

**Ghosts, Devils, Magicians, and Monsters:
Performing the Occult in Early English Drama**
ARSC390-083

MWF 10:10-11:00
206 Penny Hall
Office hours:
MWF 11:00-12:00, and by appointment
209 Penny Hall

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First-Year Interdisciplinary Honors Colloquia

These three-credit writing-intensive interdisciplinary first-year seminars are broadly conceived, generally going beyond conventional disciplinary boundaries and focusing on topics of enduring significance. Colloquia are intellectually rigorous without requiring more than a high-school background in a field. They are elementary not in the sense of preparing students for further study in a discipline, but rather in the sense of preparing them for further skilled reflection on issues and ideas of interest to all educated people. Intensive reading, thoughtful analysis, and good writing are expected of colloquia participants. Informed discussions, rather than lectures, and attention to primary sources typify Honors colloquia. All first-year Honors students, regardless of their intended college or major, are required to take one Honors colloquium to be eligible for a General Honors Award.

Course Description

Strange happenings and curious creatures appear regularly in early English plays. This course will attempt to unravel what's behind these weird encounters. In a time when many theatergoers avidly believed in devils, for example, what did it mean to have a character conjure one of these minions? What do magical onstage moments tell us about religious beliefs, about the imagination, or about cultural attitudes towards difference? What do they suggest about the limits of knowledge and science? How is theater uniquely attuned to the occult? Ultimately, why are people so interested in mysterious, unexplainable phenomena? Readings will include early modern plays, as well as other Renaissance primary sources about the occult, religion, and science. Secondary readings will include theories of the occult, literary and dramatic criticism, and historical analysis. The class will also view several film versions of these plays, attend the REP production of *Cymbeline*, and experience an in-class magic presentation in order to discuss the ways in which performance deals with the occult.

Course Topics

We will discuss a wide range of issues based in part on the interests of the class. Some possible topics include: the occult as a symbol of art; the relationships between the occult and science and religion; metatheatricality and dramatic performance; the occult as a marker of cultural difference; nationhood and nationalism; royalty and politics; and psychology.

Skills

The course will emphasize improving research skills, in particular evaluating and using primary texts. We will also work to develop critical thinking and academic writing skills.

Texts

I do not require you to purchase any texts. All of the texts are available online, or I will distribute them electronically or in class. I have provided a list of links at the end of this document, and they will be available on Sakai and on our course website. Since you are required to bring each text to

class, however, I advise that you acquire an inexpensive hard copy of each of the plays, so that you can highlight/annotate the text and bring it to class. We will be reading the following plays: *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare; Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*; Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist* and *The Masque of Blackness*; the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*; John Milton's *Comus*; and Thomas Dekker's *The Witch of Edmonton*. I also recommend *A Student's Guide to Writing at the University of Delaware with the Arak Anthology*. 16th ed. Newark, DE: University of Delaware, 2009. The *Oxford English Dictionary* is the class's preferred dictionary, and it is available online through lib.udel.edu.

Requirements

Class Participation: You should come to class prepared to participate meaningfully to the discussion and to take part in all class activities. I expect you to contribute to class conversations in a civil manner. Please do not interrupt others; instead, listen to your peers and respond to their ideas. Obviously, do not text, email, or make phone calls during class. **Finally, bring a copy of the assigned reading to every class.**

Writing Fellows Conferences: For this course, you have the added advantage of Writing Fellows, advanced students who have been trained to assist you in all stages of the writing process from brainstorming and researching to drafting and revising. This semester you will have two mandatory conferences with them. Please come to all meetings on time and prepared with the required materials. The Writing Fellow's objective is to help you develop your own writing skills, not to do the work for you. For more information, please visit the Writing Fellows Program website at <http://www.udel.edu/honors/writingfellows>. **For assignments #1 and #2, you will be required to meet with your Writing Fellow for a minimum of one half-hour session.** Be sure to schedule your appointment well in advance.

