COURSE GUIDEBOOK

The Terror of History: Mystics, Heretics, and Witches in the Western Tradition

Part I

Lecture 1: The Terror of History
Lecture 2: Politics, Economy, and Society
Lecture 3: Religion and Culture
Lecture 4: Mysticism in the Western Tradition
Lecture 5: Mysticism in the Twelfth Century
Lecture 6: Mysticism in the Thirteenth Century
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Lecture 8: Mysticism in Early Modern Europe
Lecture 9: Heresy and the Millennium
Lecture 10: The Church Under Attack
Lecture 11: The Birth of the Inquisition
Lecture 12: The Millennium in the Sixteenth Century

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The Terror of History, Pa
Professor Teofilo F. Ruiz

COURSE GUIDEBOOK

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The Terror of History: Mystics, Heretics, and Witches in the Western Tradition

Part I

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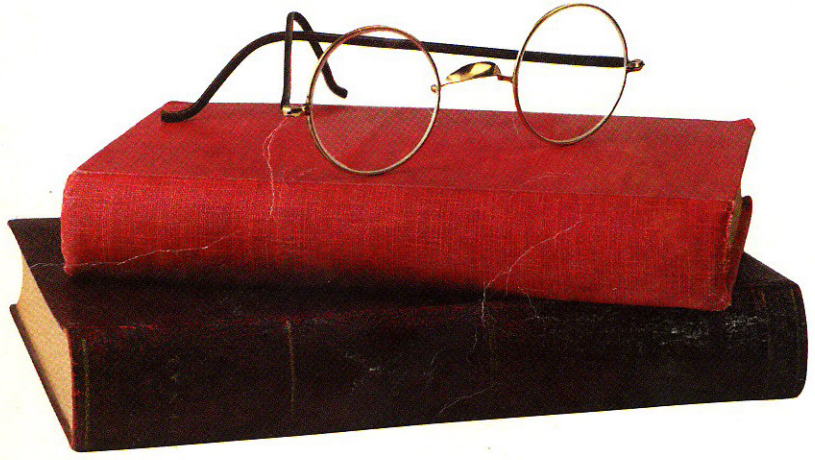
University of California, Los Angeles



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A student of Joseph R. Strayer, Teofilo F. Ruiz received his Ph.D. from Princeton in 1974 and taught at Brooklyn College, the CUNY Graduate Center, the University of Michigan, the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (Paris), and Princeton (as 250th Anniversary Visiting Professor for Distinguished Teaching) before joining the History Department at UCLA in 1998. He has been a frequent lecturer in the United States, Spain, Italy, France, England, Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina.

Professor Ruiz has received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, and the American Council of Learned Societies. In 1994–1995, he was selected as one of four outstanding teachers of the year in the United States by the Carnegie Foundation. He has published six books and more than forty articles in national and international scholarly journals, plus hundreds of reviews and smaller articles. His *Crisis and Continuity: Land and Town in Late Medieval Castile* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994) was awarded the Premio del Rey prize by the American Historical Association as the best book in Spanish history before 1580 in a two-year period, 1994–1995. His latest book, *Spanish Society, 1400–1600*, was published by Longman in 2001. Another book, *From Heaven to Earth: The Reordering of Late Medieval Castilian Society*, is forthcoming from Princeton.

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The Terror of History: Mystics, Heretics, and Witches in the Western Tradition

Scope:

This set of twenty-four lectures examines aspects of elite and popular culture in late medieval and early modern Western Europe, focusing on the way in which men and women—seeking to explain, order, and escape the terrors of their lives—embraced transcendental religious experiences, dreamed of and worked for the coming of the apocalypse, and seized on a widespread belief in witchcraft and Satanism.

The lives of mystics, heretics, millenarian prophets, and accused witches, as well as those of their followers and persecutors, will be explored in the historical context of the rise of the nation-state in the late Middle Ages, the birth of a new science and of new perceptions of the world during the Renaissance and the early modern period, sweeping social and economic changes, and the discovery of the New World. In examining the persecution of witches and the authority of female mystics, special attention will be given to gender issues and the construction of "otherness" during the crises of the late medieval world.

Lecture One discusses the idea of the "terror of history" and places the course in a methodological framework. Lectures Two and Three present the historical context for the period between 1000 and 1700, emphasizing the social, economic, and cultural background of Western European mysticism, heresy, and witchcraft. Lecture Four provides a general discussion of mysticism in the Western tradition, while the next four lectures explore case studies of mystics. Lecture Five looks at two twelfth-century mystics, Hildegard of Bingen and Bernard of Clairvaux. The next lecture looks at the life of two thirteenth-century mystics, Francis of Assisi and Dante Alighieri. In Lecture Seven, we turn to a close examination of Jewish mysticism, specifically the mysticism found in the *Zohar*. Lecture Eight concludes our discussion of mystics with an exploration of the lives and works of Theresa of Avila and John of the Cross.

Lecture Nine begins our discussion of heresy and millenarian movements. This lecture provides a general overview of these topics and sets the stage for a detailed discussion of specific heretical and millenarian movements. In the next lecture, we focus on three different heretical movements from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the Waldensians, the Cathars, and the Fraticelli. Lecture Eleven explores the birth of the Inquisition in early thirteenth-century Europe and looks at one of the most interesting and widespread heresies of late medieval Europe, that of the Free Spirit. Lecture Twelve explores the millenarian aspects of the peasant uprisings in early sixteenth-century Germany and links these apocalyptic expectations with similar movements in early modern England and America. Lecture Thirteen concludes our discussion of these topics with a look at Jewish Messianism, particularly the rise and fall of Sabbatai Sevi.

In Lecture Fourteen, we begin to examine a series of topics leading to the study of the European witch craze. This lecture discusses the Renaissance discovery of "deep time," and the reception of esoteric systems of knowledge into European culture. In Lecture Fifteen, we take a close look at the popularity of hermeticism, astrology, alchemy, and magic in early modern Europe. Lecture Sixteen describes the role of witchcraft in Western culture and its development to the eve of the modern era. Lectures Seventeen and Eighteen present a comprehensive view of the religious, cultural, social, economic, and political context of the European witch craze, a period of persecution extending from the late Middle Ages to around the second half of the seventeenth century. Lecture Nineteen focuses on the widespread fear and social unrest that resulted from structural changes. It also discusses the idea of Satan in Western culture and the role of the devil in European early modern witchcraft. Lecture Twenty continues to examine the causes of the witch craze and explores misogyny as one of the reasons for persecution. Lecture Twenty-One provides a close reading of a sixteenth-century description of how to become a witch, while Lecture Twenty-Two concentrates on a case study, that of the trial and execution of Urbain Grandier at Loudon. In Lecture Twenty-Three, we examine the social history of two outbursts of witchcraft, one in Essex (England) and the other one in the town of Salem in colonial Massachusetts. The course ends with a look at the survival of pre-Christian beliefs in European culture and with a summary of how the themes explored provided an escape from history.

Lecture One

The Terror of History

Scope: Lecture One discusses what is meant by the "terror of history" and places this course in a methodological framework. The lecture begins by exploring specific themes in the Western tradition and by examining the manner in which men and women in medieval and early modern Europe dealt with such continuous vicissitudes in their lives as wars, plagues, oppressive lordships, and injustice. Most of all, this lecture argues that if we are going to understand the pre-modern and modern West, then we must also understand the different perspectives from which Western men and women looked at the world. The lecture also outlines the theoretical and historiographical issues that inform the study of these topics.

Outline

I. This introductory lecture has two basic aims, which are interrelated and help us set the tone of the course.

- **A.** We begin with a reflection on what is meant by the "terror of history."
  1. We look at the growth of historical consciousness and of people's awareness of their roles as witnesses to, and actors in, historical events.
  2. One of the main themes of the course is that mysticism, millenarian ideals, and the widespread belief in witches represented a denial of history or, at least, an escape from certain forms of history.
  3. Although mystical and apocalyptic ideas are valid in themselves and play an important role in Western European culture, we might also view these movements as an escape from history, as a way of coping with the horror, the "terror," of everyday existence.
- **B.** This lecture also serves to draw the methodological boundaries for this inquiry. The course is built on certain methodological and historiographical premises.
  1. First, the best way to understand the past is through the writings and monuments of those who lived in the past. Therefore, as much as possible, the course depends on primary sources to reveal the complexities of the cultural and religious shifts we are examining here and of the contemporaries who wrote about and experienced these shifts.
  2. Nonetheless, every written, artistic, or iconographical source must be examined critically. Texts are mediated by writing, and they do not let us see fully the lives of those who did not write. To recapture the popular culture of the late medieval and early modern

periods is almost impossible. The culture of those below is always tainted by learned discourse.

3. By looking at the sources through critical eyes, we hope to capture the voices of those who did not write or who were placed on the lowest levels of society. Although some of the protagonists of this story were literate and their works and lives reflected the worldview of the upper classes, we will also try to capture echoes of popular culture and the beliefs and aspirations of those below, particularly when looking at millenarian movements and the victims of witchcraft.

II. The history of mysticism, heresy, magic, and witchcraft is a form of cultural and popular history.

- **A.** An enduring conflict exists between Apollonian and Dionysian strains in Western thought.
- **B.** On the one hand is the need for order; on the other, the need to obliterate the self and become one with the world.

III. The "terror of history" seeks to explain how the tension and pressures of history work in human experience. Three avenues are open for dealing with the quandaries of life and the "terror of history":

- **A.** The formulation of religion and the embracing of transcendental beliefs serves as a way of escaping history.
- **B.** The embracing of the material world and a life of dissipation helps to create a bulwark against fear.
- **C.** Aesthetics and the pursuit of art are other forms of escaping from the burdens of history.

Suggested Reading:

Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane* and *Cosmos and History.*

Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents.*

Geertz, *The Interpretations of Culture.*

Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy.*

Questions to Consider:

1. Why has the irrational played such a significant role in history? What is the relationship between the rational and the irrational in historical developments? Can you think of examples of the working of the irrational in our own history?
2. Why do you think that providing a more balanced historical interpretation is important? Why is giving a voice to the voiceless and illiterate a significant way of getting closer to the reality of the past? How would you write this history?

Lecture Two

Politics, Economy, and Society

Scope: This lecture examines the social, political, and economic contexts of European mysticism, heresy, and witchcraft in the centuries between 1000 and 1650. We will historicize these developments and place them in social structures. As I argue here and throughout the twenty-four lectures, the rise of mysticism and heretical movements in the twelfth century and the beginnings of the witch craze in the late fifteenth century were grounded in local historical contexts. In probing such diverse events as the rise of the nation-state, the breakdown of the medieval village community, the end of feudal society, and the formation of new social ties among different classes, we explore the role of these events in bringing about new ways of thinking.

Outline

I. Lectures Two and Three provide a historical context for the development of mysticism, heretical and apocalyptic movements, and the witch craze. This lecture focuses on the social, political, and economic contexts of Western history in the Middle Ages and the early modern period.

II. In the period between 1000 and 1700, Europe experienced an extraordinary social transformation. Deeply tied to economic and cultural changes, these social shifts created unstable conditions that served as a context for mysticism, millenarian agitation, and widespread belief in witchcraft.

- **A.** Around the year 1000, medieval society was being organized along a tripartite hierarchy that was believed to be inspired by God.
- **B.** This division of society organized medieval men and women according to their functions: those who pray, those who fight, and those who work.
  1. Those who pray included priests and monks. They derived great privileges from their role as intermediaries between God and man and from their monopoly on learning.
  2. Those who fight were the defenders of society. The knights, those who we will call the nobility by the twelfth century, enjoyed great standing, deriving most of their power from their monopoly on weapons.
  3. Those who work, almost ninety percent of the population in 1000, were mostly peasants, often tied to the soil in servile dependence.

III. The economic structures of the West show change over time.

A. Around the year 1000, the Western European economy was almost completely agrarian.
   1. At the beginning of the millennium, trade was limited to essential items, such as salt and a few spices, and luxury items for the well-to-do.
   2. Towns and cities were just beginning to emerge in the north of Western Europe, and the developments of urban life and an urban social group were only beginning.
   3. The center of the agrarian economy was the manor. Farming was done communally and yields were small. Most Europeans lived on the edge of famine.

B. By the twelfth century, rural Europe was being transformed by the expansion of the arable acreage and the introduction of new tools and farming techniques. Cities were on the rise, and true urban societies came into being.
   1. The economic changes of the twelfth century transformed the face of Western Europe. New villages and towns sprung up. New crops were planted that provided better nutrition.
   2. True urban centers grew in the wake of commercial activity. A new social group, the bourgeoisie, began to establish its grip on urban politics and institutions. By the twelfth century, a new mentality, one based on production, salaries, and new notions of secular time, became widespread throughout Western Europe.

C. By the twelfth century, coinciding with the great economic transformations, fissures appeared in the tripartite division of society.
   1. A new social class, the bourgeoisie, began its long struggle against noble privilege.
   2. Servile labor began to be replaced by free labor, and peasants began to accumulate some wealth.
   3. The nobility began to define itself not only in terms of its military function but also in terms of its birth and lineage. The relations among the three orders of society changed as social mobility undermined the boundaries between social classes.

D. These economic transformations (economic and population growth) faced great challenges from the late thirteenth to the late fifteenth centuries.
   1. This period is known as the late medieval crisis, and its manifestations threatened to destroy the achievements of the previous three centuries.
   2. The late medieval crisis was ushered in by a series of catastrophes: the great famines of the early fourteenth century, the Black Death, a series of peasant and bourgeois uprisings, and the Hundred Years War.

E. By the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, the Western European economy was already in full recovery.
   1. New forms of economic organization, new markets, and far more significant, new ways of understanding the economy came into being.
   2. Concomitant with these changes, a new secular understanding of the economy led to the emergence of capitalism. All these economic forces (enclosure, the demise of the village community, New World slavery, and so on) had a tremendous impact on the mentality of Europeans.

F. As we enter the late Middle Ages and the early modern period, the power of wealth had made a shambles of social orders. New forms of distinction were necessary. Rules of etiquette, education, and books of manners sought to create discourses of difference that separated the refined from the vulgar and created a new social order that was far more inflexible than the one that had existed in the past.

G. One of the most important outcomes of these social and economic transformations was the rise of new attitudes toward the poor and poverty in late medieval and early modern Europe.
   1. By 1300, the poor in Europe began to be confined, persecuted, and policed.
   2. The idea of the poor as the select children of Christ began to be challenged. Charity and attitudes toward the poor changed dramatically as a result.

IV. Social and economic change also led to dramatic political changes in the structure of Europe. These political changes, most of all, the rise of the state, had a significant impact on the construction of fear and the making of the "terror of history."

A. In the year 1000, most of Europe did not have a concept of the state or of public order. Instead, most parts of Western Europe were organized politically along feudal lines.
   1. Feudal organization meant private arrangements between free men of the warrior class (lords and vassals) and the exercise of the rights of government at the local level.
   2. These feudal agreements provided a semblance of order and the foundations from which to centralize political rule in the West.

B. By the late thirteenth century, we witness the emergence of fairly efficient realms in England, France, Castile, and Aragon. Building on feudal structures, the kings of these diverse realms began to concentrate power in their hands. This process implied new discourses of inclusion and exclusion and the development of communal identities.

C. During the crisis of late medieval society, much of the progress made by kings in centralizing power in the late twelfth and thirteenth

centuries came under the attack of an unruly nobility unwilling to give up its power and privilege. Notwithstanding these disturbances, by the end of the fifteenth century, new types of monarchy emerged in some parts of the West as fully constituted nation-states.

1. The emergence of the so-called "new monarchies" was signaled by the Crown's new alliances with the bourgeoisie and the "taming" of the nobility.
2. A common language, a sense of geographical space (territory), and a common culture were some of the components in the rise of the nation in some parts of the West.
3. Nowhere was the rising power of the new kings more evident than in Max Weber's classic formulation that the rise of the nation-state in this period was most evident in the state "monopoly of legalized violence."
4. Taxation, conscription, standing armies, and expansive bureaucracies were the instruments for the centralization of power and the rise of the rational state. Here, as in the economic and social realms, a growing secularization of politics made the kings supreme over other social groups.

Suggested Reading:

Hays, *Europe in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Century.*

Peters, *Europe in the Middle Ages.*

Rice and Grafton, *The Foundations of Early Modern Europe, 1460–1559.*

Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages.*

Questions to Consider;

1. Why do social, economic, and political changes affect changes in mentality and attitudes toward the sacred and toward history? How would you describe similar changes in our own world today? How do they affect the way we think about religion and our own place in the world?
2. What is the relationship among economic, social, and political change? How are these three areas related? Are you able to see the connections between the social, the economic, and the political in our own world today?
3. How did the power of kings and the rise of the so-called rational state influence the spirituality of the West?

Lecture Three

Religion and Culture

Scope: This lecture continues to discuss the historical context of the changing face of medieval and early modern mysticism, the growth of millenarian cults, and the widespread belief in witches. Here, we turn from social, political, and economic issues to the role of religion and culture in the development of esoteric beliefs and doctrines. The lecture focuses on several important developments: the religious reform movements of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the growth of new forms of spirituality after the Black Death, and above all, the pervasive influence of the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation on the European mentality. In terms of cultural transformation, the lecture explores the Renaissance of the twelfth century and the impact of the Italian Renaissance and the Scientific Revolution in early modern Europe.

Outline

I. The outburst of mystical and millenarian activities from the twelfth century onward and the slow transformation of attitudes toward witchcraft around the same period were deeply imbedded in the religious and cultural transformations of this period. This lecture looks at the transformations as a necessary context for later discussions.

II. Religion played a fundamental role in the development of alternatives to reason and in the escape from the terror of history. In the period under consideration, the Christian Church, and other religions (Judaism and Islam) in the West, underwent radical transformations. These shifts in liturgy, doctrine, and praxis had a dramatic impact on the Western world.

- **A.** In the late tenth century, the Christian Church was beset by myriad problems that threatened to undermine its authority and weaken popular belief.
  1. The Church suffered from its involvement in the feudal structure and by its connection with the private affairs of lords and their property.
  2. Ecclesiastical offices were sold to the highest bid. This practice is called simony and weakened the Church's mission by enmeshing religion in the affairs of the world.
  3. Most priests and monks were illiterate and did not observe the vows of poverty, obedience, and chastity.
  4. At its center, the papacy was corrupt, and the office had become the plaything of Roman aristocrats and German kings.
- **B.** In the early tenth and eleventh centuries, a powerful reform movement swept aside a number of ills besetting the Church. This movement

spurred a restructuring of the Church and the rise of new forms of piety. It also led to a rebirth of mysticism and to an outburst of heretical and millenarian movements.

1. The first wave of reform was monastic. It was centered at Cluny and led to stricter rule for monks.
2. The second wave of reform was led by secular lords who sought to name pious abbots and priests to the ecclesiastical institutions under their jurisdiction.
3. A movement also arose to reform the papacy, with sometimes violent consequences.

C. The main consequence of the reforms was the violent clash between the Church, now led by a reformed papacy, and the emperor. The conflict ended with the temporary defeat of the emperor and the ascendancy of the pope to an unchallenged position of authority.

1. One result of the papal victory was the launching of the Crusades against Islam to recover the holy places.
2. Another consequence was the growth of papal authority, underpinned by a vast and efficient bureaucracy.
3. A third consequence was an intense war of propaganda between those supporting the pope and those supporting the emperor. The elaborate formulations of political and ideological positions provided ample material for the elaboration of heretical doctrines and the intellectual competition between the sacred and the profane.

D. By the beginning of the fourteenth century, the Church was already assailed by the growing power and demand of kings, such as Philip IV of France. This shift in the balance of power between kings and popes had dramatic consequences, including the violent attack on the pope at Anagni in 1303 and the eventual removal of the papacy to Avignon in 1305 under French supervision.

E. The Protestant Reformation, a great wave of reform that swept the Church, led to a permanent split in the Christian world. Other consequences of this break in Christian unity included an extraordinary revolution in the way of thinking about the world.

1. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, Martin Luther's pronouncement on doctrinal matters led to a permanent severing of Christianity.
2. The Protestant Reformation not only challenged the longstanding power of the papacy, but it marked an extraordinary mental revolution that changed the world as it had existed until then.

F. One of the results of the Protestant Reformation was a move to reform the Catholic Church and to define more clearly the boundaries of orthodoxy.

1. The most important landmark in the Catholic reform movement was the edicts of the Council of Trent. They defined, once and for all, the new Catholic Church, emphasizing its opposition to Protestant beliefs.
2. The new religious values of both the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation led to growing intolerance and surveillance of heterodoxy. Behavior that may have been tolerated in Europe before the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation now became a target for persecution.

III. Between 1000 and 1700, the culture of Europe underwent extraordinary changes. These changes, as we shall see in later lectures, transformed the awareness of God and the world. A number of the themes to be explored in subsequent lectures are directly related to these cultural transformations.

A. Europe saw a great renaissance of learning in the twelfth century.

1. Courtly love played a role in the development of mystical traditions. We can see connections between secular *courtois* poetry and romance and the language of the mystical experience.
2. We can also see the relationship between the twelfth-century Renaissance and the emergence of new heresies.
3. The cult of courtly love had deeply heretical aspects—it was, in fact, condemned by the Church.

B. Other issues of importance include the reception of Aristotle and the Aristotelian worldview in the late thirteenth century, the role of the universities, and the spread of literacy.

1. The development of vernacular literature affected mystical writings.
2. Some heretical groups (the Waldensians, most notably) attempted to gain control of the Bible by translating it into the language of the people (the vernacular).

C. The Scientific Revolution and new scientific knowledge had a significant impact on the European mind. Most important here is the connection among science, religion, and magic and the manner in which the rise of scientific discourse shaped the fate of magic and, to a lesser extent, religion.

IV. The connections between popular and high culture and the play and circularity of ideas between one and the other are also important issues.

A. We must define the different realms of the themes to be explored in subsequent lectures.

1. Mysticism is an esoteric activity. We know about it because mystics wrote about their experiences, although they did not intend their writings to circulate widely. As such, mysticism belongs to the realm of high culture.

2. Some forms of heresy can be placed firmly in the realm of high culture; others, however, clearly belong to the world of popular beliefs. Millenarian movements were clearly mass movements that appealed to the popular imagination.

B. We must keep in mind the almost irretrievable nature of popular culture. As indicated briefly in Lecture One, all our knowledge of popular (oral, folk) culture is tainted by the mediation of high (written, learned) culture.

C. Elements of high culture are transmitted to the populace, and the opposite is also true.

Suggested Reading:

Buckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy.*

Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms*, chapter 1.

Haskins, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century.*

Kuhn, *The Copernican Revolution.*

Tellenback, *Church, State, and Christian Society at the Time of the Investiture Controversy.*

Questions to Consider:

1. What do you think are the consequences of changes in religious culture and spirituality? How do these changes affect the majority of the population? When the liturgy or the language of devotion are transformed, how do people react to these changes?
2. What is the role of culture and cultural transformation, specifically secular and scientific learning, in religious beliefs? Why does secular learning always appear to be in opposition to religious dogmas? What are the different ways of knowing, and are they incompatible?

