

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
Undergraduate Course Outline 2015-16

Philosophy 2006: Metaphysics & Epistemology of Witchcraft

Albrecht Dürer's depiction of a witch, c1500. Image Credit: The British Museum

Fall and Winter



DESCRIPTION

European witches were terrifying. Many of them ate babies, had sex with devils, destroyed crops and all, murdered human souls. At least that is what their contemporaries believed. These are just some of the apparent reasons why tens of thousands of them were tried and executed, in many cases after being tortured, between the years 1400 and 1750.

This course aims to understand the intellectual dimensions of this disturbing but fascinating period pejoratively as the "Witch Craze". To do this, we will try to get inside the minds of persecutors, judges and accusers of the Western witch by looking at medieval, renaissance and early modern literature on magic, witchcraft and the devil. A second aim will be to assess this event and the underlying worldview that has shaped it philosophically.

Sample philosophical topics include: faith and reason, skepticism and toleration, miracles and tests, the problem of evil, the ethics of killing, the mind-body problem, free will, justice, feminist critiques of the witch hunts, sexual ethics, and the philosophy of death.

TEXTS

- ¥ Levack, B. (ed) The Witchcraft SourcebookRoutledge. 2003E-book freely accessible through the UWO library site.
- ¥ Nash, D. Witches and WitchcraftShire Publications. 2014. ISBN - 10: 0747812918. Kindle edition: CAD \$ 6.36.
- ¥ Plantinga, A. Knowledge and Christian Belief2015. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. ISBN-10: 0802872042. Kindle edition: CAD\$ 9.99.
- ¥ Sandel, M. Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do2010. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. ISBN-10: 0374532508Kindle edition: CAD\$ 5.99.
- ¥ van Inwagen, P. Metaphysics. Fourth Edition. 2014. Westview Press. ISBN-10: 0813349346. Kindle edition: CAD\$ 21.49.

N.B. ISBN numbers above correspond to paperback editions, which will be made available for purchase through the UWO bookstore. Kindle edition prices are quoted from amazon.ca, solely for comparative purposes, and may change at any time.

REQUIREMENTS

¥ Attendance/participation	15%
¥ Short assignments	25% (Detailed instructions will be provided)
¥ Midyear test	20%
¥ Exam	40 %

OBJECTIVES

See above description.