

# Retro Reading: Secrets

HNRC 301VH-002 (9279)

Monday 5:00-6:15, Gearhart 243

Instructor: John Treat  
Office: Gearhart 252  
Office Hours: Mondays, 9:00-11:00 a.m.  
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## Course Overview

Belief in hidden knowledge, power, and wisdom conferred by initiation and via the performance of ritual magic has continued unabated through Europe and North America's industrial and scientific revolutions. In fact, the authority of the latest scientific theories is often used to frame and bolster Western esotericists' claims. Secrets will use primary texts to take its participants through the rise and accreditive development of Western esotericism, from its early modern antecedents, to the occult revival of the nineteenth century, to the twentieth-century rise of neopaganism.

## Course Objective

The course will investigate these texts to ascertain the lasting appeal of esoteric systems of thought in an increasingly scientific and secular culture and to test Wouter Hanegraaff's claim that Western esotericism is best understood as the discarded knowledge of earlier eras.

## Grading

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Points Possible</u>
Participation	500
Presentation	250
Weekly one-page reflection papers	250
<b>Total</b>	<b>1000</b>

## Grading Scale

A: 900-1000      D: 600-699  
B: 800-899      F: Below 600  
C: 700-799

## **Participation and Attendance (500 points)**

A readings course is, above all, a conversation about the texts. You need to come prepared AND PARTICIPATE IN THE DISCUSSION. Participation will be half of your course grade.

Each week, except for the first, you will receive a grade for your class participation. Your lowest three grades out of 13 weeks will be dropped and the remaining 10 averaged to determine your final grade. You will receive interim participation grades in week 6 and week 12.

- A Dynamic, informed, insightful participation.
- B Consistent participation with evidence of a careful reading of the sources.
- C Occasional participation with evidence of having consulted the readings.
- D Present but not participating to a meaningful extent.
- 0 Not present.

Note: Since three weeks of participation grades will be dropped, these may be used strategically for skips, illnesses, or family emergencies. There are no excused absences.

## **Presentation (250 points)**

One week in the course, you will be responsible for framing the week's readings in an eight to ten minute oral Presentation. As in a weekly reflection paper (see below) you will need to frame the readings for the week in the context of our other readings, take us through the important points of any ritual or esoteric texts, and give the points you find to be worth discussing. Remember: presenting usually takes longer than you think, so be sure your presentation fits the timeline.

On your week to present, you need to get me at least three discussion points/questions in your reflection paper by noon on Monday before class.

## **Weekly 200-Word Reflection (250 points)**

Ten weeks out of sixteen, you will need to turn in a reflection of not less than 175 words or more than 225 words on the week's texts. The reflection should demonstrate that you have read the texts, but its focus should be on your reaction to the texts, their relationship to or divergence from our other course readings, and at least one point that you believe merits discussion--a discussion that you may be asked to kick off in class.

Reflection papers are due on Blackboard on Monday at noon before class.

## Required Texts

All texts will be available for free in a Zotero group. If you have not signed up for Zotero, please do so at [zotero.org](http://zotero.org) and respond to the invitation to join the Secrets group.

## Class Norms of Behavior

Respect is key when discussing subjects that engender strong feelings. State your opinions and make your arguments as strongly as possible, but only do so based on historical evidence and solid reasoning. Argue with positions, not other class members. Attacking another class member rather than his or her argument will affect your participation grade and, in some cases, may result in you being asked to leave the course for the day.

## Syllabus Changes

The syllabus may change at any point in the course at the instructor's discretion.

## Contested Grades

If you believe that you have received a lower grade than you deserved on an assignment, please come to my office hours to discuss your grade, but only after at least 24 hours have elapsed. This gives time for initial reactions to a grade to cool and time for me to be able to review your work with fresh eyes. Bring written points showing why you feel that your grade was in error to make your case.

## Academic Dishonesty

*As a core part of its mission, the University of Arkansas provides students with the opportunity to further their educational goals through programs of study and research in an environment that promotes freedom of inquiry and academic responsibility. Accomplishing this mission is only possible when intellectual honesty and individual integrity prevail.*

*Each University of Arkansas student is required to be familiar with and abide by the University's 'Academic Integrity Policy' which may be found at <http://provost.uark.edu/> Students with questions about how these policies apply to a particular course or assignment should immediately contact their instructor.*

For further information, a useful video can be found at <http://honesty.uark.edu/students/>. Short summary: cheating (including plagiarism) will result in an F on the assignment, in the course, or possible dismissal from the U of A depending on the severity of the offense and your past offenses.

## ADA Notice

University of Arkansas Academic Policy Series 1520.10 requires that students with disabilities are provided reasonable accommodations to ensure their equal access to course content. If you have a

documented disability and require accommodations, please contact the Center for Educational Access (479-575-3104 or <http://cea.uark.edu>). The center staff are very helpful and will assist you in documenting your condition and for arranging appropriate accommodations, which may include assigning a note taker to the class, arranging for longer deadlines, or other helpful measures.