Lecture Four

Mysticism in the Western Tradition

Scope: In Lecture Four, we begin with a close look at mysticism and the role of mystics in Western European history. The lecture examines the different types of mysticism, the stages of the mystical ascent to God, and the differences between Western mysticism and transcendental practices elsewhere in the world. We also look briefly at the early stages of Christian mysticism in the first centuries of Christianity, the character of late antique mysticism as compared to medieval forms, and the relationship between mysticism and orthodoxy.

Outline

I. Lecture Four examines the main characteristics of the mystical tradition in medieval and early modern Europe and traces the cultural and religious roots of mysticism in the classical and early Christian worlds.

II. What are the roots of mysticism in Western thought?

A. We revisit the conflict between the Apollonian and Dionysian tendencies in Western thought. This is the eternal conflict between Western individualism and the desire for submerging the self into the whole, the oceanic feeling described by Freud.

B. The West has attempted to distinguish between the real and the unreal. The scientific answer is different than the Platonic one, but both lead to spiritual dead ends.

C. Is mysticism a superior form of grasping reality, or does it represent a form of escaping the terrors of existence?

III. We place ourselves at the starting point of the mystical experience.

A. In the West, the starting point of mysticism has to do with "I," with the deeply ingrained sense of self. Mystics begin by moving away from "I" and its demands to search for a deeper self.

1. The move to the center of the self is through a process of withdrawal, an act of introspection.
2. Introspection and withdrawal from the outside world bring about physiological, psychological, and spiritual changes that transform the individual into a new being.

B. The search for God usually occurs in two distinct ways: emanation and immanence.

1. Emanation postulates that God is outside man or woman. The mystic sees the emanations of God in the world. The mystic's journey is upward and outward.

2. Immanence means that God is within. The journey is an interior one, in search of the God that inhabits everything, including the self.
3. Most Western mystics practiced some form of emanation (though examples of immanence are not uncommon). Immanence, however, presented problems. Adherence to it could result in a form of heresy, either autotheism (the belief that one is God) or pantheism (the belief that all things are God).

IV. The symbols used by mystics in their writings and utterances are part of a fairly uniform genre.

A. One of the most common themes in mystical writings and an often-used symbol is that of the pilgrimage.
1. The mystic depicts his or her experience as a journey. This journey or pilgrimage is a search for home.
2. The analogy of a pilgrimage is a common one in the Middle Ages. It is part of the quest literature and compares to the descriptions in romances of the search for the Holy Grail.

B. The most powerful symbol of the mystic's experience is love. This love is understood as the love of God.
1. In mystical writings, the ultimate experience of God is almost always described as an intense act of love. The language used parallels closely that of human love and sexual intercourse.
2. Historians and theologians have long argued the extent to which courtly language influenced mystical writings. We will examine this possibility further in our discussion of Bernard of Clairvaux.

C. The third and final element in the mystics' deployment of symbols is the often-expressed desire for perfection. This implies the remaking of one's personality and a complete change in one's outlook.

V. We examine the five stages of the mystic way and its main characteristics. Though every mystic is different, we can observe similar patterns in their thinking.

A. The first stage in the mystic way is the awakening. Certain triggers awaken the mystic to the awareness of a new reality.

B. The second stage in the mystic way is self-knowledge or purgation. This is an attempt by mystics to shed their old selves and make themselves worthy of God.
1. Purgation involves a purification of the self and a return to a "natural" self.
2. Purgation involves acts of contrition and the practice of asceticism, that is, fasting, punishing the body, committing to chastity, and engaging in other such practices.

C. The third stage of the mystic way is illumination. Illumination is a brief awareness of the divinity, a flash. It is somewhat similar to the awakening, but it comes after a period of introspection. It is the experience of the direct presence of God but without a union with God. Many mystics never go beyond this point.
1. Illumination is manifested in the hearing of voices.
2. Illumination also involves visions and other extraordinary psychic phenomena.
3. It often includes compulsive and automatic writing, such as we see in Mohamed and William Blake.

D. The fourth stage of the mystic way is known as surrender, or the dark night of the soul.
1. This stage is the period after the illumination and before the ecstasy or union with God. It is a hard period when the soul feels abandoned by God.
2. As in the second stage, this stage involves introversion and quiet as the soul prepares itself for union with God.

E. The final stage is ecstasy, or union with God. This is a high point of the mystic way. Mystics emphasized that it is an involuntary act. God literally ravishes the soul. The mystic is passively taken by God. Some mystics claim to be one with God. Others argue that they have been in the actual presence of God without losing their selfhood.
1. Union with God is a state known as mono-ideism.
2. This ecstasy often involves a physical trance and, in some cases, the so-called mystic death, when the body appears to be dead.
3. Union with God involves a deep psychological transformation.
4. This union is almost always depicted as a marriage between the soul of the mystic and God. In Christianity, the soul is always feminine, God is always masculine, and human marriage and sexual intercourse, as indicated above, is the analogy most commonly used to describe this stage.

Suggested Reading:

Underhill, *Mysticism* and *The Mystics of the Church.*

Augustine of Hippo, *The Confessions.*

Questions to Consider:

1. What role do you think mysticism and mystical beliefs play in Western culture? What role does mysticism play in your life?
2. What sort of experiences in our daily lives can we consider as part of a mystical outlook? How do they influence the development of our own personalities and our relation to the world and the people around us?

3. Why do you think these stages of the mystic way are so similar among mystics even when they come from diverse geographical or cultural contexts? Can we point to examples of mystics in today's world?

Lecture Five

Mysticism in the Twelfth Century

Scope: In Lecture Five and the next three lectures, we turn from a general discussion of mysticism to case studies of mystics and their roles in Christian society. My approach in these lectures is chronological. We examine the lives and teachings of specific mystics; in analyzing their historical milieus, we will try to determine how their claims to transcendental awareness of God affected the world in which they lived. In Lecture Five, we look at two specific mystics, Hildegard of Bingen and Bernard of Clairvaux. The lecture also seeks to compare the differences between female and male mystics.

Outline

I. In this lecture, we turn from a general discussion of mysticism to a close examination of two twelfth-century mystics. We will locate these two individuals in their immediate cultural, social, and religious milieus and place their experiences and writings in the overall description of the mystic way presented in the previous lecture.

II. Hildegard of Bingen, a famous twelfth-century mystic, had a great impact on religious life and the development of mysticism.

- **A.** Born around 1098, Hildegard came from an aristocratic background, and her family had important social and political connections with the ruling elites in the region of Bingen.
- **B.** Hildegard was a literate woman and acquired great knowledge of theology and science. Her education stands in contrast to the general lack of education of women in twelfth-century Europe.
- **C.** Hildegard pursued scientific works and made contributions to the developing medical literature of the twelfth century.
  1. Hildegard advanced what may be called today "a feminist interpretation" of scientific evidence and an innovative approach to the scientific issues of the day.
  2. Because of her works on medicine, Hildegard occupied an important place in the scientific culture of her age.
- **D.** Her music was yet another facet of her complex personality.
  1. She composed music that had a role in her mystical writings.
  2. In the past ten years, we have seen a contemporary revival of Hildegard's music, and she has taken a place in modern feminist discourse.
- **E.** Hildegard's mystical writings and visions are of greatest interest to us.

1. She was the first mystic to envision Eve and Mary and the role of women in the church.
2. The body, above all the female body, played a significant role in twelfth-century mysticism. Female mystics purified the body by purgation, then partook of the body and blood of Christ (communion) to replenish themselves. Some mystics took no food except through communion.
3. Hildegard argued that male and female were equally important in the act of conception. By extension, then, Eve was the true mother of mankind.
4. Hildegard's mysticism was highly cerebral, emphasizing her vision of the pillar and weaving great figures of the Old and New Testament into an affirmation of God.

F. Hildegard's mystical vision of the pillar reveals the joining of the Virgin Mary to God.

III. We now turn to the life and mystical writings of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, one of the most important figures of the twelfth century.

A. Bernard's role in Western European medieval history and his impact on later writers and mystics is central.

B. Bernard was born about 1090; he underwent a spiritual conversion and entered Citeaux, the mother house of the Cistercian Order.

1. Citeaux and the Cistercian Order were founded as a means of escaping the growing wealth of the Church and the contamination of the world.
2. The lives of the "Desert Fathers" (the ascetic activities of third- and fourth-century anchorites) provided a spiritual context for the Cistercian Order's ascetic practices.
3. Bernard played an important role in the bitter polemics of the period, in the preaching of the Second Crusade, in the divorce of Louis VII of France and Eleanor of Aquitaine, and in a disputed papal election.

C. Bernard's mystical writings reflect his ideas about the transcendental union with God.

1. While emphasizing man's free will, Bernard argued that freedom was a gift from God and that it requires man to love God completely. Because our freedom is a gift, we are not free; we must love God with our entire selves.
2. Bernard's mystical doctrine is best expressed in his description of the four stages of love, from (1) self-love to (2) the love of God, (3) the sweetness of the love of God, and (4) surrender to God, which finally leads to the vision of, and union with, the Godhead. He explains the distinction between self-love and selfless love.

D. Bernard's mystical Christian reinterpretation of the "Song of Songs" meant much for a twelfth-century mystic.

E. Bernard also played a role in the development of the cult of the Virgin Mary.

Suggested Reading:

Bynum, *Holy Fast, Holy Feast* and *Christ as Mother*.

Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages*.

Underhill, *The Mystics of the Church*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Why do you think Hildegard of Bingen played such a significant role in the spiritual life of the twelfth century? What was the nature of her mysticism? How did her work add to the unique role of women in the Christian religion?
2. What were the special contributions of Bernard of Clairvaux? What was his role in the religious and political life of twelfth-century Western Europe? What was the central point of his mysticism?
3. How would you compare the mysticism of Hildegard with that of Bernard? How are they similar? How are they different and why?

Lecture Six

Mysticism in the Thirteenth Century

Scope: Lecture Six explores the lives of Saint Francis of Assisi and Dante Alighieri, the author of the *Divina Commedia*. The lecture seeks to place these mystics in their respective historical contexts. For Francis, this context was the world of the small city-state in twelfth-century Italy, with its rising trade and growing bourgeoisie. For Dante, this context was the world of fratricidal conflicts in Italian cities, a world that was also deeply influenced by Aristotle and courtly romances. This lecture also examines in some detail Francis's reception of the stigmata and its importance in late medieval Christian spirituality.

Outline

I. Lecture Six examines the development of mysticism in the thirteenth century and takes a close look at the lives, writings, and historical contexts of two important figures, Saint Francis of Assisi and Dante Alighieri. We focus on their particular historical settings and the social, economic, and political forces that shaped their lives.

II. At the end of the twelfth century and the beginnings of the thirteenth, momentous events and transformations ushered a different kind of religious climate into Europe.

- **A.** Again, we note some of the issues briefly reviewed in the introductory lectures, including the following:
  1. The growth of urban societies and the impact that the rise of the bourgeoisie had on the mentality of Western Europeans
  2. The profound consequences for Christians of the commercial revolution and the widespread use of money
  3. The ongoing debate on property and the Church's position on whether owning property was sinful or not.
- **B.** The mass was performed with some changes, and the formalization of the liturgy occurred in the early thirteenth century.
  1. These changes included the relocation of the altar and the place of the celebrant in the performance of the mass.
  2. Latin, which was no longer used by the people, became the formal language of the liturgy and, thus, almost incomprehensible for the populace.
  3. Some of the reforms of the Lateran Council outlined above led to widespread opposition and the rise of heretical movements. We will cover this topic in detail in Lecture Ten.

III. Saint Francis's deeds and work buttressed the Church against the perils of sweeping social and economic changes.

- **A.** Apocalyptic feelings of the age influenced the medieval debate on property. To what extent the new wealth generated by mercantile activities presented a threat to one's salvation was a question that disturbed the minds of the growing bourgeois population of Western Europe. Francis provided an answer to their quandary.
- **B.** Francis was born about 1182, a member of the middling sorts. His father was a rich merchant.
  1. Wounded in war, Francis made a radical transformation in his life. Because of his illness and growing introspection, he withdrew from his usual pursuits.
  2. The central moment in his awakening was his experience at the Church of Saint Damian, when he was commanded by God "to rebuild his Church."
- **C.** Other important events in Francis's life include the trial in the cathedral, the beginning of his preaching, and the foundation of his order.
  1. After a confrontation with his father in the cathedral, Francis renounced his previous life.
  2. Francis traveled along the roads of central Italy, gathering his first disciples, and gained from Pope Innocent III final approval for his order.
- **D.** The main messages of Francis's life and preaching must be seen in the wider context of the history of Christianity.
  1. The first important message, noted earlier, was that of the sanctity of poverty and the renunciation of wealth.
  2. The second message was imbedded in the preaching to the birds and the story of the wolf of Gubbio. It spoke of Francis's new awareness of nature and his vision of the presence of God in the world.
  3. The third important message was the manger and the emphasis on the humanity and vulnerability of Christ, thus establishing the cult of the Christ child.
  4. The fourth message was the new type of preaching to the "infidels" and the need to love, rather than to wage war against, those of other religions.
- **E.** During Francis's last years, he experienced the betrayal of some of his followers, the reception of the stigmata, and the composition of the *Canticle of the Sun*.
  1. At the end of his life, some of his followers drew a new rule for the order that allowed the Franciscans to hold property and to teach in the universities. Francis opposed these changes but was defeated.

2. Heartbroken, he withdrew to the solitude of Mount Verna, where he received the stigmata (September 14, 1224), that is, the wounds of Christ.
3. Shortly after that, he composed a beautiful poem, which he sang as he waited for death in 1226.

IV. Dante Alighieri is not a name we may usually associate with mysticism. Nonetheless, his crowning achievement ends in a mystical vision.

A. Born about 1265, Dante belonged to a patrician family of Florence.

B. We trace the early parts of Dante's life up to his exile and the writing of *La Vita Nuova*.

1. Dante was educated in the social and political world of Florence.
2. At about the age of nine, he had his first encounter with Beatrice; this meeting would have great impact on his later life.
3. Political conflicts in Florence led to Dante's exile from the city. For the rest of his life, he lived away from Florence, which proved to be an extraordinary hardship for him.
4. The composition of *La Vita Nuova* marked an important literary moment in Dante's life.

C. We consider Dante's composition of the *Divina Commedia* and the place of the *Commedia* in Western thought and literary tradition.

1. The *Divine Comedy* is an extraordinary guide to the culture and politics of late medieval Europe and to the special world of Italian city-states in the early fourteenth century.
2. The *Commedia* represents not only a major literary achievement, but it is also the account of Dante's imaginary pilgrimage from sin and despair to the vision of God.
3. *Paradiso*, the last part of the *Commedia*, concludes with the mystical vision of God. This vision, presented in poetic language, is deeply influenced by an Aristotelian view of the world.

D. Dante experienced many of the mystical stages noted above. He put his quill down in 1321 and gave his soul to God.

Suggested Reading:

The Little Flowers of St. Francis.

Dante, *The Divine Comedy* and *La Vita Nuova.*

Underhill, *The Mystics of the Church.*

Questions to Consider:

1. Why do you think Saint Francis's preaching and life played an important role in buttressing the Church in a time of change? How did he do that? How did it work, and far more important, why did it work?
2. Considering Dante's life experiences and literary career, would you have thought of him as a mystic? Why or why not? Can you think of any recent authors whose work leads to mystical visions?
3. What were the different social, political, economic, and cultural contexts that gave rise to someone like Francis of Assisi or Dante Alighieri? Do you think that the context shapes the personality or that some individuals accomplish similar things in spite of the structural contexts?

Lecture Seven

Jewish Mysticism

Scope: Christians were not the only mystics in medieval Europe. Elsewhere, in Islam and among the Jews, there was a strong mystical tradition that contrasted vividly with that of Christians. Lecture Seven takes a close and comparative look at one aspect of Jewish mysticism. In this lecture, we examine in some detail the writing of the *Zohar*, or *Book of Splendor*, the main Kabbalistic text of the Middle Ages. The lecture summarizes the *Zohar*, compares Christian and Jewish mysticism, and concludes with a review of the impact of the Kabbalah on Christian thought and religion.

Outline

I. Lecture Seven explores the different types of Jewish mysticism, focusing on one specific type of mystical doctrines: those of the Kabbalah. The first part of the lecture reviews the different strands of mystical traditions in Judaism. Ezekiel's visions of the throne of God and the subsequent interpretations of the throne or chariot of God by Jewish mystics play an important role in the construction of a mystical vision.

II. Historiographical controversies revolve around the authorship and composition of the *Zohar*, or *Book of Splendor*, the most important Kabbalistic text ever written.

- **A.** Gershom Scholem was one of the greatest of all Jewish scholars on the Kabbalah.
- **B.** Scholem used philological and topographical arguments to advance his arguments, that is, that the *Zohar* was written in late thirteenth-century Castile. Scholem's views stand in contrast to those of more religious scholars who argued for the antiquity of Kabbalah mysticism and of the *Zohar*.
- **C.** Scholem argued that Jewish mysticism was different, less "feminine," than its Christian counterpart. He asserted that there was no marriage of the soul (feminine) with the Godhead (masculine).

III. What is the *Zohar*?

- **A.** We begin with a look at the historical context for the rise of Kabbalah mysticism in late thirteenth-century Spain.
- **B.** Here we look closely at the *Zohar*, attempting to draw out its structure and meaning.
  1. We must examine the different traditions of learning in Judaism.
  2. The *Zohar* argues that the Hebrew people were shown the glory of God in the Sinai. There, they were given the first commandments, those written by God. Although these were positive, subsequent ones related by Moses were negative because Moses found the people worshipping the golden calf when he came down from the mountain. Thus, the commandments are a mixture of confirmation and denial.
  3. The scriptures can be interpreted in four ways: (1) *peshat* (simple interpretation), (2) *remez* (allusion), (3) *derash* (homiletic), and (4) *sod* (mysteries hidden behind the word). Kabbalah is concerned with *sod*, revealing the mystery behind the words of sacred texts.
- **C.** The ten *sefiroths* are arranged hierarchically from God to man: (1) *kether* (consciousness of God), (2) *hokhmah* (wisdom of God), (3) *binah* (intelligence) (these three form the *arik anpin*), (4) *hesed* (God's love), (5) *din* (judgment), (6) *tifereth* (God's beauty), (7) *sefirah* (divine victory), (8) *hod* (glory), (9) *yesod* (justice), and (10) *malkuth* (the feminine principle).
  1. We will discuss the meaning of each of the *sefiroths* and explain the movement from the unknowable to the knowable, from the transcendental to the understandable.
  2. Crucial was the doctrine of the seven heavens, seven earths, seven earthly paradises, and seven hells found in the *Zohar*.
  3. Dante's *Divine Comedy* was built on the same Ptolemaic model of an inverted cone.
  4. Man, then, is the focal point by which the emanations of God return to God.
  5. We consider the *Zohar*'s theory about creation and the way in which *tsim tsum* (the contraction of God to allow a space for creation) is deployed in the text.
- **D.** The purpose of Kabbalah is to return the world as a whole to God. How does one return to God? It is through the role of *teshubah* (repentance).

IV. The Kabbalah had a great impact on Western thought, specifically on Italian Renaissance ideas about the dignity and uniqueness of man.

- **A.** Kabbalah mysticism, though always an esoteric knowledge open only to a few initiates, spread rapidly among a few Christian scholars in the fourteenth century.
- **B.** Jewish Kabbalists became popular as teachers of Hebrew and of the secret doctrines of the Kabbalah in Renaissance Europe.
- **C.** Some of the most important scholars in early modern Europe, such men as Pico della Mirandola, were deeply influenced by Kabbalah. Their writings often cited Kabbalistic texts.
- **D.** Through Kabbalah (though not only just through Kabbalah), the power of letters and numbers became a significant part of Western culture. In some of its stages of transmission, the Kabbalah became intimately

linked to a magical tradition and functioned, in fact, as a form of beneficent magic.

Suggested Reading:

Scholem, *Kabbalah* and *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism.*

The Zohar, or *Book of Splendor* (many editions).

Questions to Consider:

1. Why do you think Jewish mysticism differs from Christian mysticism? How are these two forms of mysticism usually articulated? What is the central focus of each?
2. What do you think of Scholem's arguments on the authorship of the *Zohar*? Is his evidence convincing to you? How are we to apply critical tools to sacred texts held in veneration by many believers?
3. What do you think are the main points in the *Zohar*? How does the *Zohar* compare to the other mystical texts we have discussed in previous lectures?

Lecture Eight

Mysticism in Early Modern Europe

Scope: Lecture Eight concludes our examination of mysticism. It focuses on the nature of mysticism in early modern Europe and its evolution as a response to the dual impact of the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation. The lecture also examines case studies of the two greatest Spanish mystics of the sixteenth century, Saint Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross, and explores the relationship between their mystical writings and the imperial policies of Spain. The lecture concludes with a summation of what mysticism meant for European society and for the Christian Church in a period of rapid upheavals.

Outline

I. Lecture Eight examines the development and changes that came about in the nature of mysticism as Europe moved into the modern world. Some of the issues to be examined in this lecture are the manner in which the search for God was transformed by the onslaught of secularism and the interiorization of the spiritual life.

II. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, developments in learning, above all, in the sciences; the emergence of economies of scale; rapid political centralization; and religious conflicts undermined ancient religious traditions.

- **A.** One of the responses to these shifts in political and religious culture was a growing interest in detachment from the world and mysticism.
  - **1.** The early modern period witnessed an increase rather than a decrease in mystical activity. Quietists, Pietists, and other groups, both Catholic and Protestant, encouraged the development of new forms of spirituality that brought the individual closer to God.
  - **2.** Some individuals, such as Pascal and others, even though they were well-known scientists and played important roles in the making of the modern world, nonetheless embraced a search for a transcendental awareness of the divine.
- **B.** The heightened emotions released by the Protestant Reformation and the Catholic response to the Reformation led to a search for spirituality that contrasted with the growing materialism of the age.
- **C.** We must distinguish between Catholic and Protestant mystics and examine the new character of mysticism in a changing world. Despite their differences, both types of mysticism embrace the vision of God in similar ways.

III. Saint Ignatius of Loyola and Saint Teresa of Avila serve as two case studies in mysticism.

A. Saint Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuit order, was a mystic who wrote *The Spiritual Exercises*, which became a guide to the spiritual life. The text had a strong martial element.

B. Saint Teresa of Avila was one of the great sixteenth-century Spanish mystics.

1. She was born in 1515; her family was of *Converso* and aristocratic origins. Her autobiography, however, does not mention her *Converso* background.
2. Teresa's early years were dominated by her fascination with romances and books of chivalry and her eventual conversion to a religious life. She even tried to enlist in the Crusade against the Moors.

