chaps. 4-6  
 June 12: Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, chaps. 7-8

#### **June 16-18: The Salem Witch Hunt as Misogyny**

June 16: Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman*, chaps. 1-3  
 June 17: Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman*, chaps. 4-5  
 June 18: Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman*, chaps. 6-7 and “Epilogue”

#### **June 19: More Recent Interpretations**

Amanda Porterfield, “Witchcraft and the Colonization of Algonquian and Iroquois Cultures,” *Religion and American Culture* 2 (1992), 103-124  
 David Harley, “Explaining Salem: Calvinist Psychology and the Diagnosis of Possession,” *American Historical Review* 101 (1996), 307-330  
 Elaine G. Breslaw, “Tituba’s Confession: The Multicultural Dimensions of the 1692 Salem Witch-Hunt,” *Ethnohistory* 44 (1997), 535-556

**June 23-26: A Grand Synthesis**

- June 23: Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*, Introduction and chaps. 1-3
- June 24: Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*, chaps. 4-5
- June 25: Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*, chaps. 6-7
- June 26: Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*, chap. 8, Conclusion and, "Epilogue"

**June 30: Aftermath and Assessment—What *Really* Happened?****July 1: Film—*The Crucible* (1996)****July 2: Discussion of Case Analyses****July 3: Final Exam**

Case Analysis Due by 5:00 p.m. No Exceptions!