Major Assignments: You must complete one performance review, one research paper, and one group performance/collaborative wiki performance analysis. You **MUST** attend the REP production of *Cymbeline*. You can attend this production for free with the class the evening of Thursday, February 25th, or you can purchase a ticket for another date if you have a conflict that evening.

Attendance: This course is designed to provide an intellectual experience, a semester-long academic conversation; therefore, I expect you to attend **all** classes. Please arrive early for class and do not pack up your bags before the end. If you do miss a class, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed before the next class session. If illnesses, family emergencies, or other crises occur during the term, one of the key things you must do is to contact the office of the dean of your college as soon as possible. This office can assist you in notifying faculty and in validating for your teachers what has happened. Such validation will be necessary for you to make up missed assignments.

Online Course Evaluation: I expect you to complete the on-line student course evaluation. This survey will be available for you to complete during the last two weeks of the semester. Apart from being an expectation of the course, your evaluation provides valuable information to the English Department, the University Honors Program, and me.

POLICIES

Paper Format and Late Papers

You will submit all papers electronically to me via email or wiki. You should follow MLA guidelines for all formatting, including citations. The library has several books on MLA format, or you can consult this website (or others like it): <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01>. Late papers will be marked down one letter grade per day, including weekends.

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism comes in many forms, and it violates the University's Code of Conduct. You are expected to understand this code, which can be found at <http://www.udel.edu/stuguide/09-10/index.html>.

Grading

If you complete every assignment in the class and miss no more than two class sessions, the lowest grade you can earn in the class is a B. In other words, you are guaranteed a B if you complete the minimum requirements. Grades above or below B will be determined using the following formula. Please note that I reserve the right to deviate from this formula in the case of exceptional performance on individual assignments or class participation.

| | | |
|---|---|--------------|
| Assignment #1: Performance Review | 1000-1250 words | 15% |
| Assignment #2: Primary Text Research Essay | 2000-2500 words + annotated bibliography | 35% |
| Assignment #3: Group Performance and Collaborative Performance Analysis | 15-20 minutes; 1250-1500 words | 25% |
| Class Discussion | daily participation | 20 % |
| Writing Fellows Conferences | At least 2 | 5 % |
| TOTAL | | 100 % |

Grade Distributions

94-100 = A / 90-93 = A-

88-89 = B+ / 83-87 = B / 80-82 = B-

78-79 = C+ / 73-77 = C / 70-72 = C-

68-69 = D+ / 63-67 = D / 60-62 = D-

59 and lower = F

Correspondence and ICE

I will make reasonable attempts to respond to your questions via email, and I am available during office hours. In case of an emergency that will close the University for an extended period of time, the University will determine how courses will be continued or completed.

Sakai and Technology in the Classroom

I will use Sakai to post assignments, grades, and announcements. Our course wiki is also in Sakai. I encourage you to bring laptops to class if you are using online texts. Only use your laptops for class purposes. Similarly, please keep all cell phones, iPods, and other electronics out of sight and turned off during class time. Failure to do so will adversely affect your participation grade.

Disability Support Services

If you have a registered disability that will require accommodation, please see me immediately.

Class Discussion Grading Criteria

20% of your grade is class discussion and class work. You will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- attend all class sessions and arrive on time
- bring class materials, including primary texts to each class session
- contribute meaningfully to class discussion
- listen and respond to ideas of peers in a civil and productive manner
- read assignments carefully and thoughtfully
- support arguments with textual evidence, including quotes and specific details
- complete all in-class assignments in a timely and satisfactory fashion
- make connections between plays and primary texts
- make connections from previous plays and class discussions
- ask relevant questions that prompt provocative discussions
- complete an online course evaluation

Assignment #1: Performance Review

Assignment Description

Deadline: March 17

Assignment

Your goal in this essay is to analyze the performance of the occult in the REP production of *Cymbeline*. You will discuss the play's use of performance elements, such as special effects, costumes, lighting, sound, rhythm, movement, vocal effects, and staging. Below are some questions to consider:

- How does the performance represent the occult?
- Why does it represent the occult in this way?
- What is the effect on the audience?
- How does it achieve its effect?
- What is the unifying idea or attitude about the occult in the performance?
- Is this staging of the occult effective? Why or why not?
- What would you have done differently, if you were directing the play, and why?
- What is the function of the occult in the play itself? In the performance of the play?