C. Teresa had difficulties in her reforming mission, as she attempted to bring a more ascetic lifestyle to the Carmelite Order; with the Inquisition; and with completion of her reforms.

1. Very aware of her aristocratic origins, Teresa became a nun at the age of twenty-one.
2. Combative and austere, she became a reformer of her order. The Church as a whole was reforming itself in the wake of the Reformation.
3. For Teresa and others, mysticism empowers women in a world in which they have little power.

D. In Teresa's writings, particularly in her autobiography, we find her ideas about the mystical way.

1. Teresa's description of the watering of a garden as a metaphor for the union with God is extraordinary in such a place as Spain where water is scarce.
2. Teresa's influence in world literature was considerable; for example, George Eliot used Teresa and images of water in her great novel *Middlemarch*.

IV. From Teresa of Avila, we turn to another great sixteenth-century Spanish mystic, John of the Cross. This part of the lecture explores his early life, childhood difficulties and trials, and eventual embracing of religion.

A. John was born in 1542. Orphaned early in life, he proved to be inept at working with his hands.

B. From this unpromising start, he ended up composing some of the most beautiful poetry ever written—some of it eroticized—in Castilian.

C. For John, God can be known in five ways:

1. Through self-knowledge
2. By seeing the world
3. Through faith
4. Through the *via negativa*—going beyond the knowable
5. By union with God.

D. In John's great poem *Dark Night of the Soul*, he uses poetic metaphors and symbols to convey his experiences and lead the mystic to a place where he loses all sense of self.

V. A brief review and assessment of mysticism in the Western tradition shows its importance in shaping religion and contributing to Western thought.

A. Claims to transcendental experiences provided a space and authority to those—women, the poor, the marginalized—who would otherwise have had none.

B. The mystical experience was often on the border of heterodoxy, and mystics always ran the risk of falling into the hands of the Inquisition or similar controlling institutions.

Suggested Reading:

John of the Cross, *The Living Flame of Love* and *Dark Night of the Soul.*

Teresa of Avila, *The Life of St. Theresa of Avila by Herself.*

Underhill, *The Mystics of the Church*, chapter 9.

Questions to Consider:

1. How did early modern mysticism differ from medieval transcendental experiences? How were these experiences articulated in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries? Why do you think there were differences?
2. What was unique about the life and writings of Teresa of Avila? How does her story fit in the social, economic, political, and cultural milieus of Imperial Spain? Why is her metaphor of water so appealing, and how does her frequent use of the symbolism of water fit in the ecological realities of an arid central Spain?
3. What do you make of the beautiful poem of John of the Cross about the dark night of the soul? What is the nature of his sexual imagery? How is it used to describe the union of the soul with God?

Lecture Nine

Heresy and the Millennium

Scope: In Lecture Nine, we shift from a discussion of mysticism to an examination of the place of heresy and apocalyptic beliefs in Western Europe between 1000 and 1650. The lecture defines different types of heresies in the Christian tradition and seeks to uncover the ancient roots of the millenarian tradition in the West. This lecture also provides a taxonomy of the different types of millenarian movements that emerged in the West from the beginning of the Christian era onward. Finally, the lecture compares heretical and apocalyptic movements and assesses the significance of these movements in the development of Western culture.

Outline

I. Lecture Nine defines the different meanings of heresy and millenarian beliefs in the Western tradition. It seeks to provide taxonomies of the different causes leading to heretical beliefs and for the different types of apocalyptic movements.

II. We first examine the relationship between heresy and orthodoxy and the origins of heresies in the period after 1000.

- **A.** Heresy is the denial of established dogmas or dissent from established truth. You can be a heretic only of the religion you profess. For example, a Jew or a Muslim cannot be a heretic by denying a Christian dogma. Only a Christian can be a heretic in Christianity. By the same token, a Muslim or a Jew could be heretical only in relation to his or her own set of beliefs.
  1. A dogma of the Catholic Church, for example, is transubstantiation, the ritualized conversion of bread into flesh and wine into blood. Such dogma evolves out of heresies, and heresies, of course, are defined by the victors.
  2. A thin line separates the heretic from the orthodox: Dogma is defined out of confrontation with sincere and long-held beliefs.
- **B.** Specific cases of heresy in early Christianity include Pelagianism, Arianism, and Donatism, all of which played roles in shaping early Christianity.
- **C.** Five different types of heresies swept Europe in the wake of the Investiture Controversy and the reform of the Church.
  1. In Christian Europe at the time of the Investiture Controversy, the impact of Church reform on Christian belief and practices was profound. The upheavals of this period led to the emergence of religious dissent.
  2. One group of dissenters was the Reformists, that is, those who were carried away by the reforming spirit and went beyond what Church authorities considered orthodox.
  3. A second type of heresy was that of eccentrics. These were people, usually isolated and without broad support, who held views that were outdated and, in some ways, bizarre.
  4. A third group was composed of those practicing some form of dualism or Manichaeism. The best example of this type of heresy is the Cathars. We will examine them in detail in the next lecture.
  5. A fourth category of heresy was that of reactionaries. These were people who objected to Church reform and advocated an allegiance to tradition.
  6. A final category were those who held heterodox views out of intellectual questioning. Such thinkers as Baruch Spinoza, expelled from his synagogue on charges of heterodoxy and even atheism, fit into this category.

III. We next consider the roots of the millenarian tradition and the idea that time has a beginning and an end.

- **A.** Apocalyptic thinking originated in Persian/Iranian concepts of time and the endless struggle between good and evil. Cultural and social constructions create such notions, which had a lasting impact on the making of Western culture.
  1. In the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, we read about heroes who keep evil at bay—time was cyclical, repetitive.
  2. Zoroaster taught of good and evil, of the formulation in the *Avesta* of two opposing forces.
- **B.** Many cultural and religious formulations have constructed the idea of Paradise (our prehistory) and the widespread elements of utopianism in popular culture and folklore.
- **C.** Different millennial traditions exist in Judaism and Christianity. Christianity has two orthodox millennial traditions—one in Matthew, the other in Revelations.
  1. The Book of Revelations, 20:1–3, offers the classical formulation—the devil is seized and imprisoned, and the faithful reign for 1,000 years before the final battle. At that point, history and time will come to an end.
  2. There are other conceptions of the end, such as that of the Sabbath Age.
  3. Joachim of Fiori drew parallels between the Old Testament and the New and put forth a third age, the Age of the Holy Spirit.
  4. The concept of the king who died and will return is also part of this tradition, one that begins with the propagandizing of Frederick II.

IV. Heresy and millenarian beliefs affected the social, political, and cultural structures of Western Europe.

A. The violence that followed the first popular crusade and the apocalyptic sentiments roused by the crusaders' conquest of Jerusalem triggered millenarian movements.

B. Norman Cohn argues convincingly that millenarian ideas were closely related to the emergence of totalitarian regimes in Europe in the twentieth century.

Suggested Reading:

Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium* and *Cosmos, Chaos and the World to Come: The Ancient Roots of Apocalyptic Faith*, chapter 1.

Reeves, *Joachim of Fiori.*

Questions to Consider:

1. How would you describe heresy and the role of heretical ideas in the evolution of Western thought? Do some people hold heretical ideas today? How are these ideas treated by the public and by the authorities?
2. Why do you think millenarian ideas have such lasting power? If one considers that part of the American identity was created by such ideas and that the country was overrun with millenarian and utopian movements in the nineteenth century, how have such tendencies become part of the fabric of our society?
3. Can you identify apocalyptic movements in our culture and worldwide? Are these movements different from those discussed in this lecture? How are they different and how are they similar?

Lecture Ten

The Church under Attack

Scope: In Lecture Ten, we look at the emergence of specific heresies in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Europe. The lecture explores the social and economic conditions in southern France that led to the rise of heterodox movements. In particular, the lecture describes the beliefs of Waldensians and Cathars. Describing Cathar beliefs, the lecture focuses on the role of asceticism and dualism in Western thought and the longstanding influence of Manichaean doctrine on European culture. The lecture continues by providing a review of the demise of the Cathars or Albigensians in the early thirteenth century and the rise of Fraticelli heretical movements in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.

Outline

I. The lecture begins with a close look at the social, economic, and cultural context that led to the rise of heterodox movements, with special attention to the unique conditions that existed in southern France at the end of the eleventh century.

A. In the twelfth century, southern France was politically independent from the demands of French kings. This explains, in part, both the success of Catharism and the actions of other political forces in the region.

B. Southern France was culturally different from the north. In many respects, its culture, particularly that of Provence and Languedoc, was unique.

1. The ideas of courtly love were widespread in the region. The courtly love tradition originated in the south of France.
2. Southern France had its own linguistic identity, different from that of northern France.

C. We must also note the laxity of Catholic observance in the south and the role of women in the region's spirituality.

II. One particular type of heresy (that of the Waldensians) had a great impact on Western society and the debate on the relationship among the economy, social practices, and a Christian life.

A. The Church's attitudes toward wealth were important, as were the contradictions between growing spiritual needs, the growth of a commercial mentality, and the Church's wealth.

B. The life and preaching of Peter Waldo was significant, as were the activities of his followers.

1. Peter Waldo converted to a life of poverty after hearing a passage from the Gospel.
2. The Waldensians made the scriptures available in the vernacular. They believed that if the Bible was in Latin, it was available only to the elite.

C. In 1179, the Church opposed Waldensian preaching. By about 1182, Waldo was declared a heretic. Unlike Francis, he refused to accept the dictates of the Church.

D. Waldensian beliefs spread and continue to this day.
1. Like the earlier Donatists, the Waldensians questioned the power of priests.
2. They criticized purgatory as a bourgeois creation, a way of bargaining for salvation.
3. They embraced a radical evangelical morality.

III. Catharism was the so-called Albigensian heresy of the late twelfth century.

A. Catharism traces its development to Manichaean dualism in the ancient world.

B. In many respects, although identified as a heresy, Catharism was a different religion in competition—quite successfully, in fact—with dominant Christian beliefs.
1. We examine Cathar beliefs on the origins of mankind (the world of matter is the work of the devil), the place of Jesus in Catharism (his physical body is an illusion), and Cathar's attack on the Catholic Church. Catharism imposed Christian ideology over ancient beliefs.
2. The Cathar leaders (the pure) were considered different from its followers.
3. What was the social context of Catharism? Who was a Cathar? The social orders most inclined to Cathar beliefs were the mercantile classes and lower nobility. The role of women in Catharism was much more significant than in the Catholic Church.

C. The antagonism between the Church and the Cathars led to a crusade against the Cathars.
1. Attempts were made to bring the Cathars back into the fold of the Church through preaching.
2. The failure of this approach led Pope Innocent III to preach a crusade against the Cathars, the first time a crusade was preached against Christians.
3. The crusaders, mostly from northern France, defeated the Cathars in bloody battles. We examine the political implications of this anti-Cathar crusade.

D. In the aftermath of the crusade and the defeat of the heretics, Catharism remained alive.

E. The survival of Catharism in Languedoc and other parts of Europe is shown by Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie's *Montaillou* as a point of departure.

IV. We often see the spread of radical religious movements that began as orthodox and ended as heretical.

A. The Fraticelli, those who claimed to have kept the message of Saint Francis alive, challenged established religion.

B. In the 1260s, the flagellant movement and the suffering of its adherents was supposed to bring about the end of time.

Suggested Reading:

Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou.*

Strayer, *The Albigensian Crusade.*

Barber, *The Cathars.*

Questions to Consider:

1. Why do you think Peter Waldo's preaching was found to be heretical while that of Saint Francis was considered orthodox? What do you think are the differences between heresy and orthodoxy?
2. Why do you think Catharism presented such a challenge to the established Church? Was there something in the doctrines or organization of Cathars that made them attractive? What was the social, economic, and cultural context that led to their success?
3. Is the flagellant movement unique to the Christian Middle Ages? Do you know of any similar movement in the contemporary world? What is the relationship between pain and religious experience?

Lecture Eleven

The Birth of the Inquisition

Scope: In Lecture Eleven, we study the birth of the Inquisition in the 1220s as a response to the spread of Catharism in late twelfth-century Languedoc. The lecture analyzes the meaning of the Inquisition in medieval culture and the historiographical debate on whether inquisitorial practices marked a significant shift in the treatment of heretics, Jews, women, and lepers. The lecture looks at the arguments for the emergence of exclusionary discourses and the creation of "otherness." The lecture concludes with a brief examination of the heresy of the Free Spirit, its implications for lay piety, new forms of sexuality, and the growing intolerance of the Church and Christian people in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries.

Outline

I. The lecture begins by explaining the unique circumstances that existed in southern France in the wake of the Albigensian Crusade.

- **A.** The crusaders failed to stamp out the Cathar heresy.
- **B.** Violence against the Cathars and violent responses from the heretics helped set a climate of persecution.
- **C.** Political needs—the desire to pacify the region and establish French control over the area's resources—led to the creation of the Inquisition.
- **D.** We examine the actual foundation of the Inquisition, its first official actions in southern France, and its initial impact on Languedoc society.
- **E.** From the foundation of the institution, we turn to its organizational structure.
  1. The Inquisition was organized in southern France by papal order and placed in the hands of the newly founded Order of the Dominicans. The chain of authority went from the pope to the bishop to the local inquisitors.
  2. The Inquisition persecuted heretics, brought them to trial, and meted out different forms of punishment, including confiscation, penance, and burning.
  3. The symbolic meaning of inquisitorial trials can be found in the rituals of detection, conviction, and punishment.

II. The genesis of the Inquisition took place in the political, social, economic, and cultural context of southern France in the 1220s and 1230s.

- **A.** A judicial procedure for finding the "truth," the Inquisition marked a dramatic shift in mentality in dealing with heterodoxy.

- **B.** Coinciding with the creation of the Inquisition and perhaps very much as its outcome, new discourses of difference appeared in Western society.
  1. These discourses sought to define those to be included in the reformed Church and in the early beginnings of a national community and to exclude those unworthy of being part of this project.
  2. Jews, lepers, and other marginalized types (including heretics) were now excluded from communal and national projects.
  3. This process has been described as the construction of "otherness" or as the "rise of persecuting societies." We briefly explore the historiographical debates on these topics.
- **C.** Ultimately, the Inquisition was a monitoring device, a way to confiscate the property of those you believed to be your enemies.
- **D.** One of the reasons for the birth of the Inquisition was the radical shift in the perception and manner of dealing with heresy.
  1. Before the twelfth century, the Church dealt with heretics by attempting to bring them back into the orthodox fold.
  2. By the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, extreme forms of punishment (burning at the stake, violent physical torture) became acceptable to the "public."
  3. The development of a persecuting mentality was a way of binding together the community in the capture, torture, and execution of "heretics."
  4. Still, inquisitors in the thirteenth—or, for that matter, the fifteenth—centuries were restrained in their behavior compared to those who led the later persecution of witches, much less those who perpetrated the horrors of the twentieth century.

III. One specific heretical movement, often associated with the *beghards* and *beguines*, was known as the Free Spirit.

- **A.** Various ideas and behaviors were associated with the Free Spirit.
  1. Adherents of the Free Spirit were accused of lechery and sexual excesses.
  2. Adherents were also accused of claiming to be like God and of reaching a state of perfection in which they were no longer bound by moral laws.
- **B.** Several case studies are associated with the heresy of the Free Spirit. Such stories, of course, were spread by the enemies of the movement.
- **C.** As a result of the Church's more rigid position and the moratorium on the formation of new religious orders, new lay groups came into being.
  1. New types of spirituality resulted from the impact of Franciscan piety and the active preaching of Franciscans and, to a lesser extent, Dominicans in the urban centers of medieval Europe.

2. Among the groups that emerged in this period, the so-called *beguines* and *beghards* were most important in defining the new forms of lay spirituality.

D. Those accused of joining the Free Spirit were mostly urban, literate, and middling sorts. Marguerite Porete, one of the leading thinkers of the Free Spirit, was condemned and executed in Paris.

E. The heretics did not think of themselves as heretics, but as true orthodox believers who followed the teachings of Christ.

Suggested Reading:

Lea, *The History of the Inquisition in the Middle Ages.*

Lerner, *The Heresy of the Free Spirit.*

Wakefield, ed., *Heresy, Crusade, and Inquisition in Southern France.*

Questions to Consider:

1. How do the historical realities of the Inquisition compare to the representation of the institution in the popular mind?
2. What was the context for the rise of the Inquisition? How did this context help explain the making of discourses of difference? What similar developments can we point to in modern society? Where?
3. Why do you think the ideas associated with the heresy of the Free Spirit conquered the popular imagination? Are there similar movements in our own recent past? What is the role of the amoral in the historical process?

Lecture Twelve

The Millennium in the Sixteenth Century

Scope: Lecture Twelve explores the outburst of millenarian expectations in the wake of the Reformation and the great social and religious upheavals caused by peasant uprisings in early sixteenth-century Germany. This lecture places these rebellions and their expectations of a godly kingdom in the context of religious reform, political antagonisms, and cultural change. The lecture describes the trials and tribulations of the peasants as they faced their noble and religious opponents, their expectations of the heavenly city on earth, and their final defeat and slaughter. The lecture concludes with a comparative examination of the role of political apocalyptics in early sixteenth-century Germany and seventeenth-century England and the impact of these political and cultural developments in the making of the American consciousness.

Outline

I. We begin the process of contextualizing the German peasant uprisings, seeking to explain the reasons for the dramatic apocalyptic bent of peasant resistance in early modern Germany.

A. At the end of the Middle Ages and the beginnings of the modern era, economic conditions changed dramatically.

B. These changes created unstable conditions that fostered resistance to the established order.

1. In Germany, but also throughout most of Western Europe, the village community, which had long been the mainstay of the rural economy, experienced great changes. These changes affected the social structure of rural society.
2. In the villages, growing social differences led to rapid stratification. A few wealthy peasants and urban dwellers began to purchase most of the village common lands. A large number of peasants were thrown into the ranks of a landless proletariat, daily journeymen, who hired themselves out to the wealthy farmers.
3. The enclosure of common lands throughout Western Europe led to protests as peasants saw their traditional ways of life eroded beyond recognition.

II. The most important change was brought about by the onset of the Reformation. Martin Luther's break with the papacy and with Catholic dogma transformed the mental landscape of Germany and Europe.

A. Martin Luther's biography helps explain some of his most fundamental challenges to Church dogmas. His discovery of a vocation in the middle

of a lightening storm, his dramatic conversion, and his crisis of faith in the choir set the stage for his dispute with Rome.

B. These challenges revolved around Luther's arguments for the priesthood of all believers and his denial of transubstantiation, ecclesiastical celibacy, and the supremacy of the pope. He also advocated the translation (which he did himself) of the Holy Scriptures into the vernacular.

C. Luther's successful challenge to Church authority was closely linked to the political infighting taking place in Germany at the beginning of the sixteenth century. The German princes, now threatened by the growing power of the new emperor, Charles V, looked to Luther as a way to legitimize their resistance to imperial power.

III. We now turn to a close examination of the great peasant uprising and explore the social and economic grievances of the peasants and how these complaints were articulated through an apocalyptic discourse.

A. Under the impact of the Reformation, the Ottoman threat, and the social and economic shifts outlined above, the German peasants began to make social, economic, and religious demands, asking for justice and for a more egalitarian society.

1. The outbreaks of violence were widespread and, often, led to attacks on monasteries and to the peasants' appropriation of Church lands.
2. The discourse of violence was often articulated in radical revolutionary and religious terms.

B. The ideologue of the "Great Peasant War" was Thomas Muntzer (ca. 1488–1525).

1. Muntzer began his preaching as a follower of Luther, then broke with him to espouse far more radical political and theological positions. He believed in direct revelation and spirit possession.
2. In his Prague Manifesto, Muntzer described the seventh-fold gift of the Spirit and the direct reception of the Holy Spirit.
3. In his preaching, Muntzer began to justify violence and encourage peasant rebellion.

C. Muntzer's preaching marked the opening of radical Anabaptism and the beginnings of full-fledged violence.

1. In the early stages of the Great Peasant War, the rebels defeated noble armies.
2. After their early success, the peasants presented their list of demands. These requests ranged from fairly traditional economic claims to a radical restructuring of German society.
3. These radical demands rallied the high nobility to meet the challenge presented by the new peasant radicalism.

4. The Great Peasant War ended with the victory of the nobility—Luther condemned the peasants and encouraged the nobility to suppress them—and the final slaughter of untold numbers of peasants.

IV. The crushing defeat of the Anabaptists did not end millenarian agitation in Germany and elsewhere in the West.

A. The Protestant Reformation in its most radical forms also found a home in England. There, religious devotion mixed with new forms of political radicalism, eventually leading to direct confrontation with the Crown.

B. By the mid-seventeenth century, some Protestant sects, the Puritans among them, were able to overthrow King Charles I and establish, under Cromwell, a commonwealth, a godly republic. "No king but king Jesus" was the cry of many of these radicals, who protested against the secularity of power.

C. The Puritans, although entertaining some millenarian and apocalyptic beliefs, did not, strictly speaking, espouse such radical views. Nonetheless, their execution of the king and their heightened sense of being selected by God opened the way for a proliferation of millenarian movements.

1. During the rule of Cromwell, numerous fringe groups became active in England. These groups, Levellers, Diggers, Quakers, Fifth Monarchy men, and others, combined radical social views with apocalyptic expectations.
2. Many of their views could also be described as utopian, because they sought to create God's heaven on earth.
3. As was the case in Germany, the most radical elements were suppressed, some even during Cromwell's rule and others after the restoration of the monarchy under Charles II.

V. We consider the impact that these Anabaptist, Puritan, and English radical beliefs had on the construction of an American identity and in the making of American democracy.

A. The first wave of English migration to the American northeast was composed of Puritans and other religious radicals. They brought with them that heady combination of levelling political ideals and religious commitment.

B. In New England, the settlers thought of their new land as the "city upon the hill," an earthly recreation of the blessed Jerusalem. Their vision also led to the construction of American exceptionalism. The country continued to be a magnet for religious radicals and utopian thinkers, who migrated to North America as the ideal place to construct a perfect society.

Suggested Reading:

Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium.*

Freedman, *Images of the Peasantry.*

Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down.*

Questions to Consider:

1. Why do you think the German peasant uprisings occupy such a prominent place in the history of apocalyptic movements? What were the special circumstances that led to the conflation of politics and religion? Are there such links among belief, politics, and the world to come today?
2. How would you describe the role of such fringe groups as Levellers, Quakers, and others in the making of an American identity? What characteristics would you recognize in American political institutions and civic life that echo English developments in the seventeenth century?
3. During the confirmation of John Ashcroft as Attorney General, he was quoted as having said, "there is no king but king Jesus." What are the apocalyptic elements found in such pronouncements?