Minimum Requirements

This essay should be 1000-1250 words, or 4-5 pages. You should turn in an assessment of the writing process as well (see attached).

Schedule

You should meet with me and with your Writing Fellow by **March 12**. You should bring a full, polished draft with you to at least one of these sessions. You should **completely** revise your paper based upon these meetings.

Your final draft, along with your assessment of the writing process (see attached) is due by **March 15**. You should **fully revise** your previous draft based on the suggestions of the Writing Fellow. Further, I encourage you to visit the Writing Center to discuss your paper before submitting it.

Grading Criteria

A=The review discusses the performance decisions, process, and outcomes in a detailed, thorough, and thoughtful way, using substantial supporting evidence. Its expression is engaging and apt, with few or no errors in grammar, spelling, or usage. The organization is clear and effective.

B=The review discusses the performance decisions, process, and outcomes in a detailed and thoughtful way, using sufficient supporting evidence. Its expression is effective, with few or no errors in grammar, spelling, or usage. The organization is clear and effective.

C=The review discusses the performance decisions, process, and outcomes in a detailed way, using supporting evidence. Its expression is competent, with limited errors in grammar, spelling, or usage. The organization does not detract from the communication of ideas.

D=The review discusses the performance decisions, process, and outcomes in a limited way. Its expression is generally competent, and its errors do not interfere significantly in communication.

F=The review does not sufficiently discuss the performance decisions, process, and outcomes. OR Its expression interferes significantly with its communication.

**Performance Review
Assessment of the Writing Process**

Please write a short assessment of the writing process along with the final draft of your essay. Your assessment must answer the following questions, though you should write it in paragraph (not numbered) form.

1. What do you feel is the strongest aspect of this essay? What was the most challenging aspect of writing this essay? How did you overcome this challenge?
2. In what way(s) did meeting with the Writing Fellow assist your writing process? How might this aspect be improved for future assignments?
3. How did your draft change based upon your meeting with the Writing Fellow?
4. How did meeting with me affect your writing? What might make such meetings more helpful for future assignments?
5. Was the assignment too hard, too easy, or just right? How might it be improved in the future?
6. What did you learn about your topic from writing this paper? What did you learn about your writing?
7. What, if anything, will you change about your writing process in future assignments?

Assignment #2: Primary Text Research Essay Assignment Description

Deadline: April 30

Assignment

You will select a primary text that we have read up to this point. Your goal in this project is to research this text and to discuss how its portrayal of the occult illuminates your reading of the play that we read in conjunction with it. Your final paper will situate the play in its historical context, but it will also perform a close reading in order to formulate an argument about how the occult is working in the play. Some questions you might consider include:

- By reading the primary text, what can readers learn about the occult in the play?
- How does the play represent the occult differently from or similarly to the primary text? What accounts for this difference?
- What is the function of the occult in the play?
- How does genre influence the play's representation of the occult? In other words, what is the role of performance?
- What can these two texts offer contemporary readers interested in the occult?

Since each primary text is different, each essay will have a unique approach. Please feel free to discuss your ideas with me over email or during office hours.

Minimum Requirements

The essay should be 1500-2000 words, or about 6-8 pages, in addition to an annotated bibliography of at least 5-10 sources.

Schedule

Now You should read your primary source and begin to research relevant historical context, including publication information (author, date, publisher, etc.). Also, schedule an appointment with me and with your Writing Fellow.

4/12 You should submit a short prospectus, which is a brief description of your working thesis, the resources you plan to consult, and the ideas that you have for connecting the primary source to the play. **Email your prospectus and annotated bibliography to me by 4 PM today.**

4/16 Your full draft for your writing fellow is due today.

4/23 By this date, you should have met with me and with your Writing Fellow at least once to discuss a FULL, POLISHED draft.

4/30 Your final draft, along with your assessment of the writing process (see attached) is due. You should **fully revise** your previous draft based on the suggestions of the Writing Fellow. Further, I encourage you to visit the Writing Center to discuss your paper before submitting it.

Grading Criteria

A

- The essay performs a close reading of the texts in order generate a convincing argument about the occult in the play;
- The essay has a clear and persuasive thesis, which is supported and elaborated with compelling evidence;
- The prose is particularly apt and lucid, enhancing the rhetorical force of the argument;
- The organization is logical and gives the reader a sense of the necessary flow of the argument, and there are markers to guide the reader through the argument; and
- There are few, if any, grammar, usage, or spelling errors.

B

- The essay performs a close reading of the texts in order generate a convincing argument about the occult in the play;
- The essay has a clear and persuasive thesis, which is supported with appropriate evidence;
- The prose appeals to an academic audience, although more varied and/or complex sentence structure would enhance the expression;
- The organization is logical and clear; and
- There are few, if any, grammar, usage, or spelling errors.

C

- The essay performs a close reading of the texts in order generate an argument about the occult in the play;
- The essay makes interesting points but does not have a unifying thesis and/or supports its argument with minimal evidence;
- The prose has limited appeal for an academic audience;
- The organization does not enhance the strength of the argument or is unclear; and/or
- There are some issues in grammar, usage, or spelling.

D

- The essay connects the two texts but lacks a plausible argument and/or sufficient supporting evidence;
- The prose has limited appeal for an academic audience;
- The organization is illogical or unclear; and/or
- There are several errors in grammar, usage, or spelling.

F

- The essay lacks a plausible argument and supporting evidence;
- The prose does not communicate its meaning to an academic audience;
- The organization is illogical or unclear; and
- There are several or many errors in grammar, usage, or spelling.

**Primary Text Research Essay
Assessment of the Writing Process**

Please write a short assessment of the writing process along with the final draft of your essay. Your assessment must answer the following questions, though you should write it in paragraph (not numbered) form.

1. What do you feel is the strongest aspect of this essay? What was the most challenging part of writing this essay? How did you overcome this challenge?
2. In what way(s) did meeting with the Writing Fellow assist your writing process? How might this experience be improved for future assignments?
3. How did your draft change based upon your meeting with the Writing Fellow?
4. How did meeting with me affect your writing? What might make such meetings more helpful for future assignments?
5. Was the assignment too hard, too easy, or just right? How might it be improved in the future?
6. What did you learn about your topic from writing this paper? What did you learn about your writing?
7. What, if anything, will you change about your writing process in future assignments?

Assignment #3: Group Performance and Wiki Performance Analysis

Assignment Description

Deadline: May 10 or 12 (performance) and May 17 (wiki performance analysis)

Note: Although this assignment is not due until the end of the semester, your group will work on it for the second half of the semester. It is important to work on this assignment well in advance of your performance date. You do not have to meet with a Writing Fellow for this project, although you are encouraged to do so and to meet with me and visit the Writing Center, as well.

A Note About Collaborative Work

Group work requires patience and cooperation, but it can be very rewarding. Some of the best projects I have assessed have been collaborative in nature, especially when groups draw upon the strengths of all of their members. While I expect that working collaboratively will run smoothly, occasionally, there are insurmountable difficulties. In extreme cases, I may consider rearranging groups or altering my assessment of the group project.

Some Guidelines for Group Work

You'll have time in class to work on the performance, but you'll also need to get together outside of class to prepare. The hardest part of group work is project management. You should appoint a project leader and assign tasks.