Timeline

c. 1000	Millenarian agitation widespread throughout the West.
1090/1091–1153	Bernard of Clairvaux.
c. 1098–1179	Hildegard of Bingen, mystic and scientist.
1121/1122	Bernard enters Citeaux on his twenty-first birthday.
c. 1135–1202	Joachim of Fiori
c. 1171–1221	Dominic of Guzman, founder of the Dominican Order.
c. 1182–1226	Francis of Assisi.
1184	Joachim meets with Pope Lucius III and is given permission to write his visions.
1208–1226	Crusade against the Cathars and foundation of the Inquisition in Languedoc.
1210	Francis begins his preaching and meets with Innocent III.
1212–1250	Frederick II, Holy Roman Emperor.
1213	Joachim's views on the Trinity condemned by the Church.
1224	Francis receives the stigmata.
1260s	A new wave of millenarian agitation. The flagellant movement begins.
1265–1321	Dante Alighieri.
c. 1285	Moses of Leon writes the *Zohar*, the greatest Kabbalistic text.
1347–1380	Catherine of Siena.
1348–1350	The Black Death leads to another wave of apocalyptic movements and a rebirth of flagellant activities.
1437–1508	Isaac Abravanel, Jewish apocalyptic writer.
1450s	Reception of Hermetic lore in Western Europe.

c. 1480–1690s	Witch craze in Western Europe.
1483–1546	Martin Luther.
1484	Innocent VIII's *Summa desiderantes affectibus.*
1486	Publication of the *Malleus maleficarum.*
c. 1488–1525	Thomas Muntzer, radical Protestant leader.
1491–1556	Ignatius of Loyola.
1509–1564	John Calvin.
1515–1582	Teresa of Avila.
1517	Luther nails his ninety-five theses on the door of a church at Wittenberg.
1520s	Anabaptist peasant uprisings in Germany. Great wave of apocalyptic rebellions.
1542–1591	John of the Cross.
1545–1563	Council of Trent.
1634	Trial and execution of Urbain Grandier in Loudon.
1660s	Sabbatai Sevi's messianic preaching.
1665	Sabbatai reveals himself as the Messiah.
September 16, 1666	Sabbatai's conversion to Islam.
1692	Salem witch trials.

Glossary

alchemy: A strange combination of chemical lore, religion, and secret practices, alchemy dated back to Babylonian times. It was preserved and transmitted to the West by the Arabs and became one of the most important esoteric forms of knowledge in early modern Europe.

Anabaptist: A radical early sixteenth-century sect that advocated adult baptism. The great German peasant uprising of 1525 was greatly inspired by Anabaptists' social and religious views.

astronomy: The belief that a connection exists between the stars and other celestial bodies (the macrocosm) and humans (the microcosm). The stars, it was believed, influenced the life of individuals, and certain amulets, stones related to one's astrological sign and other such objects, provided protection against the fatal influence of celestial bodies.

awakening: The first stage of the mystic's way. The first awareness that life is not right and the turning of the mystic to God.

Catharism (also Albigensian heresy): A heresy, widespread in southern France and northern Italy in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. It had Manichaean origins and beliefs in the corruption of the material world.

dark night of the soul: The fourth stage of the mystic's way. After the first vision of the Godhead, the mystic suffers a period of withdrawal and pain. It also marks a period of growing introspection and preparation for the union with God. *Dark Night of the Soul* is also the title of a great mystical poem by John of the Cross.

emanation: In mysticism, this term refers to the mystic's awareness of the presence of God in His emanations. The Godhead is utterly transcendental and cannot be seen or comprehended. Instead, the mystic perceives the manifestations of God.

familiars: Evil spirits or demons, which often take the form of an animal, given by the devil to his followers to attend, serve, and satisfy them.

flagellant movement: Movement of people who, in the 1260s and mid-1300s (the most significant periods), whipped themselves in penance and as a way of ushering in the millennium.

heresy: Simply, heresy is the holding of beliefs or ideas that contradict the dogma or orthodox belief of one's own religion

hermeticism: A doctrine based on a body of works written c. 150–200 A.D. but believed to have been written much earlier by an Egyptian priest, Hermes Trismegistus. This body of work combined magical, astrological, and other mysterious accounts and had great influence on European culture.

illumination: One of the five stages of the mystical way. This third stage signals the mystic's brief awareness of the presence of the Godhead. It is not a total union with God but a taste of what that union may be.

immanence: In mysticism, the mystic finds God within himself or herself. God is within us.

incubus: A male companion, an evil spirit or demon, given to witches for their sexual satisfaction. See **familiars**.

Kabbalah (also Cabbala): An esoteric form of Jewish mysticism. Although Kabbalah has ancient roots, its most important text, the *Zohar*, dates from the late thirteenth century.

Manichaeism: An ancient set of beliefs, dating back to Mani or Manes, a third-century A.D. Persian religious leader. These beliefs held that the world was divided between two contending forces: evil, associated with the material world, and goodness, associated with the spirit.

Messianism: Belief in the Messiah and of His coming in a near future.

millenarianism (millennium, apocalyptics): The belief that after long trials and tribulations, a period of 1,000 years of peace (when the devil will be chained in hell) will be enjoyed by all Christians. Many variations on the theme of the millennium existed during the period between the beginnings of the Christian era and 1700.

mysticism: The belief that mystics (those who follow along the mystical path) experience a union or direct awareness of the Godhead.

mystic's way: Mystics argued that the journey to their final union with God followed a path and included five stages: awakening, purgation, illumination, withdrawal or dark night of the soul, and union.

necromancy: Conjuring the spirit of the dead.

purgation: This is the second stage in the mystic's way. It is the process of chastising and cleansing the body to prepare for the union with God.

Sabbat: The nocturnal gathering of witches.

Sabbatianism: The followers of Sabbatai Sevi, a Jewish messianic figure who declared himself the long-awaited Messiah and attracted thousands of followers in the late seventeenth century.

stigmata: The reception of the five wounds of Christ on the Cross; that is, wounds on the two feet, the two hands, and the piercing of the side. Francis of Assisi was reported to be the first Christian to receive the stigmata.

succubus: A female companion, an evil spirit or demon, given by the devil to one of his male followers for sexual pleasure. See **familiars**.

union or unitive stage: The fifth stage in the mystic's way. It is the final union of the mystic's soul with the Godhead.

Waldensians: A twelfth-century heretical movement that preached absolute poverty. Founded by Peter Waldo (Valdes of Lyons), the Waldensians translated the gospel into the vernacular and became a great threat to the Church.

witch craze: A period in Western European history, running roughly from the late fifteenth century to the late seventeenth century, when most Europeans believed that a vast conspiracy of witches existed whose aim was to overthrow the Christian order. As a consequence, between 80,000 and 100,000 people were executed on charges of witchcraft.

Biographical Notes

Isaac Abravanel. Descendants of a well-established Sevillian Jewish family, the Abravanels fled to Portugal in 1391, a period of great violence against the Jews. After political difficulties in Portugal in the 1480s, members of the family, including Isaac, fled to Castile in 1483, where Isaac became an important tax farmer. In 1492, in spite of the pleading of the Catholic monarchs, Isaac chose exile. He left Spain that year and became an important messianic figure before he died in 1508.

Bernard of Clairvaux. A member of an aristocratic family in the area of Dijon, Bernard was born in either 1090 or 1091. He joined the newly created Cistercian Order on his twenty-first birthday and became abbot of Clairvaux at the age of twenty-four. He was among the most influential mystics, intellectuals, and religious figures of the twelfth century. He died in 1153.

John Calvin. Born in 1509, Calvin brought the new doctrines of the Reformation to Geneva. This city became the center for a more radical interpretation of Luther's position. Calvin's great work, *Christianae Religionis Institutio*, was published in 1535. It emphasized predestination. Calvin died in 1564.

Catherine of Siena. A contemporary of Petrarch, Catherine was born in Siena on 25 March 1347, one year before the Black Death. From a fairly prosperous artisan family, she began to have visions at the age of six and took the habit in 1363. Catherine developed a doctrine of holy hatred, that is, the closer a soul is to God the more that soul hates the sins and mistakes it commits against God.

Charles V (Charles I in Spain and V in the Holy Roman Empire). Ruled in Germany between 1519 and 1556. He was opposed by Luther and the Protestant German princes and played a significant role in the religious and political conflicts of the early sixteenth century.

Francis of Assisi. Born around 1182 in Assisi, Italy, Francis was the son of Pietro Bernardone, a well-to-do merchant, and probably of a French mother. His life was that of a typical child and adolescent in a late twelfth-century urban milieu, until he was wounded in the war against Peruggia. After undergoing a conversion, he began his preaching of poverty. He died in 1226, less than two years after receiving the stigmata.

Hildegard of Bingen. One of the most significant female mystics of the twelfth century, Hildegard came from an aristocratic family in the area of Bingen in Germany. A learned woman, she wrote extensively on a variety of topics and was one of the leading physicians of her time. She was born around 1098 and died, after a long and productive life, in 1179.

Joachim of Fiori. Born around 1135, Joachim was abbot of a Cistercian monastery in southern Italy. He had an interview with Pope Lucius III in 1184 and was given permission to go wandering and to explain his prophetic visions and revelations about the Third Age. Two years later, he met the new Pope, Urban III, and in 1190 or 1191, traveled with Richard the Lionhearted who was on his way to the Holy Land. The author of important millenarian treatises, Joachim died in 1202.

John of the Cross. Juan de Yépez y Alvarez was born in 1542 at Fontiveros and orphaned at an early age. He spent his childhood in an orphanage in quite trying circumstances, until his obvious intellectual abilities came to the attention of his superior and he was sent to school. Joining the Carmelite Order at the age of twenty-one, he soon became one of the greatest mystics of the age.

Martin Luther. The great Protestant leader was born in 1483, became a priest in 1507 and a professor at Wittenberg the following year, and broke openly with the Church in 1517. His translation of the Bible into German and his positions on questions of dogma opened a rift in Western European Christianity.

Moses of Leon (Rabbi). According to Gershom Scholem, Moses of Leon, who lived in several towns in northern and central Castile in the late thirteenth century, composed the *Zohar*, the greatest of all Kabbalistic texts, between 1280 and 1286.

Thomas Muntzer. Born in Stolberg in the Harz Mountain region in 1488 or 1489, Muntzer became a follower of Luther until breaking ranks with him and preaching a radical form of Protestantism and social doctrine. His millenarian preaching played an important role in the Great Peasant Rebellion of 1525.

Richard of St. Victor. Born around 1123, Richard died on 10 March 1173. He came from Scotland to the monastery of Saint Victor in France, where he studied under Hugh of Saint Victor. His two main works were *On the Preparation of the Soul to Contemplation (Benjamin Minor)* and *On the Grace of Contemplation (Benjamin Major).*

Sabbatai Sevi. Born in 1625 in Smyrna and part of the great Sephardic migration to the eastern Mediterranean, Sabbatai became the focus of great messianic agitation among Sephardic communities in 1665, until his imprisonment and conversion to Islam in 1666.

Teresa of Avila. The granddaughter of a relapsed *converso*, Teresa, born in 1515, was related through her mother to one of Avila's most aristocratic families. She entered the Carmelite Order when she was about twenty-one and became a reformer, writer, and mystic. Her works are among the most cherished in Spanish literature. They were written in a simple yet effective style.

Bibliography

Essential Reading (Primary Sources)

Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Confessions*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961. Augustine's passionate autobiography, this text served as inspiration to most medieval mystics and religious thinkers.

Buber, Martin. *Tales of the Hasidim: Early Masters*. New York: Schocken Books, 1947. A delightful collection of stories about the founder of Hasidism and his early followers. In many respects, the tone of the book and the character of the stories parallel that of the *Little Flowers*.

Dante Alighieri. *The Portable Dante*. New York: Viking, 1969. This collection includes the entire text of the *Divine Comedy* and relevant excerpts from *La Vita Nuova*.

Ignatius of Loyola. *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*. New York: Image Books, 1964. One of the most inspiring devotional guides by the founder of the Jesuit Order. It became an important part of the education of some of the leading Catholic intellectuals in early modern Western Europe.

John of the Cross. *Dark Night of the Soul*. New York: Image (many editions). A beautiful account of a mystical experience.

———. *Living Flame of Love*. New York: Image (many editions). Another great poem by one of the deepest mystics in Christian Europe.

Kors, Alan C., and Edward Peters. *Witchcraft in Europe, 1000–1700: A Documentary History*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972. A superb collection of primary sources showing the changing attitudes toward witchcraft from the central Middle Ages to the early modern period. The excerpts are long enough to provide important insights into the perceptions of witchcraft.

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The Little Flowers of St. Francis. New York: Image, 1958. This is the delightful account of Francis of Assisi's life, miracles, and mystical experiences. Written with childlike style, these narratives, the work of the radical followers of Francis, bring the saint down to the human level.

Teresa of Avila. *The Life of Saint Teresa of Ávila by Herself*. London: Penguin Books, 1957. Teresa's autobiography is an engaging account of her life and activities as an ecclesiastical reformer. It includes a beautiful description of her mystical experience that uses the metaphor of watering a garden as a means to convey her union with God.

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Zohar, or *Book of Splendor*. Many editions and translations.

Supplementary Reading

Barber, Malcom. *The Cathars: Dualist Heretics in Languedoc in the High Middle Ages*. Harlow, England: Longman, 2000. A superb study of Catharism and the religious context in which this heresy prospered in twelfth-century southern France.

Burckhardt, Jacob. *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*. 2 vols. New York: Harper, 1975. Written more than a hundred years ago, this remains one of the most exciting reconstructions of the culture and politics of Renaissance Italy. Among the greatest history books ever written.

Burke, Peter. *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*. Aldershot, England: Wildwood House, 1978. A brilliant synthesis and pioneer work on popular culture. One of the most important books on cultural history.

———. *The Italian Renaissance: Culture and Society in Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986. A remarkable examination of the social aspects of Renaissance cultural production, Burke's book provides new insights into the culture of the period.

Bynum, Caroline. *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982. A compelling series of essays on female spirituality in the High Middle Ages. This is a formidable and innovative approach to religious history.

———. *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Woman*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987. Bynum's path-breaking monograph on the relation among fasting, the Host, and female sanctity. A classic.

Caro Baroja, Julio. *The World of the Witches*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965. A classical anthropological examination of witchcraft. Caro Baroja also provides a detailed description and analysis of the great witch trials in the sixteenth-century Basque region.

Cohn, Norman. *The Pursuit of the Millennium*. New York: Oxford, 1970. This is the classic account of millenarian movements in the medieval and early modern West. A wide-ranging and thoughtful treatment.

Davis, Natalie Z. *The Return of Martin Guerre*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983. Davis's moving retelling of the saga of Arnaud, who took the place of Martin Guerre. A wonderful recreation of sixteenth-century peasant culture and beliefs.

Delumeau, Jean. *La peur en Occident XIVe–XVIIIe siècles (Fear in the West).* Paris: 1978. An extraordinary work on mental attitudes in Western Europe by one of the leading cultural historians in the world.

Dunn, Richard. *The Age of Religious Wars, 1559–1715.* New York: Norton, 1979. A very good study of Europe during the period of religious war and excellent reading as context for the Protestant Reformation and the witch craze.

Eliade, Mircea. *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return.* New York: Harper, 1959. A thoughtful and wise collection of essays about the ancient beliefs on the return of time. The essay entitled "The Terror of History" (although on a different note from my aims here) serves as inspiration for these lectures.

———. *The Forge and the Crucible: The Origins and Structure of Alchemy.* New York: Harper, 1962. A superb discussion of alchemy and of its symbolic and religious meanings by a leading scholar of religion.

———. *Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991. A re-impression of Eliade, one of the most noted historians of religion. Includes masterful essays on the nature of religious symbols and their cultural significance.

Frazer, James G. *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion.* 1 vol. abridged. New York: MacMillan, 1951. The superb abridgement of Frazer's classic early anthropological work on folklore and religion. This is one of the greatest books—even though the conclusions may no longer be acceptable—of the twentieth century.

Freedman, Paul. *Images of the Medieval Peasant.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999. This brilliant book offers insights into how peasants were represented, above all during the German Peasant Uprising, by those in power.

Freud, Sigmund. *Civilization and Its Discontents.* New York: Norton, 1961. Freud's provocative examination of the origins of civilization and of our discontents in a primeval patricide.

Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Culture.* New York: Basic Books, 1973. The first chapter in this book is an extraordinary theoretical insight into the ways in which we should read culture. One of the most influential books in the last fifty years.

Ginzburg, Carlo. *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth Century Miller.* New York: Penguin, 1988. Ginzburg, one of the greatest historians alive today, provides this fascinating account of the trial and eventual execution of an Italian miller. In so doing, Ginzburg reconstructs the popular culture of sixteenth-century Italy.

———. *Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches' Sabbath.* New York: Penguin, 1991. A controversial book. Ginzburg unearths the origins of the witches' sabbath in prehistoric folk beliefs.

———. *The Night Battles: Witchcraft and Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1992. Ginzburg's classic study of how Italian peasants practicing ancient rites were turned into witches under the suggestive questioning of inquisitors. A must-read book!

Happold, F. C. *Mysticism: A Study and an Anthology.* Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1963. A short synthetic work on the varieties of mysticism with useful excerpts from some of the major mystical texts.

Haskins, Charles H. *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century.* New York: Meridian, 1976. Haskins wrote a pioneer study of the twelfth century that is still one of the best guides to the culture of the period. That cultural revival served as a context for the intense mystical writings of the age.

Hay, Denys. *Europe in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries.* London: Longman, 1980. An excellent synthesis of the social, economic, and political history of Western Europe at the end of the Middle Ages. A good resource for the context of some of the issues discussed in these lectures.

Hill, Christopher. *The World Turned Upside Down.* Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984. Hill's brilliant depiction of the revolutionary and messianic upheavals of seventeenth-century England; among the great historical narratives of the past century.

Huxley, Aldous. *The Devils of Loudon.* A semi-fictionalized history (but quite close to the facts) of the events in Loudon in the mid-seventeenth century. Huxley, a noted novelist, captures the social and cultural context in a magisterial manner.

Idel, Moshe. *Kabbalah: New Perspectives.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988. The work of one of the leading scholars on the Kabbalah, this book places the esoteric teachings of the Kabbalah in a wider Jewish and European context.

Jung, C. G. *Alchemical Studies.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976. An intriguing and fascinating exploration into the psychological roots and manifestation of ancient alchemy by one of the leaders of early psychiatry and cultural history.

Kuhn, Thomas. *The Copernican Revolution.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971. A superb survey of early modern scientific developments. It traces the slow adoption of Copernican ideas and examines the impact of those ideas on European civilization.

Lea, Henry C. *A History of the Inquisition in the Middle Ages.* 3 vols. New York, 1880. The classic study of the birth of the Inquisition in Western Europe. This is still the most comprehensive and reliable study available.

Le Roy Ladurie, Emmanuel. *Montaillou: The Promised Land of Error.* New York: George Braziller, 1978. One of the most influential books of the last three decades. It reconstructs the social and mental world of a handful of villagers in the late Middle Ages. An engrossing story told with the sophistication of a great historian.

Levack, Brian P. *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*. London: Longman, 1996. The best textbook on the history of the witch craze. Levack provides the most sober and thorough account of this phenomenon. An excellent book!

Macfarlane, Alan. *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England*. New York: Routledge and Keegan-Paul, 1970. Another pioneering study, Macfarlane's book provides the statistical apparatus to support a comprehensive examination of the social history of witchcraft.

Michelet, Jules. *Satanism and Witchcraft: A Study in Medieval Superstition*. New York: The Citadel Press, 1960. Michelet was one of the great Romantic historians of nineteenth-century France. This book contains interesting accounts of accusations of witchcraft, but the title already reflects the author's judgmental approach.

Midelfort, H. C. Erik. *Witch Hunting in Southwestern Germany, 1526–1684: The Social and Institutional Foundation*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972. One of the pioneering local studies on the witch craze, this work remains a formidable account of the social aspects of the phenomenon.

Niccoli, Ottavia. *Prophecy and People in Renaissance Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987. A superb study of the role of prophecy in Renaissance Italy. It shows the role of religion in cultural production (and cultural destruction).

Nietzsche, Frederick. *The Birth of Tragedy* in *The Philosophy of Nietzsche*. New York: Modern Books, 1954. One of the boldest formulations of the origins of Western culture by one of the most influential thinkers of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century.

Otto, Rudolph. *Mysticism East and West: A Comparative Analysis of the Nature of Mysticism*. New York: Collier Books, 1962. A classic comparative study of the nature of mysticism in Eastern and Western cultures.

Ozment, Steven E. *Mysticism and Dissent: Religious Ideology and Social Protest in the Sixteenth Century*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973. Ozment has written an excellent monograph on the links among mysticism, social dissent, and the upheavals of early sixteenth-century Germany.

Pepper, Elizabeth, and John Wilcock. *A Guide to Magical and Mystical Sites: Europe and the British Isles*. New York: Harper, 1979. An engaging description of places around Western Europe that are associated with lore and magical traditions. Emphasizes Celtic sites.

Peters, Edward. *Torture*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985. A thorough account, with emphasis on the Middle Ages, of the varieties of questioning and torture in the West.

———. *Europe and the Middle Ages*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1989. An excellent survey of medieval history, offering a broad perspective on social, economic, political, and cultural change over a millennium.

Reeves, Marjorie. *Joachim of Fiori and the Prophetic Future*. New York: Harper, 1976. One of the best studies of Joachim of Fiori and the role of prophecy in twelfth-century Europe.

Rice, Eugene, Jr., and Anthony Grafton. *The Foundation of Early Modern Europe, 1460–1555*. New York: Norton, 1994. An excellent survey of European history in the early modern period, with special emphasis on cultural developments.

Scholem, Gershom G. *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*. New York: Schocken Books, 1961. A seminal study of the different varieties of Jewish mysticism by the leading scholar in the field. A must read!

———. *Sabbatai Sevi. The Mystical Messiah*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975. Scholem's exhaustive study of Sabbatai's life, preaching, and messianic claims and their impact on the Jews.

———. *Kabbalah*. New York: Dorset, 1987. Scholem's magisterial examination of the Kabbalah, its origins, character, and impact. This is a superb book.

Southern, Richard W. *The Making of the Middle Ages*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997. A classic study of twelfth-century civilization by one of the greatest medievalists of the twentieth century. A rich and engaging book.

Strayer, Joseph R. *The Albigensian Crusade*. New York: Dial Press, 1971. A lucid summary of the nature of Catharism and the actions taken by the Pope and secular leaders to combat the spread of the heresy.

Tellenbach, Gerd. *Church, State and Christian Society at the Time of the Investiture Contest*. New York: Harper, 1970. One of the most insightful studies of the Investiture Controversy and of the emergence of a particular religious culture in the West.

Trevor-Roper, H. R. *The European Witch-Craze of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries and Other Essays*. New York: Harper, 1967. A series of controversial but thought-provoking essays by one of England's most distinguished (and combative) historians. Although a great deal of what Trevor-Roper argues in some of these essays is no longer acceptable to most historians of witchcraft, the articles are insightful and bold.

Underhill, Evelyn. *Mysticism*. London: 1924 (Image: 1970, reprint). The most complete introduction to the mystical experience in the Christian West, this is one of the most formidable books on the history and practice of mysticism ever written.

———. *Practical Mysticism*. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1943. A short guide to the mystical experience by one of its leading practitioners and scholars.

———. *Mystics of the Church*. Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1988. A summary of the experiences of Christian mystics from early Christianity to the modern period by the leading scholar of mysticism. A delightful introductory guide to the subject.

Yates, Frances. *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition.* New York: Vintage, 1969. The pioneering study of Hermeticism in Western Europe; Yates's book remains the standard study on the subject.

Yerushalmi, Yosef H. *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto. Isaac Cardoso: A Study in Seventeenth Century Marranism.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1971. A classic study of Sephardic culture after the expulsion from Spain.

Notes

COURSE GUIDEBOOK

The Terror of History: Mystics, Heretics, and Witches in the Western Tradition

Part II

Lecture 13: Jewish Millennial Expectations
Lecture 14: The Mysteries of the Renaissance
Lecture 15: Hermeticism, Astrology, Alchemy, and Magic
Lecture 16: The Origins of Witchcraft
Lecture 17: Religion, Science, and Magic
Lecture 18: The Witch Craze and Its Historians
Lecture 19: Fear and the Construction of Satan
Lecture 20: The Witch Craze and Misogyny
Lecture 21: The World of Witches
Lecture 22: The Witches of Loudon
Lecture 23: The Witches of Essex and Salem
Lecture 24: The Survival of the Past

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The Terror of History, Part II
Professor Teofilo F. Ruiz

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The Terror of History: Mystics, Heretics, and Witches in the Western Tradition

Part II

Professor Teofilo F. Ruiz
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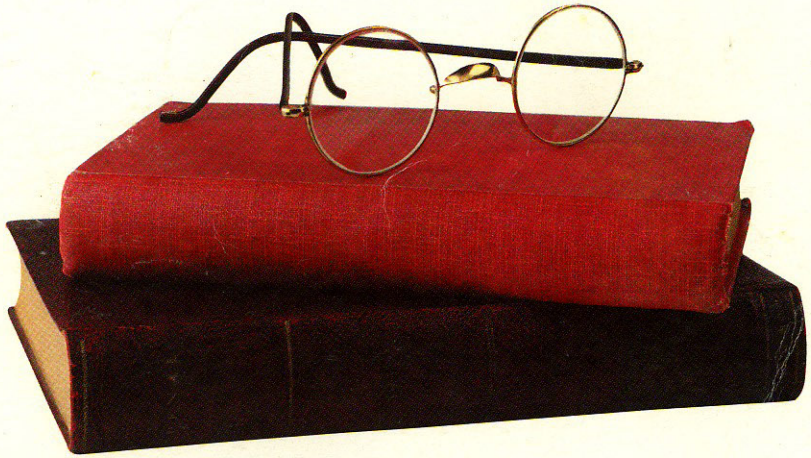

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Teofilo F. Ruiz, Ph.D.

Professor of History, University of California, Los Angeles

A student of Joseph R. Strayer, Teofilo F. Ruiz received his Ph.D. from Princeton in 1974 and taught at Brooklyn College, the CUNY Graduate Center, the University of Michigan, the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (Paris), and Princeton (as 250th Anniversary Visiting Professor for Distinguished Teaching) before joining the History Department at UCLA in 1998. He has been a frequent lecturer in the United States, Spain, Italy, France, England, Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina.

Professor Ruiz has received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, and the American Council of Learned Societies. In 1994–1995, he was selected as one of four outstanding teachers of the year in the United States by the Carnegie Foundation. He has published six books and more than forty articles in national and international scholarly journals, plus hundreds of reviews and smaller articles. His *Crisis and Continuity: Land and Town in Late Medieval Castile* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994) was awarded the Premio del Rey prize by the American Historical Association as the best book in Spanish history before 1580 in a two-year period, 1994–1995. His latest book, *Spanish Society, 1400–1600*, was published by Longman in 2001. Another book, *From Heaven to Earth: The Reordering of Late Medieval Castilian Society*, is forthcoming from Princeton.

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The Terror of History: Mystics, Heretics, and Witches in the Western Tradition

Scope:

This set of twenty-four lectures examines aspects of elite and popular culture in late medieval and early modern Western Europe, focusing on the way in which men and women—seeking to explain, order, and escape the terrors of their lives—embraced transcendental religious experiences, dreamed of and worked for the coming of the apocalypse, and seized on a widespread belief in witchcraft and Satanism.

The lives of mystics, heretics, millenarian prophets, and accused witches, as well as those of their followers and persecutors, will be explored in the historical context of the rise of the nation-state in the late Middle Ages, the birth of a new science and of new perceptions of the world during the Renaissance and the early modern period, sweeping social and economic changes, and the discovery of the New World. In examining the persecution of witches and the authority of female mystics, special attention will be given to gender issues and the construction of "otherness" during the crises of the late medieval world.

Lecture One discusses the idea of the "terror of history" and places the course in a methodological framework. Lectures Two and Three present the historical context for the period between 1000 and 1700, emphasizing the social, economic, and cultural background of Western European mysticism, heresy, and witchcraft. Lecture Four provides a general discussion of mysticism in the Western tradition, while the next four lectures explore case studies of mystics. Lecture Five looks at two twelfth-century mystics, Hildegard of Bingen and Bernard of Clairvaux. The next lecture looks at the life of two thirteenth-century mystics, Francis of Assisi and Dante Alighieri. In Lecture Seven, we turn to a close examination of Jewish mysticism, specifically the mysticism found in the *Zohar*. Lecture Eight concludes our discussion of mystics with an exploration of the lives and works of Theresa of Avila and John of the Cross.

Lecture Nine begins our discussion of heresy and millenarian movements. This lecture provides a general overview of these topics and sets the stage for a detailed discussion of specific heretical and millenarian movements. In the next lecture, we focus on three different heretical movements from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the Waldensians, the Cathars, and the Fraticelli. Lecture Eleven explores the birth of the Inquisition in early thirteenth-century Europe and looks at one of the most interesting and widespread heresies of late medieval Europe, that of the Free Spirit. Lecture Twelve explores the millenarian aspects of the peasant uprisings in early sixteenth-century Germany and links these apocalyptic expectations with similar movements in early modern England and America. Lecture Thirteen concludes our discussion of these topics with a look at Jewish Messianism, particularly the rise and fall of Sabbatai Sevi.

In Lecture Fourteen, we begin to examine a series of topics leading to the study of the European witch craze. This lecture discusses the Renaissance discovery of "deep time," and the reception of esoteric systems of knowledge into European culture. In Lecture Fifteen, we take a close look at the popularity of hermeticism, astrology, alchemy, and magic in early modern Europe. Lecture Sixteen describes the role of witchcraft in Western culture and its development to the eve of the modern era. Lectures Seventeen and Eighteen present a comprehensive view of the religious, cultural, social, economic, and political context of the European witch craze, a period of persecution extending from the late Middle Ages to around the second half of the seventeenth century. Lecture Nineteen focuses on the widespread fear and social unrest that resulted from structural changes. It also discusses the idea of Satan in Western culture and the role of the devil in European early modern witchcraft. Lecture Twenty continues to examine the causes of the witch craze and explores misogyny as one of the reasons for persecution. Lecture Twenty-One provides a close reading of a sixteenth-century description of how to become a witch, while Lecture Twenty-Two concentrates on a case study, that of the trial and execution of Urbain Grandier at Loudon. In Lecture Twenty-Three, we examine the social history of two outbursts of witchcraft, one in Essex (England) and the other one in the town of Salem in colonial Massachusetts. The course ends with a look at the survival of pre-Christian beliefs in European culture and with a summary of how the themes explored provided an escape from history.

Lecture Thirteen

Jewish Millennial Expectations

Scope: Lecture Thirteen compares Christian and Jewish millenarian beliefs in the early modern period. The lecture begins with an examination of the impact that the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492 had on Jewish religious life. The lecture continues by exploring briefly the works of Isaac Abravanel and other important Jewish millenarian thinkers and their articulation of Jewish beliefs about the coming of the Messiah. Lecture Thirteen continues by describing the life and deeds of Sabbatai Sevi, whose proclamation as the Messiah created great disturbances among the Sephardic Jews in the mid-seventeenth century. The lecture concludes with a short assessment of the impact of Sabbatianism and the rise of the Hasidim.

Outline

I. We begin with an extended discussion of Jewish life in the Iberian peninsula (Sefarad), the events leading to the Decree of Expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492, and the impact of these catastrophes on the Jewish mind.

A. From 1391 onward, Jews suffered growing intolerance and economic losses. The large and fairly prosperous Spanish Jewish communities became bifurcated and serious questions arose about their abilities to withstand Christian pressure.

1. In 1391, a series of pogroms led a large number of Jews—perhaps as many as sixty percent—to convert to Christianity. Many of these conversions were involuntary and resulted from threats and violence.

2. Many other Jews converted voluntarily. They did so either because of the social and economic gains they could make as Christians or because, as was the case with some famous conversions, Jewish faith had been undermined in the previous centuries by successful exchanges with Christian society.

3. By the mid-fifteenth century, the once thriving Jewish community of Iberia had become two different and, at times, antagonistic bodies. On the one hand, we find the *Conversos*, those who had converted to Christianity; on the other hand, many Jews remained faithful to their ancestral beliefs, though their role in Spanish society was now much diminished.

B. The Jews who refused to convert were, with a few exceptions, mostly marginalized. They moved to small towns where they could place themselves under the protection of great lords at a time of civil wars and political anarchy.

1. The Jews' relationship with their former co-religionists, the *Conversos*, was initially cordial, but by the 1440s, growing animosities marked their contacts. Some *Conversos* still practiced Judaism in secret; others became faithful Christians, while still others suffered from religious confusion and were neither fully Jewish nor Christian.
2. One of the outcomes of the adversities faced by Jews was the return to a more faithful observance of Judaic law and rituals. The concerns with Aristotelian philosophy and radical Averroist interpretation were now replaced by more traditional religious practices.
3. The growing religiosity of the Jewish communities in Spain also led to a greater interest in apocalyptic expectations. Linked, to a certain extent, with Kabbalah mysticism, these messianic beliefs became an important component of the cultural and spiritual landscape of late fifteenth-century Spanish Jewry.

C. The coming of the Inquisition in the 1480s and its savage attack against *Conversos* served as a confirmation to the Jews of the rightness of their position. In some instances, Jews implicated *Conversos* to the Inquisition; in others, Jews provided support for *Conversos* who still practiced Judaism in secret.
1. The Inquisition created a climate of mistrust and fear among *Conversos* and, to a lesser extent, among Jews. The latter, however, did not come under the Inquisition's jurisdiction.
2. By the early 1490s, conditions had deteriorated to the point that a normal life for Jews in the peninsula was very difficult.

D. In 1492, the Catholic monarchs Isabella and Ferdinand proclaimed the Edict of Expulsion, giving Jews in Spain three months in which to convert or leave the kingdom.
1. The Edict of Expulsion had a catastrophic impact on the Jewish communities of Spain.
2. Henry Kamen has argued that half of Spain's Jewish population converted rather than leave their homes. The other half, around 40,000 according to the latest calculations, left for bitter exile.
3. The expulsion came at the time in which national identities were beginning to be forged. The Jews did not escape this process, and their expulsion was doubly bitter because they thought of Spain—and rightly so—as much their country as Christians did.

II. Jewish anxieties and suffering from expulsion were articulated in messianic expectations.

A. In the first wave of exiles, Jews fled to Portugal, Navarre, North Africa, and Italy (mostly to Rome). Their lives in these places often proved to be difficult. In some cases, Jews voluntarily returned to Spain and reclaimed the properties they had left behind.

B. In exile, the Spanish Jews were led by some of their most distinguished and prestigious scholars and aristocrats.
1. After the Edict of Expulsion, the Catholic monarchs pleaded with some of their closest advisers to convert. Some did; others did not.
2. Among those who refused to convert and to accept high honors and titles from the Catholic monarchs was Isaac Abravanel (1437–1508).
3. Abravanel was a learned student of the Torah and one of the main financial advisers to the Catholic monarchs. Early in the 1460s, he had written on planetary conjunctions and their influence on the events of the age. He had shown a messianic strain even before the events of 1492.

C. In choosing exile, Abravanel became one of the leading intellectuals (one of the richest, too) among the Jews who migrated from Spain. He also developed an elaborate doctrine on the coming of the Messiah.
1. The most important component of this doctrine was a turn away from rationalist pursuits and a return to the faithful observance of the Torah.
2. In his writings, Abravanel discusses the why and wherefore of redemption. He presents historical-religious interpretations of the seven ages of mankind.
3. The beginnings of the sixteenth century, marked by the expulsion from Sefarad, ushered in mankind's return to God.
4. For Abravanel, repentance (*teshuba*) was a condition of redemption.
5. The conflicts between Christians and Turks (Muslims) was a sign of the coming of the final wars that would bring an end to history and the coming of the Messiah.

D. For Abravanel, the coming of the Messiah also had a political aspect. The final wars and the coming of the Messiah would lead to a restoration of religious life and to the political rehabilitation of Israel. The new Israel, victorious over Rome, was seen as a utopia.

III. Sabbatai Sevi, born in 1625, led a great messianic movement and conducted an apocalyptic mission between 1665–1676.

A. The Sephardic communities throughout the Diaspora faced numerous trials; some settled in the lands of the Ottoman Empire.

B. Nathan of Gaza recognized Sabbatai's "messianic qualities."
1. Nathan worked tirelessly to promote Sabbatai as the long-awaited Messiah.
2. Sabbatai's visit to Jerusalem in 1662 marked the beginning of a period of intense religious activity that culminated with his revelation as the Messiah in 1665.

3. Gershom Scholem conducted an intensive study of Sabbatai's activities.

C. The announcement of the appearance of the Messiah in Palestine sent shock waves throughout the Sephardic communities in Europe and the Middle East.
   1. Many Jews sold or left behind their goods and traveled to Palestine to await the end of days.
   2. The disturbances among the Jewish communities came to the attention of the Ottoman authorities. In 1666, Sabbatai Sevi was imprisoned and questioned by Turkish authorities.
   3. The prison where Sabbatai lay in captivity became a rallying point for the faithful. They flocked there in expectation of his final revelation as the Messiah.

D. In a most surprising development, Sabbatai converted to Islam on 16 September 1666. His conversion, however, did not bring an end to messianic expectations.
   1. The Sabbatian movement continued for a long time after Sabbatai's conversion and death.
   2. Many argued that the Messiah had to come as a *Converso*, that is, that Sabbatai's conversion was a necessary step in the history of the redemption of the Jewish people.

E. We conclude with a brief look at some of the responses to the debacle of Sabbatai's messianic preaching and to the enduring quality of messianic belief among some orthodox Jews to this very day.
   1. A belief in the unique role of Israel in human history is shared by all these figures. Some of the Lubavitchers today similarly believe in a messianic figure.
   2. In such thinking, Israel plays a redemptive role in history.

Suggested Reading:

Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi* and *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism.*

Yerushalmi, *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto.*

Questions to Consider:

1. Why do you think messianic expectations were particularly attractive to certain segments of Spanish Jewry? What were the conditions in late fifteenth-century Spain that encouraged this type of movement? Are similar movements in existence in the world today?
2. Abravanel's messianic writings combined religious and political elements. Do you think most apocalyptic movements have an underlying political agenda? How are Messianism and some forms of Zionism articulated in Israel today? Can you identify other religions that link the political to the religious?

3. False Messiahs populate the pages of history. Why do you think that is the case? How would you judge the success of Sabbatai Sevi? What social, economic, political, and cultural reasons made his preaching and announcements so popular?

Lecture Fourteen

The Mysteries of the Renaissance

Scope: In Lecture Fourteen, we move from a discussion of millenarian movements to an investigation of the flip side of the Renaissance. This lecture focuses on Renaissance concerns with "deep time," that is, with the recovery of what was thought to be the most ancient forms of knowledge. The lecture presents a nuanced view of Renaissance scholarship and writing, showing the different strains that made for cultural innovation. The lecture also explores the role of mysteries in Renaissance thought and their influence on the art and culture of Renaissance Italy and the rest of Europe. The lecture outlines briefly the different intellectual influences on the development of mysteries: hermeticism, astrology, alchemy, and magic.

Outline

I. We begin with a description of the culture of Italy in the fifteenth century and the first half of the sixteenth and conclude this part of the lecture with a discussion of the manner in which Italian Renaissance culture has usually been represented.

A. In the late Middle Ages, Italy's culture was quite different from that of the rest of Europe. In many respects, Italy was never fully "medieval."

1. In Italy, the knowledge of the classical world was never too distant. Ancient monuments and easier contacts with the east guaranteed the survival of many classical forms and of Roman culture.

2. The beginnings of the Renaissance in Italy must be located in the work of Francesco Petrarch, on its insistence on the study of the "humanities," and on his move away from Aristotelian philosophy and metaphysics to an emphasis on rhetoric and ethics.

B. The humanist culture that bloomed in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries extended to all areas of human creativity: art, letters, architecture, and civic life.

1. Italian Renaissance art marked a break with medieval artistic forms. The break was not just a matter of techniques, but also a question of mental attitudes and new cultural perceptions.

2. In sculpture and letters, Renaissance scholars and artists sought to recover the greatness of the classical past. Their use of Latin, which was written in imitation of great Roman works, set them in a different direction than that of their medieval counterparts.

3. Most important, Renaissance humanists had an awareness of themselves and their own time to be a "rebirth" of ancient culture.

C. By the late fifteenth century, the overwhelming superiority of Italian Renaissance culture had begun to spread to other parts of Europe, influencing plastic arts, behavior, and other cultural trends.

1. This Renaissance influence reached into every aspect of life. It was transmitted through such popular works as Baldassare Castiglioni's *The Courtier*; literary forms, such as the sonnet (invented by Petrarch); the use of perspective; pathbreaking philological work; and the popularity of certain literary and iconographical themes (mythological and classical references) that became models for cultural transformation elsewhere in Europe.

2. Ironically, Italian cultural hegemony came about as the different political entities that were found in the Italian peninsula came under the control of foreign powers, mostly Spain.

3. This strange combination of a rarified cultural context and diminishing political importance may help explain the widespread interest in esoteric knowledge that Italian humanists had.

D. Textbooks often reveal a Whiggish bent when discussing Renaissance culture, emphasizing the "rationality" of its cultural productions and achievements as a sign of the progress of Western civilization. Nothing could be further from the truth: The Renaissance looked always to the past.

II. Renaissance interest in the past was not limited to the Roman past, even though Roman ruins could be found throughout Italy, and they spoke vividly of a great civilization. A good number of Renaissance scholars sought to capture and understand a "deeper past."

A. One of the most important outcomes of Renaissance culture was a new awareness of time.

1. This consciousness of time led to new types of history and a search for the historical roots of one's city, the writing of elaborate historical accounts (often fictitious) of the city's past, and an increased interest in genealogy and genealogical trees.

2. The most immediate past was that of Rome, and Renaissance humanists mined the ruins around them, collecting epigraphic material and reading the past in the stones.

B. By the mid-fifteenth century, a series of developments uncovered for the Renaissance intellectual elite a different kind of past, a far more remote and, until then, fairly inaccessible kind of past.

C. Kabbalah mysticism, numerology, and the magical power of letters—topics already examined in a previous lecture—became favorite topics of study among some Italian humanists and found their way into the works of these humanists.

1. The interest in Kabbalah and other esoteric forms of knowledge led to a great deal of interest in ancient languages. Greek, which had

been seldom known in the Middle Ages, became a favorite topic of study.

2. In addition, Hebrew, Aramaic, Chaldean, and other such ancient languages began to be taught and learned by a few scholars.

D. As a result, some Renaissance scholars began to argue that the deepest form of knowledge was to be found in the oldest and most distant past.

1. This idea was, of course, deeply rooted in their attachment to the classical tradition, the belief in a golden past, and the slow decline of mankind from an age of gold, to one of silver, to one of iron.
2. These ideas, held by a few intellectuals, were intrinsically anti-Christian and denied the inherent sense of progress found in the Judeo-Christian tradition.

III. The knowledge of civilizations that preceded Greek and Roman cultures was fully recovered in mid-fifteenth–century Italy. These ideas were disseminated throughout the culture, pervading most cultural production.

A. Humanists and scholars were always aware of older civilizations. Greek and Roman texts mentioned many of these civilizations. Herodotus's historical works made references to the formidable age of Egyptian civilization. Other such sources were always reminders of a world that existed before Greece and Rome.

B. Alchemical, astrological, and magical treatises had entered the West through the Arabs. They had been translated into Latin in the twelfth century and attracted a few scholars who were interested in these types of esoteric knowledge. Acquaintance with these works was not widespread, and they never crossed over into popular culture unless they did so as distorted forms of superstition.

C. Significantly, by the mid-fifteenth century, the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople led to a massive migration of Greek scholars to the West. They brought with them numerous ancient texts not known in the West or not available in Western collections.

1. The most important center for the translation and study of these texts was Florence, and the key figure in the adaptation of some of these diverse and esoteric types of knowledge was Marsilio Ficino, one of the central topics of the next lecture.
2. Among these texts were such fundamental Western works as Plato's *Republic* and *Symposium*, as well as the mysterious *Corpus Hermeticum* and the *Aesclepius*, the foundations of hermeticism.

IV. Alternative intellectual traditions became popular in the Italian Renaissance and influenced literary texts, works of art, and religion throughout Europe.

A. The first important tradition was astrology, which had ancient roots, going back to the beginnings of civilization in Mesopotamia. Astrology had been popular in antiquity and was extremely popular in the Renaissance. No great prince or pope could get along without an astrologer.

B. The second tradition was alchemy. Alchemy, an Arabic word meaning "chemistry," had Babylonian and Chaldean roots, but it had been developed to dazzling heights by the Arabs.

C. The third form of knowledge was magic. This included both benefic and malefic magic. The great book of magic, the *Picatrix*, was well known in Europe, and several copies are reported to have been in use from the Middle Ages onward.

D. The final and by far most important of these forms of esoteric knowledge was hermeticism. It combined, to a certain extent, all the other three traditions and promised to Renaissance humanists a view of the world that was far more ancient than the Bible. In the next lecture, we will look in some detail at these four forms of knowledge.

Suggested Reading:

Burke, *The Italian Renaissance*.

Eliade, *The Forge and the Crucible*.

Jung, *Alchemical Studies*.

Questions to Consider:

1. How would you say Renaissance thought on time influenced the interest in esoteric knowledge? How does the past influence the way we think? Why do we have such veneration for old things?
2. Why was Italy the site for a revival of classical culture? What made Italy so receptive to new types of knowledge? How would you characterize Italian culture?
3. Are you able to recognize the influence of some of these mystery traditions in Italian Renaissance paintings? Think of Boticelli's *Primavera* or his *Birth of Venus*. What pagan symbols can you identify in these and other paintings of the period?