Some Advice for Group Meetings

- Encourage debate, invite everyone to speak, listen to each member, and treat the project as team property not just as individual effort.
- Emphasize efficiency, set agendas for each group meeting, reestablish the focus of discussions, and bring discussions to a close when consensus is reached.
- Create detailed outlines for work.

Assignment

Performance

Your group of 4-5 students will be responsible for a 15-20 minute performance of a scene from one of the plays that we read this semester. You must choose a scene that requires a representation of some occult element of the play, such as a conjuration, an apparition, or a spell casting. The goal is to explore how the occult functions in the play and how performance decisions can illuminate and even transform this function. Props and costumes are not required, though they may enhance the performance. These performances will be filmed and posted on the wiki. I will use clips from your performances for instructional purposes in future classes and workshops.

Wiki Performance Analysis

As a group, you will write on our course wiki a short performance review (1250-1500 words, or 5-7 pages—that's only 1 page per person!). The format of this review will be a collaborative essay, which means you will write it as a group on a wiki, rather than each contributing one page or section. The purpose of this review is to discuss your performance **decisions, process, and outcomes**. You should begin this process by posting individual wiki responses on a regular basis as you meet to rehearse and as you plan your performance. As the process goes on, you will begin to shape these responses into a more unified review. After your performance, you will organize and edit this into a final draft.

Some questions to consider as you write this review are:

- Why did your group select this scene?

- What role does the occult play in this scene? In other words, why did the author feature the occult at all and specifically in this scene? How does it relate to the overall issues, character development, or dramatic structure?
- Why does this scene take place in this part of the play?
- What message, mood, or unifying idea does your staging of the occult seek to convey?
- How do you use performance elements to convey this? You might consider elements such as props, costumes, makeup, special effects, rhythm, pauses, doubling of characters, stage position, etc.
- How does your performance highlight the function of the occult in the play?
- How does your performance bridge the gap between an early modern and a contemporary audience?
- Describe the rehearsal process. How did your group make its decisions?
- What does your performance suggest about your attitudes about the play? What does it suggest about your attitudes toward the occult?
- Are you satisfied with the outcomes of your rehearsal process? If you were given more time or materials, what would you have done differently? Why?
- What impact do you think your performance had on your audience? Was this the desired effect?
- What did you learn about the play or about the occult through this performance process?

Grading Criteria, Performance

Note: The performance must be at least 15 minutes in order to receive a grade higher than a B.

A=The performance has a clear and compelling unifying idea about the occult in the play that is conveyed effectively through creative performance elements.

B=The performance has a clear unifying idea about the occult in the play that is conveyed through appropriate performance elements.

C=The performance, while engaging or entertaining, lacks focus and/or does not effectively employ performance elements to convey its idea.

D=The performance lacks focus and/or does not effectively employ performance elements.

F=The performance fails to reach its intended audience.

Grading Criteria, Wiki Review

A=The review discusses the performance decisions, process, and outcomes in a detailed, thorough, and thoughtful way, using substantial supporting evidence. Its expression is engaging and apt, with few or no errors in grammar, spelling, or usage. The organization is clear and effective. It represents the work of all group members in a balanced way.

B=The review discusses the performance decisions, process, and outcomes in a detailed and thoughtful way, using sufficient supporting evidence. Its expression is effective, with few or no errors in grammar, spelling, or usage. The organization is clear and effective. It represents the work of all group members in a balanced way.

C=The review discusses the performance decisions, process, and outcomes in a detailed way, using supporting evidence. Its expression is competent, with limited errors in grammar, spelling, or usage. The organization does not detract from the communication of ideas. The review represents the work of all group members.

D=The review discusses the performance decisions, process, and outcomes in a limited way. Its expression is generally competent, and its errors do not interfere significantly in communication.

OR The review does not represent the work of all group members.

F=The review does not sufficiently discuss the performance decisions, process, and outcomes. OR Its expression interferes significantly with its communication. OR The review has limited participation from group members.