Lecture Fifteen

Hermeticism, Astrology, Alchemy, and Magic

Scope: Lecture Fifteen continues the themes presented in the previous lecture by providing a closer look at the different intellectual traditions competing for the mind of the West in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The lecture looks briefly at astrology, alchemy, and magic. The lecture then turns to hermeticism and explains in detail what the hermetic tradition was, tracing its roots to second-century Gnosticism and astrological lore. The lecture examines in detail the role of Marsilio Ficino in translating the main hermetic texts and in adding his own interpretation of these writings. Tracing the impact of hermeticism on Western thought, we conclude with a brief discussion of the "music of the spheres" and the impact of ancient thought on Western art.

Outline

I. We begin with a brief review of the importance of magic, astrology, and alchemy during the Italian Renaissance, placing these intellectual traditions in the appropriate context.

A. In fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Europe, especially in Italy, astrology became a popular pursuit. It had the validity of science and was accepted by leading scholars as having great intellectual importance.

1. The astrologer, with his robe covered by stars and constellations and his pointed hat, was a familiar figure in papal and royal courts.

2. Astrology posited the relationship between the stars (the macrocosm) and the individual (the microcosm). The power of the stars was drawn down through the use of amulets, stones, and other products associated with particular birth signs.

3. Two noted astrologers were Luca Guarico and Nifo; both experienced successes and misreadings of the future.

4. In 1524, a conjunction of the planets brought fear to many Europeans who expected great disasters. Anti-astrological literature sought to debunk some of the predictions.

5. Astrology also involved close observation of the stars. Many of the scientific theories of Kepler and others owed a debt to the careful plotting of the movements of the planets by astrologers, especially Tycho Brahe.

B. Alchemy sought far more than turning lead into gold, that is, the transmutation of metals. Alchemy, at its most esoteric, was a search for the philosopher's stone, the key to all understanding and knowledge.

1. Alchemy was a secretive activity. Its practitioners ran the gamut from charlatans and scam artists, to serious scholars engaged in experimentation and research, to religiously inspired thinkers searching for the source of all knowledge.

2. The language of alchemy in this period closely resembles that of religion and mysticism.

3. As discussed by Jung and others, alchemy involved the meeting of opposites; the hermaphrodite was emblematic of some of the alchemical pursuits.

C. Magic also played a significant role in the intellectual debate of the Italian Renaissance and the culture of early modern Europe. As we will see in succeeding lectures, the boundaries between magic and science were extremely fluid in this period and only began to be fully defined in the struggles and transformations of the next 100 years.

1. Magic, as was the case with alchemy and astrology, was an esoteric pursuit.

2. The "magus" was also a popular character in this period. Practitioners of alchemy and astrology, and most certainly devotees of hermeticism, were also in a real sense of the word, magicians.

3. A clear distinction existed between demonic or malefic magic and beneficial magic.

II. Of all the mysterious traditions vying for Europe's attention, none was as important as hermeticism.

A. Hermeticism sprang from a series of texts that dated, in reality, to the second century of the Christian era. These texts, however, were attributed to an Egyptian priest or god, Hermes Trismegistus ("Hermes the Three Times Great"), and were considered to have an ancient provenance, contemporary with, or even older than, the life of Moses.

B. The images and symbolism of hermeticism entered European culture and influenced iconographical representations.

1. One of the most important representations of the influence of hermeticism can be found on the floor of the entrance to the Cathedral of Siena. There, represented in a mosaic work, stand Hermes Trismegistus (dressed as a Renaissance magus) and Moses, the two most significant cultural heroes of the age.

2. Hermetic ideas, as elaborated by Ficino and others, entered literature and other artistic forms.

C. The most important hermetic texts, the *Aesclepius* and the *Corpus Hermeticum*, were a strange mixture of Gnostic philosophy, astrology, and magic.

1. Because of their supposed ancient origins, these texts acquired great authority, especially given that their descriptions of the creation of the world coincided with that of the Old Testament.

2. Because these works drew from so many different traditions, they were thought to provide a coherent view of an entire field of knowledge.

D. The great hermetic texts came into Europe in the mid-fifteenth century after the capture of Constantinople. Together with Plato's *Dialogues*, they came to the attention of the Platonists at the Academy (the *Academia*) in Florence. The man responsible for translating and studying these texts was Marsilio Ficino.

III. Ficino did far more than just translate these esoteric works. In addition to writing comments on Platonic works, interpreting—or misinterpreting—Plato's ideas on love, Ficino wrote important philosophical treatises derived from his own reading and interpretation of hermeticism.

A. Ficino's most important contribution in this area was his discussion of the astrological aspects of hermeticism.

1. Ficino developed theories about the relationship among certain plants, products (sugar among them), and the power of the stars.
2. Borrowing from hermeticism, Ficino also discussed the use of talismans and stones.

B. Ficino believed that there was a fifth essence. This was identified with ether and could be captured by certain types of behavior, by eating certain products, and by listening to special music, mostly Orphic music. Thus, one seeks to find the link between the material and spiritual worlds.

C. Ficino also argued that as the planetary spheres moved, they produced a celestial music, the music of the spheres. To be receptive to this music and to the spiritual implications of such reception, Ficino suggested a whole program of activities, leading the practitioner of hermeticism to a unique grasp of the knowledge and spirituality of the universe.

IV. Finally, through Ficino and other thinkers, hermeticism came to occupy a central place in the culture of Western Europe, until philological research proved a much later provenance.

A. One good example of this influence is seen in the work of John Donne, the great early modern English poet and divine. Donne's work draws heavily on the metaphysical, astronomical, and symbolic language of hermeticism.

B. After the correct dating of the hermetic corpus and the realization that the hermetic works were written by diverse authors, the tradition became marginalized, though not unimportant, into the eighteenth century.

Suggested Reading:

Jung, *Alchemical Studies.*

Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic.*

Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition.*

Questions to Consider:

1. Why was hermeticism so attractive to many scholars in Renaissance Europe? What special characteristics served as a magnet to these pursuits? Are there similar developments in our own intellectual world?
2. What is the role of the individual thinker in the transmission and dissemination of knowledge? How is knowledge transmitted today? Do we have modern equivalents of Marsilio Ficino?
3. How do you account for the enduring popularity of astrology in this country? By the seventeenth century, astrology in Europe had been relegated to the realm of superstition; how is it, then, that such attention is given to these pursuits in our modern and "rational" culture?

Lecture Sixteen

The Origins of Witchcraft

Scope: Lecture Sixteen begins our long discussion of witchcraft and, more important, the European witch craze. The lecture begins by defining what witchcraft is, its place in the history of the West, and the relationship between magic and religion. The lecture looks at the anthropological explanations for the emergence of witchcraft with special attention to folklore and the survival of pre-Christian beliefs. Tracing the history of witchcraft, the lecture discusses how Christian theologians redefined witchcraft just before the end of the fifteenth century and the important shifts that occurred in the Church's treatment of those accused of witchcraft.

Outline

I. Defining witchcraft is not an easy task. Our understanding and discussion of witchcraft in Western culture must be grounded in the specific local context. Lecture Sixteen begins with an attempt to ground witchcraft in a cultural context.

- **A.** Witchcraft, as defined by Jean Bodin, a well-known sixteenth-century French political theorist, was the manner in which individuals, or sorcerers, by consorting with the devil, committed malefic actions and obtained their wishes.
- **B.** From the late fifteenth century onward, scholars in Europe sought to define and redefine witchcraft. They looked back to ancient sources, mostly references in the Bible, to prove the validity of these beliefs.
- **C.** By the sixteenth century, witchcraft was fixed in the European cultural landscape. In an earlier period, belief in witchcraft was seen as an aberration or as nonsense, but by the early modern period, both Catholics and Protestants had come to accept and affirm the reality of witchcraft.
- **D.** By drawing the boundaries of witchcraft so precisely, the affirmation by a few learned scholars that such practices were illogical and that, in fact, they bordered on the irreligious came under severe attack, with some notable exceptions, from both the Church and the nascent state.

II. We examine the origins of witchcraft and place these beliefs in a wider context.

- **A.** Witchcraft, or forms of what is called in the West witchcraft, can be found in most cultures; witchcraft was practiced independent of the Western tradition.
  1. Nonetheless, these forms of what we call witchcraft in other cultures may be witchcraft only in the sense that they were so described by Europeans, who placed these activities in their own peculiar cultural frames of reference.
  2. These forms of so-called witchcraft differed markedly from European witchcraft, above all from witchcraft as defined in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, because of the peculiar role of the devil or Satan in the European context.
- **B.** Witchcraft is closely related to the emergence of religion in the world and to the relation between magic and religion.
  1. Historically, the first forms of religion were vegetation religions and fertility cults.
  2. Magic also played a significant role in the first religious expressions of mankind.
  3. Magic, through incantations, mysterious formulas, and other procedures, sought to control nature and to bend it to the wishes and power of the magician.
  4. Religion comes from the awareness that magic is not very efficient in controlling and ordering the world. Instead, the religious person surrenders his or her will to the power of God, hoping for God's mercy.
- **C.** Religions, to this very day, retain a number of aspects that may be called magical. Even the most sophisticated individuals engage in practices today that can only be described as attempts to control and order the world around them.
- **D.** Witchcraft, or the notion that one could do mischief or obtain certain powers by trading with the devil, is grounded in the widespread belief that magic exists and that the world, as seen by the ancients, was divided into two great and contending powers of good and evil.
  1. Anthropologists and other scholars have already pointed out the importance of the dichotomy between sun and moon and between light and dark.
  2. In the popular imagination, and sometimes even in elite imagination, darkness was closely identified with evil; light or the sun was identified with goodness.
  3. This sharp dichotomy between good and evil is a particularly Western phenomenon and not necessarily found in other cultures or, at least, not found in the manner articulated in our culture.

III. Addressing the question of witchcraft and its long life in the Western imagination, historians have violently disagreed about its origins and character.

- **A.** Many historians have argued that witchcraft was utter nonsense and that the confessions obtained over the centuries resulted from the active and

suggestive questioning of those brought to trial. In fact, some historians have argued that the practices described by inquisitors and scholars writing on these topics resulted from their feverish imaginations.

1. Our evidence for witchcraft comes almost exclusively from hostile sources. The evidence of confessions, these historians argue, is not reliable because the confessions were obtained mostly through torture and influenced by the type of questions asked.
2. This historiographical approach has dominated the study of witchcraft for the last two decades.

B. In the early 1920s, Margaret Murray, an English scholar, argued that many of the practices associated with accusations of witchcraft and descriptions of witch activities were vivid remainders of vegetation rituals. Influenced by the great work of James Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, Murray posited the survival of pre-Christian ancient rural religions and witchcraft as the survival of those rituals.

C. Her ideas were dismissed outright, and she was almost laughed out of the profession. Witchcraft and the persecution of witches were seen as yet another example of the Church's intolerance and the ignorance of medieval and early modern society.

D. Carlo Ginzburg's dramatic book, *Night Battles*, and his recent reconstruction of the witches' Sabbat show conclusively the survival of agrarian cults in some parts of Europe.

1. His study of sixteenth-century peasants in the region of the Friuli showed the survival of strange sets of beliefs in the region, including traveling in spirit to fight witches and battles in which the peasants, "the good witches," fought with fennel stalks.
2. Inquisitors coming into contact with these practices identified them immediately as devil worship and forms of operative witchcraft.
3. The peasants denied these charges but to no avail. Under insistent questioning and over a few decades, the peasants admitted to witchcraft.

IV. In Western medieval society, ideas about witchcraft and its place in the culture of the age changed dramatically from the central Middle Ages (the period between 800 and 1100) and the eve of the early modern period.

A. In an earlier period, there are sporadic references to witchcraft and witches, but other issues clearly played a far more significant role in the spiritual life of early medieval men and women.

B. During the twelfth and later centuries, the Church was mostly concerned with heretical and millenarian movements, though charges of necromancy, often linked to charges of sodomy and blasphemy, appeared often in accusations against people perceived as deviants or dissenters.

C. By the thirteenth century, Thomas Aquinas was paying attention to questions of witchcraft and began a long process of reevaluating witchcraft and the role of witches in Christian culture.

D. By the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, the figures and representations of the devil and witches underwent a radical transformation. The stage was already set for the persecution of witches that began at the end of the fifteenth century.

Suggested Reading:

Caro Baroja, *The World of the Witches*.

Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe, 1000–1700*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Why do you think witchcraft has such ancient roots? What is it about witchcraft and witches that still captures the popular imagination? Is the anthropological explanation a valid one? Why or why not?
2. What was the nature of the transformation in Western attitudes toward witchcraft? How did this transformation come about? What were the social, economic, and cultural circumstances that led to such transformations?

Lecture Seventeen

Religion, Science, and Magic

Scope: Lecture Seventeen begins to draw a map of the religious and cultural landscape of Western Europe before, during, and after the witch craze. The lecture explores the role of the Reformation, the Wars of Religion, and the Counter-Reformation in creating new modes of thought and new definitions of orthodoxy and heterodoxy. The lecture also seeks to create a theoretical model to explain the shifting relationships among religion, magic, and science and the growing awareness and sharper definitions, in the sixteenth century and beyond, of the differences in these three categories of knowledge. The lecture concludes with a brief review of the rise of new scientific paradigms in the sixteenth century and the impact of these paradigms on the European mind.

Outline

I. At the beginning of our story (the late fifteenth century), the relationships among different branches of knowledge and belief were fluid and not yet fully defined. This situation changed radically over the next 150 years.

A. Throughout the Middle Ages, religion, science, and magic shared contiguous spaces. Where religion ended and science began was not always clear. By the same token, where magic ended and science began was also unclear.

1. This overlapping of these different "cultural forms" made definition quite difficult. A religious figure would use highly charged religious language to describe his scientific work.

2. By the same token, a so-called scientist often used magical elements in his experiments.

3. The process of secularization, however, would establish clear boundaries among the categories.

B. As a result of the Reformation, Counter-Reformation, and the Scientific Revolution that began in the sixteenth century, the boundaries among these three fields of knowledge became better defined and, far more important, policed.

1. The Reformation, with its emphasis on returning to the purity of an original Christianity, began the long and arduous process of cleansing religion from the centuries-long accretions of superstition and magic. Religion, that is, the spread of new religious codes of behavior and belief led, as Keith Thomas has argued, to the "decline of magic."

2. The Catholic Reformation also had a dramatic impact on the European perception of the interconnectedness of religion, magic, and science. The Reformation, Counter-Reformation, and above all, reformulation of Catholicism at the Council of Trent led to stricter forms of observance and to the monitoring of practices that were now considered unacceptable.

3. The Scientific Revolution, by defining the world in numerical terms and embracing Cartesian thought, led to the eventual demise of magical ways of seeing the world and man's relation to it, such as alchemical, astrological, and hermetic traditions.

II. Martin Luther's dramatic challenge to Christian orthodoxy and to the unity of Western Christianity had a signal impact on the religious and mental landscape of Western Europe.

A. Luther broke with Rome not just on the matter of indulgences, but on fundamental questions of dogma.

1. Luther argued for the "priesthood of all believers," overthrowing the Church's monopoly on the interpretation of the Scriptures.

2. To allow each Christian to read the Bible, Luther undertook a translation of the Old and New Testaments into German.

3. Luther also rejected the dogma of transubstantiation, denying, therefore, the central moment of the Christian mass.

4. Luther's positions on free will and predestination and on good deeds as the means to salvation shook the foundations of Christian society. Instead, Luther emphasized the grace of good as the sole instrument for salvation.

B. The Protestant Reformation grew in the midst of a specific political context. It helped define the new religion and led to prosecutory strategies that were efficiently used in the witch craze.

1. Many German princes, faced with the overwhelming power of the new Emperor Charles V (also king of Spain and ruler of the New World), sided with Luther against the pope and, thus, against the Catholic emperor.

2. Religious unity and compliance with new Protestant ethics and rituals left little space for alternative religious practices or old forms of worship.

C. The stricter religious demands and practices of the Protestants, above all the new radical Calvinists, made witchcraft a target for attacks and strict policing.

1. Protestant attitudes toward witches differed little from those of Catholics in other parts of Europe.

2. Protestant methods of questioning, prosecution, and execution also followed the lines established in the late fifteenth century.

III. Pushed by the spread of Protestant ideas and the fervor of the new religion, the Catholic Church undertook a massive reorganization. These reforms

were enacted in a series of Church councils that took place in Trent in the 1560s.

A. The Catholic Reformation or Counter-Reformation offered no compromise to the Protestant. Rather, it reaffirmed the basic principles of the medieval Catholic Church.

1. At Trent, the Catholic Church emphasized the importance of good works and faith in salvation. It also stood strongly for the doctrine of free will.

2. The churchmen meeting at these councils also reaffirmed the dogma of transubstantiation. They saw the Church as the rightful intermediary between God and man and claimed control of the interpretation of the Scriptures.

B. The thorough revamping of the Church also led to a streamlining of Catholic rituals and practices. It made practices that had been permissible no longer acceptable and led to greater persecution of such activities as witchcraft.

C. The sharper distinctions between Protestants and Catholics led to open conflict between the two religious denominations and little tolerance for those outside the orthodox fold. This environment had a deleterious impact on those accused of practicing witchcraft and gave a prominent and unhealthy place to demonology.

IV. The antagonisms between the two branches of Christianity in the West led to open-armed conflicts, the so-called Wars of Religion. Many of these conflicts had political elements, and their ferocity has shaped and transformed the face of Europe to this very day.

A. Fueled by religious competition and political antagonisms, Europe witnessed an endless series of religious wars. These conflicts often pitted Protestants against Catholics.

1. The conflicts began in the late 1520s and lasted on and off until the Treaty of Westphalia, which brought an end to the Thirty Years War.

2. The conflicts took place mostly in Germany and Central Europe, but France was also convulsed by religious strife between Protestants (Huguenots) and Catholics.

3. England did not escape religious strife either. In the sixteenth century, these clashes were the traditional encounters between Catholics and Protestants. In the seventeenth century, armed conflict between radical Protestants (the Puritans) and followers of the Church of England (accused of popery) led to civil war.

B. One of the results of the continuous religious wars, confirmed at the Treaty of Westphalia, was that the prince or ruler came to dictate the religion of his people. Whoever won imposed his beliefs on his subjects. Toleration was practiced in only a few places in Europe, Amsterdam most notably.

C. Accusations of witchcraft were an easy way to get rid of enemies. Not surprisingly, in Catholic localities, Protestants were the usual targets for witchcraft persecution. In Protestant towns, Catholics became the targets instead.

D. If we were to look at a map of Europe and try to determine the topography of witchcraft trials and the persecution of witches, we can see that places that experienced religious strife were also the locations of significant persecution against witches. Catholic countries, such as Spain and certain parts of Italy, experienced hardly any witch hunts. In Spain, inquisitors dismissed witchcraft as superstition and hysteria. But they had already found other heretics to persecute.

Suggested Reading:

Dunn, *The Age of Religious Wars.*

Rice and Grafton, *The Foundations of Early Modern Europe, 1460–1559.*

Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic.*

Questions to Consider:

1. Why do you think the Protestant Reformation and the teachings of Luther and Calvin had such a tremendous impact on Western civilization? What was in Luther's message that made it so radical for the times? Do you think that Protestantism in its modern evangelical manifestations still adheres to radical biblicism and religious expressions?

2. What was the nature of the Catholic response to the Reformation? Considering the political and cultural context, was that the appropriate response? Why or why not?

3. What is the relationship among war, religious strife, and persecution? Are there examples from our contemporary world that may help illustrate this point?

Lecture Eighteen

The Witch Craze and Its Historians

Scope: The witch craze was a period in Western European history when as many as 80,000 to 100,000 people, mostly elderly women, were executed because they were believed to be witches. To explain how it came about, Lecture Eighteen continues to contextualize the witch craze using specific social, political, and economic developments. The lecture looks in detail at the social, economic, and political changes (enclosure, conscription, new attitudes toward the poor, rising population, and so on) that took place in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries to explain the dramatic shift in attitudes toward witchcraft and in the use of new prosecutorial techniques to deal with those believed to be witches.

Outline

I. As we did earlier in the course, we now look carefully at the social world of early modern Europe for clues that may help explain the genesis of the persecution of witches in the sixteenth century. The lecture looks at some specific aspects of the social process.

- **A.** Because witchcraft was, most of all, a rural activity, changes in the social structures of the countryside had a direct impact on, and relation to, witch activities.
  - **1.** One of the most important changes in Europe's social history was the rise of social differences in the village community.
  - **2.** The capitalization of agriculture led to property accumulation and enclosure of common and pasture lands. This enclosure created social upheavals and sent many peasants to migrate to other villages or towns, particularly in certain parts of England, Germany, and Castile.
  - **3.** Growing social distinctions in Europe's rural world led to strife between well-to-do peasants (farmers) and those who had now been left on the margins of society. The rough egalitarian life of the village was now replaced by class differences and strife. As we shall see later, those accused of witchcraft often came from specific social groups and social milieus.
- **B.** Changing economic conditions and population growth led to a dramatic increase in poverty.
  - **1.** This change in the number of the poor also led to different attitudes toward the indigent.
  - **2.** Poor laws and poor houses marked a stiffening of attitudes toward the poor and toward beggars. Poverty was devalued.
  - **3.** A clear relationship existed between begging or, at least, certain forms of begging and accusations of witchcraft. By the early modern period, poverty and begging had been stripped of most of their Christian symbolism.
- **C.** War and other upheavals led to a surplus population of older women. Either widows or unmarried, these women who did not depend on men for their livelihoods became easy targets for witchcraft persecution.
- **D.** The early modern period saw the emergence of institutionalized confinement: the prison, mental asylum, and other such forms of control. Witch persecutions can also be seen as another form of physical and social control in an increasingly regimented world.
- **E.** The rise of the medical profession and its wholesale attack on certain forms of medicine (herbal healing, folk medicine), practiced mostly by old women, is closely related to the birth of the witch craze.
- **F.** Historian Michel Foucault has already shown the rise of such institutions as the prison, the mental asylum, and other institutionalized forms of "discipline and punishment" that led to the repression of social misfits and marginal people.

II. Social transformations that served as locomotives for persecution were deeply grounded in a series of major economic shifts that ushered in the birth of modernity. These shifts were so significant that they deserve a lesson themselves, but the limitations of time force us to list only a few of these salient developments.

- **A.** Among these economic transformations, the rise of capitalism is directly related to changing attitudes toward poverty.
  - **1.** Capitalism, and some of its early manifestations, led to a dramatic shift in how men and women thought of wealth, profit, the world to come, and the nature of human relations.
  - **2.** The importance of capital accumulation and long-distance exchanges had an impact on the ways in which agricultural production and urban enterprises were organized.
- **B.** The growth of new economic systems was also part of the long-term secularization of Europe. This, in some respects, would have made witch persecutions difficult, but the period of adjustment to new economic systems was so fraught with tensions that it fostered persecution and scapegoating.
- **C.** The discovery and settlement of the New World led to the emergence of economies of scale, the plantation system, and New World slavery. The awareness of new peoples and continents had a dramatic impact on the European imagination. Europeans were forced to rethink the nature of their world.

III. The politics of the period also affected how Europeans perceived witches and articulated the means to exterminate them.

A. The most significant political development of the late medieval and early modern periods was the emergence of the centralized nation-state. Its appearance signaled far more regimented political organization and the intrusion of royal bureaucracies throughout the West.

B. The move from regional entities to larger national ones diminished local autonomies and brought the accused (in this case, witches) face to face with remote centers of authority.

IV. Out of more well-organized nation-states and greater policing of the people's religious beliefs and orthodoxy, new methods of persecution and criminal inquiry developed in the West. Although many of these methods had ancient or medieval provenance, they were now refined to a greater degree of sophistication—and under control of the state.

A. The most formidable institution policing the boundaries of deviance and heterodoxy was the Inquisition. In Catholic countries, the Inquisition worked assiduously to ferret out heretics, blasphemers, witches, and all those who represented a threat to Christian society.

B. As had been the case in the Middle Ages, religious forms of control worked hand in hand with the repressive and coercive mechanisms of the nascent state. They did so now with a far more sophisticated understanding of the means to suppress dissent. In many respects, religious tribunals became subordinated to the secular need to keep order.

C. Public executions and burnings also became an essential part of an elaborate theatricality of power. They served as vivid reminders of the power of the state and the close working relationship of religion and political authority.

1. Public performance of punishment served as a way to reinsert the condemned into the body politic, while excluding him or her from the social body through punishment or death.

2. These public performances and executions had extraordinary popular support.

Suggested Reading:

Dunn, *The Age of Religious Wars.*

Monod, *The Power of Kings.*

Peters, *Torture.*

Questions to Consider:

1. If the swift and deep structural changes described above were to take place in our own times, how and why do you think they would affect the nature of our religious beliefs, our relations with the marginalized, and our sense of fairness?

2. What is the role of torture in obtaining confession? Why is torture such an important part of human activities and experiences to this very day?

Lecture Nineteen

Fear and the Construction of Satan

Scope: In this lecture, we turn to the question of fear and study how Europeans reacted to the upheavals during the transition from late medieval to early modern life. We then explore the nature of fear and how it was used by those in power to strengthen their rule. From this discussion, the lecture proceeds to a discussion of the devil in the Western tradition, his origins in the ancient past, Christian views on the devil, and the redefinition—iconographical as well as theological—of Satan at the beginning of the sixteenth century. The lecture concludes by exploring the centrality of Satan in the construction of the witch craze.

Outline

I. In the sixteenth century, the belief was widespread that conspiracies of witches reigned in many places in northern Europe. A mythology of witches developed; some historians would argue that it was an idea imposed from above. For example, one of the salient explanations for the witch craze argues that the persecution of witches was yet another form of scapegoating. Targeting old women and other marginalized members of society followed long-established patterns of persecution against those below.

- **A.** The great French historian Jean Delumeau has argued that the end of the Middle Ages and the beginnings of the early modern period witnessed a widespread sense of fear among the Western European population.
  1. This fear resulted from the different social, economic, religious, and political transformations described in previous lectures.
  2. The anxieties created by the birth pangs of modernity were experienced as a collective feeling, a kind of mass pathology.
- **B.** This fear was acutely present among the lower, and even some middling, classes. They perceived changes in the economy, social structure, and political order as a threat to their well-being.
  1. Bandits, criminals, vagrants, scam artists, and other such types on the margins of society represented another expression of the generalized discontent.
  2. Ironically, these forms of resistance only increased the level of anxiety, because they engendered insecurities and an almost endemic level of social violence. This violence affected, most of all, those at the bottom of society.
- **C.** According to Delumeau, the nascent states harnessed this fear against certain social groups in society for their own benefit.
  1. The use of persecution as a an antidote against widespread collective fears helped allay popular discontent by redirecting anger and unrest against specific targets: Jews, lepers, Muslims, old women, heretics, and other such groups to be excluded from the ongoing construction of the nation.
  2. These persecutions also diverted attention from more pressing problems (inflation, wars, crime, oppressive taxation) and shifted the blame (in the case of witches) to their diabolical conspiracies.
  3. In the end, state-supported scapegoating strengthened the institutions and coercive mechanisms of the nation-state.
- **D.** We should emphasize, once again, the popular support that these persecutions had from most people, especially those from below.

II. This part of the lecture traces the early history of the devil and his role in Western culture up to the eve of the witch craze.

- **A.** We consider the origins of the concept of the devil in Western culture and its place in the master narrative of Judeo–Christian religious thought.
  1. The early roots of the concept of the devil or evil power are to be found in Persian dualism, or Manicheanism.
  2. The devil in the Old Testament has an ambivalent role as both the adversary and an agent of God. The Book of Job serves as a good example of the ambiguities of Satan's nature.
- **B.** Beliefs in the devil and demons developed in early Christianity and the Middle Ages.
  1. Images of the devil in this period and iconographic representations varied a great deal, revealing the slow construction over time of the final image of the devil.
  2. The devil was powerfully represented in Dante's *Inferno*.
- **C.** By the late fifteenth century, the devil came to play an enhanced role in the beliefs of most Europeans and to be linked with a range of activities.

Suggested Reading:

Delumeau, *La peur en Occident* (*Fear in the West*).

Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*.

Michelet, *Satanism and Witchcraft*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Why did early modern Europe experience such widespread anxiety? Do we experience similar fears and anxieties in our own society? Are our own fears more individualized than the collective nature of certain types of feelings in the late Middle Ages and the early modern period?
2. Why does the devil play such a significant role in Western culture? Other cultures have no concept of evil or of an evil force as we do. Why is that so? What kind of intellectual and structural components make our culture embrace the idea of "good and evil" engaged in permanent battle?
3. Does the devil still play a role in American culture? How is the devil present in American popular culture? How is it represented?

Lecture Twenty

The Witch Craze and Misogyny

Scope: Lecture Twenty reviews the place of women in the West and provides a partial feminist explanation for the witch craze in the recrudescence of long-standing misogyny. The lecture traces the roots of Western attitudes toward women and explores women's conditions from the late fifteenth to the mid-seventeenth centuries. The lecture then turns to the writing of the *Malleus Maleficarum* (*The Hammer of Witches*) and examines the role of this text (written in the late fifteenth century) in laying the foundations for the persecution of witches. The lecture provides a close reading of the *Malleus*, with special emphasis on the pejorative representation of women.

Outline

I. The special place of women in Western culture and their pejorative representations in some of the normative texts of our culture holds the key to the interpretation of that unique phenomenon known as the witch craze.

A. The role of women in Western civilization has been shaped by a series of texts and circumstances that go back to the beginnings of civilization.

1. In prehistoric times, economic change, most of all the rise of agriculture, led to a radical shift in the role and position of women.

2. In the ancient world, invasions of pastoral people ushered in a dramatic transformation of religious worship from female-centered religions (fertility cults and the like) to male-centered ones. This change is most obvious in Judaism, but it is also evident in Greek mythology.

B. Such normative texts as the Bible (both the Old and the New Testaments) and most of the great classical works contained pejorative representations of women, which tended to associate women with evil, described them as weak and easily deceived, and depicted them as capable of leading men into temptation.

1. There are, of course, many exceptions to these types of representations. The Bible contains accounts of heroic and pious women. Some important Greek texts, including the work of Plato and Euripides, advocated a rough equality between the sexes.

2. Regardless of these exceptions, the social, cultural, and economic reality was that the place of women was inferior to that of men and that Western society, with the usual exceptions, was a phallocracy.

3. The reign of the phallus was most evident in classical Athens. The cradle of democracy and a source of inspiration to the foundations of the West was not very democratic when it came to women.

C. Early Christianity, as shown by the work of Elaine Pagels and others, allowed women some space and responsibility in the liturgy and religious life of the Church, but this situation did not last long.
   1. Throughout the Middle Ages, again with the same exceptions, women of the upper classes had only two alternatives: marriage or the monastery.
   2. Monastic life made women somewhat independent of men, but the lines of religious hierarchy were clear and favored the rule of males over females.
   3. With the exceptions of some female mystics (discussed earlier), women were strictly subordinated to men.

D. For a brief period in the twelfth century, upper-class women acquired a modicum of power. Courtly love, however, is not equality.
   1. The ideals of courtly love were subversive, but by the early thirteenth century, they had already been condemned by the Church as sinful and even heretical.
   2. Lower-class women worked endlessly, were often abused, and had few property rights (though this varied according to region) and no political rights whatsoever.

II. The conditions of women worsened considerably in the late Middle Ages and the early modern period.

A. At the end of the Middle Ages and the beginnings of the early modern period, the number of women increased and the proportion of widowed or single women in relation to the number of men rose dramatically. Women alone, living at the edge of towns and engaging in such activities as healing, herbalism, and other practices of folk medicine, became a common sight in rural Europe.

B. Women, but most of all older women of the lower classes without protection or ties to men, were easy targets for persecution. In the absence of Jews, and sometimes in conjunction with other marginalized groups, these older women made ideal scapegoats.

C. The combination of female vulnerability, old age (which in itself made for a great deal of vulnerability), begging, or lewd behavior was a heady concoction that led to marginalization and persecution.
   1. Here, the widespread misogyny of Western society finally found an opening to unleash its mistrust of women, which was articulated in persecution and killings.
   2. Old women had also long been associated with the "evil eye." Now they also became associated with Satan. All the conditions were now present; all that was needed was the intellectual construction of witchcraft.

III. This intellectual formulation of witchcraft and the connections among women, the devil, and sorcery was carried out most successfully by the *Malleus Maleficarum*, one of the most influential books in early modern culture.

A. In 1484, Innocent VIII's bull, *Summa desiderantes affectibus*, commissioned two Dominican monks, Heinrich Kraemer and Jakob Sprenger, to investigate reports of witchcraft in the Harz mountains.

B. The result of their inquests was a report on the widespread existence of witchcraft. This report was the *Malleus Maleficarum* (1486).

IV. The *Malleus* soon became the most popular guide for detecting, prosecuting, and condemning witches. It was used by both Catholics and Protestants in their activities to ferret out those dealing with Satan.

A. The first and most powerful part of the *Malleus* offers guidelines on how to identify witches.
   1. This part of the book contains pejorative representations of women, which the authors described as being, by nature, easily seduced by the devil and with great propensity to evil.
   2. The second part also contains lurid accounts of how women (witches) could make men impotent, steal their genitalia, and carry out other sexual misdeeds.

B. The linkage of women's wiles, the devil, and sexuality played an important role in the popularity of the *Malleus* and ensured that close ties were drawn in the popular and elite imagination among witchcraft, women, and lustfulness.

C. The third part of the *Malleus* outlined procedures for interrogating those accused of witchcraft, bringing them to trial, and punishing them. This set of instructions, written in the learned scholastic language of the age, carried extraordinary authority and shaped the treatment of old women for the next 150 years.

D. Even without the *Malleus*, persecution would clearly have taken place. European society was in a particularly nasty prosecutory mood, but the *Malleus* was instrumental in articulating these anxieties and in providing clear direction on how to deal with the peril at hand.

Suggested Reading:

Kraemer and Sprenger, *The Malleus Maleficarum.*

Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe.*

Trevor-Roper, *The European Witch-Craze.*

Questions to Consider:

1. Why do you think the hatred of women has been such a prominent feature of Western civilization? Or do you think that misogyny has been greatly exaggerated?

2. Can you think of historical circumstances in our own time that parallel the conditions under which women lived in the early modern period? Do these conditions lead to the same consequences, or do they have a different outcome? Why?
3. Do you think that texts have such powerful impact as I have just claimed for the *Malleus*? Which texts can you think of that have transformed societies or led to great persecutions?
4. What are the connections between the persecution of witches in the late medieval and early modern periods and persecutions today? What are the similar mechanisms of fear and scapegoating used in these persecutions?

Lecture Twenty-One
The World of Witches

Scope: In Lecture Twenty-One, we turn from theoretical discussions of witchcraft and of the historiography of the witch craze to a specific description of witchcraft, drawn from a mid-sixteenth–century source. We will learn what Europeans believed witches did and how people were supposed to join covenants of witches. In addition, the lecture will explore some specific subjects, such as the nocturnal gatherings of witches and the accusations of child sacrifices, cannibalism, and sexual excesses. We will also learn about incubi and succubi and what most Europeans, learned and unlearned alike, thought witches were like.

Outline

I. We turn to a popular account of the different steps to become a witch. Guazzo's *Compendium maleficarum* spelled out clearly what people did to become witches.

A. The most important aspect of turning into a witch was the pact with the devil. This pact bound the individual to Satan for either a lifetime or a predetermined period of time. In return, the devil granted those who signed the pact power, sex, wealth, wisdom, and/or revenge.

1. The pact was usually written in one's own blood and placed on a crossroads.
2. The terms of the pact were specific, listing what was given in return for the devil's help.
3. The pact has entered Western literature and plays an important role in such classics as Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus* or Goethe's *Faust*.

B. The second important component of the process of becoming a witch was the imprinting of a mark on the body of the putative witch by the devil himself or by one of his representatives.

1. The mark, usually in the form of a bat or a toad, is found under the armpits, in the genital area, or under the eyelids.
2. A whole category of people were employed in detecting and testing the devil's mark.
3. Sometimes a third breast or nipple was found as a devil's mark. This happened during the witch craze in Salem.

C. According to the *Compendium*, the act of becoming a witch also involved a series of important symbolic gestures, including: (1) abjuring one's faith, (2) casting away rosaries and scapulars, (3) paying homage to the devil or his representatives with obscene gestures, (4) promising to gain followers for the devil, (5) undergoing a sacrilegious baptism, (6) giving a token to the devil, and (7) entering the devil's magic circle.

D. The act of becoming a witch also involved performing sacrifices to the devil, a topic that is described in detail in the last part of this lecture.

II. An important aspect of the construction of a discourse on witchcraft was the depiction of the gatherings of witches, or Sabbats. These descriptions fueled the European imagination with dark accounts of the witches' deeds.

A. The word Sabbat, or sometimes Sabbath, originated from the name of a Phyringian deity, Sabazius.

B. These supposed gatherings of witches were divided into great gatherings and little or local gatherings.

1. The greatest gathering took place on Walpurgis Nacht (30 April), the eve of May Day. Some sources report thousands of witches gathering on that day in some sites in Germany.

2. The eve of St. John's Day (23 June) was another favorite gathering day.

3. The witches' gatherings closely followed the Church liturgical calendar.

C. These meetings of witches, presided over by the devil himself or by one of his representatives (usually dressed in a goat skin), included a series of events that were reported in luxurious detail in the literary reconstruction of the Sabbats by hostile sources.

1. Sexual orgies and lewd ritual dances were supposed to take place at these gatherings.

2. Great banquets, with exquisite food and aphrodisiacs, were held at the witches' Sabbats.

3. Child sacrifices were supposed to occur at these nocturnal gatherings. Child murder is one of the most salient themes in Western culture and one of the favorite accusations against the marginalized.

4. Acts of cannibalism have also been reported. Such accusations fall in line with those of child murder and were meant to draw a line between oneself and the "other."

D. These were precisely the same accusations made against oppressed minorities everywhere—from Christian to Jew to Muslim to Native American—over the course of centuries. The charges are as old as humanity itself.

Suggested Reading:

Ginzburg, *Ecstasies*.

Levack, *The Witch-Hunt*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Why would you think that even leading intellectuals in early modern Europe would accept such extraordinary stories of witches? What was there about the intellectual climate that fostered such beliefs?

2. Do the descriptions of how one could become a witch seem plausible to you? Do similar initiations take place today? What do you think is the symbolic power of such rituals?

3. The witches' Sabbat has long engaged the Western imagination. Why do you think this is so? Why do these images retain their unique power and commercial appeal?

Lecture Twenty-Two

The Witches of Loudon

Scope: Lecture Twenty-Two describes a famous witchcraft trial in the city of Loudon in France. This case involved a clergyman, Urbain Grandier, brought to trial and executed on charges of witchcraft. The case focused on an Ursuline monastery where the nuns confessed to being possessed by the devil through Grandier's malefic intercession. The lecture explores the political and social context of the case, using the events as a lens through which to examine the mentality and sexual mores of early modern Europeans. The lecture concludes with a summation of the history of the witch craze, its demise in the mid-seventeenth century, and its last outbursts in Salem in the late seventeenth century.

Outline

I. The lecture begins with a short introduction to the culture of France in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries and to Grandier's upbringing, his social and cultural location in French society.

- **A.** The end of the sixteenth century and first half of the seventeenth was a period of radical social, political, and cultural shifts in France and elsewhere.
  - **1.** Politically, France emerged from the upheavals of the religious wars and the coming of Henry of Navarre to the throne. Richelieu, who plays an important role in this story, became the power behind the throne and restored order to France during the reign of Louis XIII.
  - **2.** After the death of both the king and Cardinal Richelieu, a period of aristocratic unrest, La Fronde, plagued France during Louis XIV's minority.
- **B.** Culturally, France and other parts of Western Europe entered fully into the post-Renaissance world of the Baroque. This world was dominated by new artistic forms and by a novel philosophical discourse.
  - **1.** The culture of the Baroque, with its excesses and lush iconographic codes and symbols, was a culture of luxury and sensuousness.
  - **2.** France began, at this time, its ascendancy to the premier place in letters and philosophy of Europe. Centers of learning (the universities) and schools (such as La Flêche) became the training ground for a new intellectual elite. Grandier attended the latter school, which was, not coincidentally, also attended by René Descartes.
  - **3.** The Scientific Revolution and the Cartesian method revolutionized thought, creating new cultural fields and new cultural production that challenged the established order.
- **C.** The impact of the Counter-Reformation, explored in a previous lecture, radically altered perceptions of religion and created new standards for clergymen and laity alike.
- **D.** Loudon, the site of the events discussed in this lecture, was a small city in France.
  - **1.** The city was sharply divided between Protestants and Catholics. The former were, on the whole, literate and belonged to the middling sorts. The latter included the upper elites and the lower and illiterate classes.
  - **2.** As a city, Loudon was also experiencing conflicts with the Crown and facing economic transformations.

II. A young and ambitious man, Urbain Grandier was ordained as a Jesuit novice in 1615.

- **A.** Soon, however, he chose a different and more promising career as a clergyman in the hope of receiving a faster and more profitable promotion.
  - **1.** Urbain abandoned the Jesuit order and entered the secular clergy, where he thought he could do much better.
  - **2.** At the age of twenty-seven, he became a priest at Loudon and received a well-rewarded and prestigious ecclesiastical appointment.
- **B.** Urbain Grandier was a personable, handsome man, who soon became a favorite preacher among fashionable female parishioners.
  - **1.** He got himself into an endless chain of troubles when he entered into a sexual liaison with the daughter of the local prosecutor. The young woman became pregnant, and the scandal was put aside only with great difficulties. Grandier made serious and powerful enemies in the town.
  - **2.** A rich and beautiful young widow, Madeleine de Bron, also lived in Loudon. She was much sought after by eligible men in Loudon, but she became Grandier's mistress and, in a bizarre ceremony, Grandier married himself to the young widow.
- **C.** Grandier had very specific views on celibacy (he opposed it and thought it unnatural) and even wrote a secret treatise on clerical chastity. His behavior ran counter to the program of the newly reformed Church. He also snubbed a young cleric, Armand du Plessis, who later became Cardinal Richelieu and who would not forgive Grandier's arrogant behavior.
  - **1.** In 1629, Grandier was accused of sexual improprieties and imprisoned.

2. He appealed to the Parlement (higher law court) of Paris and was admonished, released, and allowed to return to his clerical position in the city.

D. Another element was then added to the drama. A new Ursuline convent opened in Loudon, a place for middling sorts and impoverished aristocratic women. The prioress, Sister Jeanne des Anges, liked Grandier and asked him to be the nuns' confessor. When Grandier refused, the position went to one of his enemies.

1. Soon young novices, partly as pranks, partly as constructed allegations, began to complain of demonic possession. Even the prioress was affected by these possessions.
2. Grandier was accused of being the devil's representative and taken prisoner in 1633.

E. In an atmosphere charged with sexuality, reports of Grandier's libidinal escapades, political revenge, and the shadow of witchcraft, Grandier was found guilty, tortured, and condemned to death by burning.

1. On 18 August 1634, after terrible torture, he was burned in the public square of Loudon.
2. He died pleading his innocence and asking God to forgive those who had tortured and executed him.

III. In the aftermath of Grandier's execution, demonic possessions and lurid public exorcisms continued for three years, to the delight of onlookers of all denominations and of Loudon's Protestants, who saw this as yet another example of Catholic misbehavior.

A. The case reveals how politics, new sexual mores, and handy accusations of witchcraft could be used to get rid of an enemy.

B. The case also gives us a good example of the manner in which witchcraft trials functioned in early modern Europe at a time when the witch craze was beginning to wane.

C. Urbain Grandier's dramatic case has generated a great deal of artistic interest. His life and death have been represented in both film and fiction.

Suggested Reading:

Huxley, *The Devils of Loudon.*

Levack, *The Witch-Hunt.*

Michelet, *Satanism.*

Russell, *The Devils* (film featuring Oliver Reed and Vanessa Redgrave).

Questions to Consider:

1. Why do you think this case allows us to dissect the complex nature of the witch craze? How does it reflect on the structure of French society in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries?
2. Why do we see such important links between sexuality and the witch craze? What changed in early modern Europe that made carnality such a dangerous force? Is there in our own political world a similar attitude toward sexuality? Can political persecutions be equated with the witch craze?
3. What do you think of the figure of Urbain Grandier? Is he a reflection of an archetype, that is, the religious figure who uses his position for sexual purposes? Some of the accusations parallel those hurled against the Free Spirit heretics 200; are there similar cases today?

Lecture Twenty-Three

The Witches of Essex and Salem

Scope: Lecture Twenty-Three focuses on the social history of witchcraft, attempting to answer a number of questions. Who were the people accused of witchcraft? To which social classes did they belong? Who were the accusers? To which social classes did they belong? The lecture seeks to draw a social profile of those who were brought to trial on charges of witchcraft and Satanism through the close exploration of two case studies. These case studies present a vivid picture of witchcraft trials in Essex (England) in the mid-seventeenth century and in Salem, Massachusetts, in the late seventeenth century. The lecture compares the social backgrounds, ages, and genders of those brought to trial in Essex with the famous American case study, that of the Salem witch trials in late seventeenth-century North America.

Outline

I. In Lecture Twenty-Three, we continue to examine specific case studies of the persecution of witches. In these cases, the trials of the witches in Essex (England) and in Salem (Massachusetts), we also look at what these trials can tell us about the social history of witchcraft. Lecture Twenty-Three examines the following:

- **A.** The historical context of the witch craze in Essex and the nature of witchcraft prosecution in the region. The lecture, based on the study made by Macfarlane, draws a social map of witches and their accusers in early modern England.
- **B.** We then turn our attention to Salem and examine the last gasps of the witch craze in the far-off colonies. In addition to providing a short narrative of this well-known episode, the lecture explores the social and cultural meaning of the Salem witch trials.
- **C.** We conclude with a brief look at anti-witchcraft measures, that is, what individuals did to prevent themselves from becoming targets for witches. In addition, the lecture raises questions about the reality of witches and attempts to explain why such beliefs were and remain present in Western culture.

II. The long series of witch trials in seventeenth-century Essex provides an ideal place to test some well-known and long-held views on witchcraft. This part of the lecture examines witchcraft in Essex and its social significance.

- **A.** Essex shire in the seventeenth century was in the midst of important transformations.
  1. The period coincides with the political disturbances caused by the English civil war and the multifaceted conflicts between the King and Parliament, Catholics and Protestants, aristocrats and merchants, Puritans and Church of England followers.
  2. Economically, Essex witnessed a period of land consolidation, enclosure of lands, and displacement of peasants.
  3. Many peasants took to the roads in search of work. They settled in new villages and became the objects of mistrust and resentment from some of the original inhabitants.
  4. Poverty led to an increase in the numbers of beggars at a time when begging had come under attack.
- **B.** In the seventeenth century, Essex authorities began to persecute those accused of witchcraft in earnest. Assizes were held and hundreds of witches were brought to trial, found guilty, and hanged.
  1. There was no torture in England or, at least, no systematic torture of accused witches; yet their confessions paralleled those of the continent.
  2. Witches and heretics were not burned, as was usually the case on the continent, though the bodies of witches could be burned after death.
- **C.** From the evidence of the assizes, Macfarlane has constructed a thorough statistical apparatus that provides a clear picture of the social landscape of witchcraft in seventeenth-century Essex.
  1. Witches were usually women (only 23 out of the 291 accused were males), and the ages of those condemned were beyond the period in which women could conceive. Those charged with witchcraft and found guilty were overwhelmingly old women.
  2. Accusers were evenly divided between women and men. Many accusers were in-laws of those whom they charged.
  3. Those accused of witchcraft were often of a lower social class than that of their accusers. Though not the extremely poor and marginalized, those accused of witchcraft belonged to the lower classes and to those segments of society caught in the middle of adverse economic shifts.
  4. Those thought to be witches were often engaged in lewd behavior, had a propensity for cursing, or begged for their sustenance.
  5. Essentially, if one acted like a witch was supposed to act or looked like one, that person became a target for witchcraft accusations.

III. In late seventeenth-century Salem, a small town in colonial Massachusetts, accusations and trials for witchcraft created an atmosphere of fear and mistrust. The sexual fantasies and social tensions of the village were articulated through the lens of witchcraft. Several members of the community paid with their lives for this.

A. We examine the social classes and religious observances of those living in Salem in the late seventeenth century. In Salem, unlike in Essex, the accusers were of a lower socioeconomic standing than those they charged with sorcery.

B. We then turn to a narrative of the events and introduce some of the main characters implicated in the events.

C. We also explore, as we did in the Loudon case, the links among repressed sexuality, social conflict, and religious differences and the use of witchcraft as a weapon to discipline and punish one's enemies.

D. Salem marks the concluding chapter of almost two centuries of the witch craze and the demise of witch beliefs in the West.

IV. We close the lecture and the discussion of witchcraft with an assessment of witches and their world. The witch craze, though connecting with a series of popular pre-Christian beliefs (see Lecture Twenty-Four), was, in fact, imposed from below on the marginalized and vulnerable.

A. Obviously, some people in Europe believed themselves to be witches and confessed to witchcraft quite willingly.

B. It is also quite obvious that many in Europe believed in the reality of witchcraft and witches.

C. Acknowledging these facts, however, is far from admitting that witches existed in reality.

Suggested Reading:

Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England.*

Miller, *The Crucible.*

Trevor-Roper, *The European Witch-Craze.*

Questions to Consider:

1. What do you think is the relationship between social class and persecution, between gender and identification as a witch, between age and social marginalization? Do such links exist today?
2. Why do you think that the witch trials at Salem have had such a cultural impact on the history of the United States? What issues made those trials and their outcomes resonate in historical memory? Do any recent events parallel those of Salem?
3. What do you think of the witch craze? How would you explain it? Why?

Lecture Twenty-Four
The Survival of the Past

Scope: In our final lecture, we explore the survival of pre-Christian traditions in Europe. The lecture focuses on folklore and the lasting presence of such Celtic influences as Beltane fires, May Day celebrations, mistletoe, maypoles, and other such practices. The lecture also discusses magic places in Europe, such as the great maze at the Cathedral of Chartres. We conclude with a summation of the material discussed in previous lecture, an explanation of how the triumph of science led to the relegation of other forms of knowledge to the realm of superstition, and the manner in which the terror of history was redefined and transformed on the eve of the Enlightenment. We conclude with some thoughts on the manner in which the terror of history remains a grim reality in contemporary history, above all, in the disasters of the last century.

Outline

I. In Lecture Twenty-Four, we come to the end of our long journey. Here, we take a wide-ranging trip through Europe to explore the cultural and religious vestiges of pre-Christian civilizations. The folklore of Europe and its distant roots is, in itself, a topic worth a series of lectures doubling the length of this one. What follows is a short and impressionistic voyage through the folklore and popular belief of the European past.

A. The lecture begins with a look at the survival of agricultural cults in Western Europe, examining in some detail Carlo Ginzburg's descriptions of the *benandanti* ("good walkers") of Friuli, a mountainous region in the far northeast of Italy.

B. The lecture continues with a review of the survival of Celtic and Germanic lore in the West.

C. We also review some sacred and magical places in Europe that attract thousands of pilgrims every year, even to this day.

D. The lecture concludes with a brief overview of the themes explored over the last twenty-three lectures and with a reiteration of what the terror of history meant in the past and means today for humans.

II. We turn to the events that took place in early modern Friuli, a region of Italy, and the manner in which the Inquisition turned an agrarian cult into a case of witchcraft.

A. In the Friuli, an isolated region of northern Italy, there was the widespread belief that those peasants born with the caul (the inner fetal membrane of higher vertebrates) had unusual powers.

1. Those born with a caul were called *benandanti* (the "good walkers") and were believed to be good witches.
2. On special days of the year, when the well-being of the harvests was at stake, the good walkers went out in spirit and armed with fennel stalks to do battle against the witches (armed with sorghum stalks) to save the crops.

B. When inquisitors came into the Friuli and in contact with these types of beliefs, which as Ginzburg clearly shows, dated back to ancient agrarian cults, they identified these practices as witchcraft.
1. Under severe questioning by the inquisitors, the *benandanti* insisted that they were good witches and good Christians to boot.
2. The proceedings against suspected witches in the Friuli lasted for decades, as the inquisitors, armed with the "script" furnished by the *Malleus Maleficarum*, followed a line of questions that tied the accused to witchcraft and to dealings with the devil.
3. The inquisitors were literate Latin- and Italian-speaking clerics from urban lowland Italy. Their prisoners were illiterate dialect-speakers.

C. After many years, the *benandanti* began to confess to supposed acts of witchcraft, confirming, through their admissions, the inquisitors' suspicions. Most were punished but not executed. (Northern Europe was where most executions for witchcraft took place.)

D. Ginzburg reconstructed the genealogy of many of these peasant beliefs, linking them to ancient practices (some of them originating in other parts of the world, such as central Asia). Ginzburg's magical book unveils a complex system of beliefs and layers of popular culture that survived in Europe under the shadow of the hegemonic political and religious establishments.

III. From agrarian cults, we turn to one of the most influential traditions in the making of Western culture. The past, a deep and mysterious past, survived in Europe until recently.

A. The most salient of these traditions was Celtic lore and its association with rural practices. These practices were imbedded in the rural cycle and influenced the Church's own liturgical calendar.
1. This included the survival of Druidic beliefs and the association with specific geographical sites (see below).
2. Many of these beliefs were centered on certain days of the year and specific plants, such as mistletoe, a sacred plant.

B. The most prevalent belief was the cult of the oak tree, the sacred tree of Indo-European people.
1. It was believed that the power of the sun resided in the heart of the oak tree. Moreover, the power of the sun had to be replenished every year on special days.

2. Great bonfires (fire festivals) were held on the summer solstice (St. John's Eve) and on other important astronomical dates to replenish the sun's power.

C. No plant or object, however, had the power of mistletoe, a parasitic plant growing between the sky and the earth on the trunk and branches of the oaks. Once cut, in special ceremonies, it turned a gold color.
1. This is the fabled "golden bough," described by James Frazer in the book by the same title.
2. Mistletoe was supposed to have healing and magical power. It was often placed on the door lintel as an effective protection against witches.
3. Mistletoe is also the weapon with which Baldar, one of the Germanic deities, was killed. This aspect of the beliefs introduced a central theme of Western civilization, that of the king who must die and who comes back to life.

D. Another important event related to mistletoe is May Day. Maypole (a phallic symbol) celebrations are related to fertility rites and to the renewal of life in spring.

IV. In association with these widespread and enduring popular beliefs and practices, Europeans have long known about the power of specific magical places, portals into a different world of nature and the imagination.

A. These places, usually high places, groves, fountains, and the like, were sites of worship for peasant folks. Their roots can be found in the ancient past, a world before history and Christianity.

B. Historically, some of the places became sites for classical and Christian monuments. Locating such monuments was not always a conscious choice, but it came about as the result of popular recognition of the sacredness of these places.
1. These places include such popular sites as Stonehenge and other stone circles in Europe.
2. Other such sites include the Cathedral of Chartres and the maze in the center aisle, the Pantheon in Rome, and the Cathedral of Compostela.

C. This folklore had led to the survival in Europe of the belief in fairies, trolls, dragons, wizards, and the like.
1. These beliefs are not spread evenly throughout Europe but prosper most in Celtic homelands.
2. Celtic lore entered literary culture in the twelfth century and is closely related to courtly culture. It entered Western thought and has remained a powerful cultural motif.

V. We conclude with a review of the three overall themes of the course and the manner in which many of these cultural and religious manifestations can be seen as an escape from the terror of history.

A. The lecture recaps the salient points of the last twenty-four lectures and examines their impact on Western society.

B. We examine how the Enlightenment collapsed in the waves of wars, new scientific discoveries, and anti-Enlightenment philosophical discourse in the nineteenth century.

1. The terror of history, we have discovered in recent times, is still with us, and it has been articulated within our living memory by a century of genocide, ecological catastrophes, and other upheavals.
2. As in an earlier period, society has formulated responses that, although unlike those of the late Middle Ages and the early modern period, seek to provide an escape from history.

Suggested Reading:

Burke, *Popular Culture*.

Frazer, *The Golden Bough*.

Ginzburg, *Night Battles*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Do you think that the power of suggestive questioning is sufficient to lead to the *benandantis*' confessions? Can you pinpoint modern examples of how specific types of questioning may alter one's perception of reality?
2. What elements of the deep past and agrarian folklore can you recognize in our world today? What role do these beliefs play in our culture? Why, while dismissing these practices and beliefs as superstition, are we still enchanted by these beliefs and this view of the world?
3. Do children have a different way of looking at the world of nature and the world of imagination? Why is this so?

Timeline

c. 1000	Millenarian agitation widespread throughout the West.
1090/1091–1153	Bernard of Clairvaux.
c. 1098–1179	Hildegard of Bingen, mystic and scientist.
1121/1122	Bernard enters Citeaux on his twenty-first birthday.
c. 1135–1202	Joachim of Fiori
c. 1171–1221	Dominic of Guzman, founder of the Dominican Order.
c. 1182–1226	Francis of Assisi.
1184	Joachim meets with Pope Lucius III and is given permission to write his visions.
1208–1226	Crusade against the Cathars and foundation of the Inquisition in Languedoc.
1210	Francis begins his preaching and meets with Innocent III.
1212–1250	Frederick II, Holy Roman Emperor.
1213	Joachim's views on the Trinity condemned by the Church.
1224	Francis receives the stigmata.
1260s	A new wave of millenarian agitation. The flagellant movement begins.
1265–1321	Dante Alighieri.
c. 1285	Moses of Leon writes the *Zohar*, the greatest Kabbalistic text.
1347–1380	Catherine of Siena.
1348–1350	The Black Death leads to another wave of apocalyptic movements and a rebirth of flagellant activities.
1437–1508	Isaac Abravanel, Jewish apocalyptic writer.
1450s	Reception of Hermetic lore in Western Europe.

c. 1480–1690s	Witch craze in Western Europe.
1483–1546	Martin Luther.
1484	Innocent VIII's *Summa desiderantes affectibus.*
1486	Publication of the *Malleus maleficarum.*
c. 1488–1525	Thomas Muntzer, radical Protestant leader.
1491–1556	Ignatius of Loyola.
1509–1564	John Calvin.
1515–1582	Teresa of Avila.
1517	Luther nails his ninety-five theses on the door of a church at Wittenberg.
1520s	Anabaptist peasant uprisings in Germany. Great wave of apocalyptic rebellions.
1542–1591	John of the Cross.
1545–1563	Council of Trent.
1634	Trial and execution of Urbain Grandier in Loudon.
1660s	Sabbatai Sevi's messianic preaching.
1665	Sabbatai reveals himself as the Messiah.
September 16, 1666	Sabbatai's conversion to Islam.
1692	Salem witch trials.

Glossary

alchemy: A strange combination of chemical lore, religion, and secret practices, alchemy dated back to Babylonian times. It was preserved and transmitted to the West by the Arabs and became one of the most important esoteric forms of knowledge in early modern Europe.

Anabaptist: A radical early sixteenth-century sect that advocated adult baptism. The great German peasant uprising of 1525 was greatly inspired by Anabaptists' social and religious views.

astronomy: The belief that a connection exists between the stars and other celestial bodies (the macrocosm) and humans (the microcosm). The stars, it was believed, influenced the life of individuals, and certain amulets, stones related to one's astrological sign and other such objects, provided protection against the fatal influence of celestial bodies.

awakening: The first stage of the mystic's way. The first awareness that life is not right and the turning of the mystic to God.

Catharism (also Albigensian heresy): A heresy, widespread in southern France and northern Italy in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. It had Manichaean origins and beliefs in the corruption of the material world.

dark night of the soul: The fourth stage of the mystic's way. After the first vision of the Godhead, the mystic suffers a period of withdrawal and pain. It also marks a period of growing introspection and preparation for the union with God. *Dark Night of the Soul* is also the title of a great mystical poem by John of the Cross.

emanation: In mysticism, this term refers to the mystic's awareness of the presence of God in His emanations. The Godhead is utterly transcendental and cannot be seen or comprehended. Instead, the mystic perceives the manifestations of God.

familiars: Evil spirits or demons, which often take the form of an animal, given by the devil to his followers to attend, serve, and satisfy them.

flagellant movement: Movement of people who, in the 1260s and mid-1300s (the most significant periods), whipped themselves in penance and as a way of ushering in the millennium.

heresy: Simply, heresy is the holding of beliefs or ideas that contradict the dogma or orthodox belief of one's own religion

hermeticism: A doctrine based on a body of works written c. 150–200 A.D. but believed to have been written much earlier by an Egyptian priest, Hermes Trismegistus. This body of work combined magical, astrological, and other mysterious accounts and had great influence on European culture.

illumination: One of the five stages of the mystical way. This third stage signals the mystic's brief awareness of the presence of the Godhead. It is not a total union with God but a taste of what that union may be.

immanence: In mysticism, the mystic finds God within himself or herself. God is within us.

incubus: A male companion, an evil spirit or demon, given to witches for their sexual satisfaction. See **familiars**.

Kabbalah (also Cabbala): An esoteric form of Jewish mysticism. Although Kabbalah has ancient roots, its most important text, the *Zohar*, dates from the late thirteenth century.

Manichaeism: An ancient set of beliefs, dating back to Mani or Manes, a third-century A.D. Persian religious leader. These beliefs held that the world was divided between two contending forces: evil, associated with the material world, and goodness, associated with the spirit.

Messianism: Belief in the Messiah and of His coming in a near future.

millenarianism (millennium, apocalyptics): The belief that after long trials and tribulations, a period of 1,000 years of peace (when the devil will be chained in hell) will be enjoyed by all Christians. Many variations on the theme of the millennium existed during the period between the beginnings of the Christian era and 1700.

mysticism: The belief that mystics (those who follow along the mystical path) experience a union or direct awareness of the Godhead.

mystic's way: Mystics argued that the journey to their final union with God followed a path and included five stages: awakening, purgation, illumination, withdrawal or dark night of the soul, and union.

necromancy: Conjuring the spirit of the dead.

purgation: This is the second stage in the mystic's way. It is the process of chastising and cleansing the body to prepare for the union with God.

Sabbat: The nocturnal gathering of witches.

Sabbatianism: The followers of Sabbatai Sevi, a Jewish messianic figure who declared himself the long-awaited Messiah and attracted thousands of followers in the late seventeenth century.

stigmata: The reception of the five wounds of Christ on the Cross; that is, wounds on the two feet, the two hands, and the piercing of the side. Francis of Assisi was reported to be the first Christian to receive the stigmata.

succubus: A female companion, an evil spirit or demon, given by the devil to one of his male followers for sexual pleasure. See **familiars**.

union or unitive stage: The fifth stage in the mystic's way. It is the final union of the mystic's soul with the Godhead.

Waldensians: A twelfth-century heretical movement that preached absolute poverty. Founded by Peter Waldo (Valdes of Lyons), the Waldensians translated the gospel into the vernacular and became a great threat to the Church.

witch craze: A period in Western European history, running roughly from the late fifteenth century to the late seventeenth century, when most Europeans believed that a vast conspiracy of witches existed whose aim was to overthrow the Christian order. As a consequence, between 80,000 and 100,000 people were executed on charges of witchcraft.

Biographical Notes

Isaac Abravanel. Descendants of a well-established Sevillian Jewish family, the Abravanels fled to Portugal in 1391, a period of great violence against the Jews. After political difficulties in Portugal in the 1480s, members of the family, including Isaac, fled to Castile in 1483, where Isaac became an important tax farmer. In 1492, in spite of the pleading of the Catholic monarchs, Isaac chose exile. He left Spain that year and became an important messianic figure before he died in 1508.

Bernard of Clairvaux. A member of an aristocratic family in the area of Dijon, Bernard was born in either 1090 or 1091. He joined the newly created Cistercian Order on his twenty-first birthday and became abbot of Clairvaux at the age of twenty-four. He was among the most influential mystics, intellectuals, and religious figures of the twelfth century. He died in 1153.

John Calvin. Born in 1509, Calvin brought the new doctrines of the Reformation to Geneva. This city became the center for a more radical interpretation of Luther's position. Calvin's great work, *Christianae Religionis Institutio*, was published in 1535. It emphasized predestination. Calvin died in 1564.

Catherine of Siena. A contemporary of Petrarch, Catherine was born in Siena on 25 March 1347, one year before the Black Death. From a fairly prosperous artisan family, she began to have visions at the age of six and took the habit in 1363. Catherine developed a doctrine of holy hatred, that is, the closer a soul is to God the more that soul hates the sins and mistakes it commits against God.

Charles V (Charles I in Spain and V in the Holy Roman Empire). Ruled in Germany between 1519 and 1556. He was opposed by Luther and the Protestant German princes and played a significant role in the religious and political conflicts of the early sixteenth century.

Francis of Assisi. Born around 1182 in Assisi, Italy, Francis was the son of Pietro Bernardone, a well-to-do merchant, and probably of a French mother. His life was that of a typical child and adolescent in a late twelfth-century urban milieu, until he was wounded in the war against Peruggia. After undergoing a conversion, he began his preaching of poverty. He died in 1226, less than two years after receiving the stigmata.

Hildegard of Bingen. One of the most significant female mystics of the twelfth century, Hildegard came from an aristocratic family in the area of Bingen in Germany. A learned woman, she wrote extensively on a variety of topics and was one of the leading physicians of her time. She was born around 1098 and died, after a long and productive life, in 1179.

Joachim of Fiori. Born around 1135, Joachim was abbot of a Cistercian monastery in southern Italy. He had an interview with Pope Lucius III in 1184 and was given permission to go wandering and to explain his prophetic visions and revelations about the Third Age. Two years later, he met the new Pope, Urban III, and in 1190 or 1191, traveled with Richard the Lionhearted who was on his way to the Holy Land. The author of important millenarian treatises, Joachim died in 1202.

John of the Cross. Juan de Yépez y Alvarez was born in 1542 at Fontiveros and orphaned at an early age. He spent his childhood in an orphanage in quite trying circumstances, until his obvious intellectual abilities came to the attention of his superior and he was sent to school. Joining the Carmelite Order at the age of twenty-one, he soon became one of the greatest mystics of the age.

Martin Luther. The great Protestant leader was born in 1483, became a priest in 1507 and a professor at Wittenberg the following year, and broke openly with the Church in 1517. His translation of the Bible into German and his positions on questions of dogma opened a rift in Western European Christianity.

Moses of Leon (Rabbi). According to Gershom Scholem, Moses of Leon, who lived in several towns in northern and central Castile in the late thirteenth century, composed the *Zohar*, the greatest of all Kabbalistic texts, between 1280 and 1286.

Thomas Muntzer. Born in Stolberg in the Harz Mountain region in 1488 or 1489, Muntzer became a follower of Luther until breaking ranks with him and preaching a radical form of Protestantism and social doctrine. His millenarian preaching played an important role in the Great Peasant Rebellion of 1525.

Richard of St. Victor. Born around 1123, Richard died on 10 March 1173. He came from Scotland to the monastery of Saint Victor in France, where he studied under Hugh of Saint Victor. His two main works were *On the Preparation of the Soul to Contemplation (Benjamin Minor)* and *On the Grace of Contemplation (Benjamin Major).*

Sabbatai Sevi. Born in 1625 in Smyrna and part of the great Sephardic migration to the eastern Mediterranean, Sabbatai became the focus of great messianic agitation among Sephardic communities in 1665, until his imprisonment and conversion to Islam in 1666.

Teresa of Avila. The granddaughter of a relapsed *converso*, Teresa, born in 1515, was related through her mother to one of Avila's most aristocratic families. She entered the Carmelite Order when she was about twenty-one and became a reformer, writer, and mystic. Her works are among the most cherished in Spanish literature. They were written in a simple yet effective style.

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Essential Reading (Primary Sources)

Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Confessions*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961. Augustine's passionate autobiography, this text served as inspiration to most medieval mystics and religious thinkers.

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Ignatius of Loyola. *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*. New York: Image Books, 1964. One of the most inspiring devotional guides by the founder of the Jesuit Order. It became an important part of the education of some of the leading Catholic intellectuals in early modern Western Europe.

John of the Cross. *Dark Night of the Soul*. New York: Image (many editions). A beautiful account of a mystical experience.

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Supplementary Reading

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Notes