### **Uof A Cares**

If something bad happens in your personal life that will cause you to miss assignments or substantial portions of class, please contact U of A Cares (<http://uofacares.uark.edu> or 479-575-5004) in the Dean of Students Office. Staff can help you navigate troubles, connect you with resources, and contact all of your professors at once so you can stay on track academically.

### **Inclement Weather**

If campus is closed, class will not be held. For those who live off campus, use your best judgment.

### **Emergency Procedures**

Many types of emergencies can occur on campus; instructions for specific emergencies such as severe weather, active shooter, or fire can be found at [emergency.uark.edu](http://emergency.uark.edu).

### **Severe Weather (Tornado Warning)**

Follow the directions of the instructor or emergency personnel

Seek shelter in the basement or interior room or hallway on the lowest floor, putting as many walls as possible between you and the outside

If you are in a multi-story building, and you cannot get to the lowest floor, pick a hallway in the center of the building

Stay in the center of the room, away from exterior walls, windows, and doors

### **Violence / Active Shooter (CADD)**

**CALL-** 9-1-1

**AVOID-** If possible, self-evacuate to a safe area outside the building. Follow directions of police officers.

**DENY-** Barricade the door with desk, chairs, bookcases or any items. Move to a place inside the room where you are not visible. Turn off the lights and remain quiet. Remain there until told by police it's safe.

**DEFEND-** Use chairs, desks, cell phones or whatever is immediately available to distract and/or defend yourself and others from attack.

## **Course and Readings Schedule**

### Week 1 (January 13) Introduction to Western Esotericism

Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *Western Esotericism: A Guide for the Perplexed*, Chapter 1: “What is Western Esotericism.”

*The Roman Missal* (1803, trans.), Blessing of the Fire and Font from the Great Vigil of Easter.

### Week 2 (January 20) Martin Luther King Day: No Class

### Week 3 (January 27) Renaissance & Reformation Magic and Secret Societies

Antoine Faivre, *Western Esotericism* (2010), Chapter 2: “Esotericism in the Heart of the Renaissance and the Flames of the Baroque.”

Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa, selections from *Three Books Concerning Occult Philosophy*, 1531.

Anonymous, “*Fama Fraternalitatis Rosae Crucis*” (1614).

Anonymous, “*Confessio Fraternalitatis*” (1615).

### Week 4 (February 3) Freemasonry: The Scaffold

Henrik Bogdan, *Western Esotericism and Rituals of Initiation*, Chapter 2, “Rituals of Initiation, Secret Societies, and Masonic Initiatory Societies.”

Richard Carlile, *Manual of Freemasonry* (1833), First-Third Degree rituals.

### Week 5 (February 10) The Occult Revival

Gareth Knight, “Sons of Hermes 2: Eliphas Levi.”

Eliphas Levi, selection from *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie*, trans. By A. E. Waite (1854).

### Week 6 (February 17) Occultism and Utopianism

John Michael Greer, *A Magical Education*, Chapter 4: “Victorian Sex Magic.”

Paschal Beverly Randolph, selections from *Magia Sexualis* (1868).

## **First Participation Grade Report**

### Week 7 (February 24) Theosophy

Ezra Glintner, “Secret Doctrines.”

Helena Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, “Introductory” (1888).

### Week 8 (March 2) Fraternalism and Esotericism

John Treat, “Ham-Amun & Cush-Osiris as Guardians of the Ark: Ethiopia, Egypt, and Israel in the

Ritual Work of Moses Dickson.”

Moses Dickson and the Daughters of the Tabernacle, Saba Meroe Degree Ritual (1883).

Week 9 (March 9) The Golden Dawn: Mother of Magical Groups

Ronald Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon*, Chapter 5: “Finding a High Magic.”

Israel Regardie, *The Golden Dawn: A Complete Course in Practical Ceremonial Magic* (1989), Adeptus  
Minor Vault Ritual (1887-1937).

Week 10 (March 16) The Beast

Justin Scott Van Kleeck, “The Art of the Law: Aleister Crowley’s Use of Ritual and Drama,”  
*Esoterica*

V (2003): 193-99, 204-206.

Aleister Crowley, *The Book of the Law* (1904).

Aleister Crowley, *Liber XV* (The Gnostic Mass) (composite of texts of 1915, 1919, and 1929).

Week 11 (March 23) Spring Break: No Class

Week 12 (March 30) The Art of Chaos

Phil Baker, “Spare, Austin Osman,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

Austin Osman Spare, *A Book of Satyrs* (1907).

Austin Osman Spare, *The Zoëtic Grimoire of Zos* (c. 1927?).

### **Second Participation Grade Report**

Week 13 (April 5) Tarot as Divination and Meditation

A. E. Waite, selections from *The Pictorial Key to the Tarot* (1910).

Week 14 (April 12) Practical Magic and Imagination

Dion Fortune, selections from *What is Occultism* (2001).

Dion Fortune, selections from *Aspects of Occultism* (2000).

Dion Fortune, selections from *The Sea Priestess* (1938).

Week 15 (April 19) Wicca Announces Itself to the World

Ronald Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon*, Chapter 11: “Gerald’s Friends.”

Gerald Gardner, selections from *The Book of Shadows* (1949-1961).

Week 16 (April 26) Modern Paganism and the Women’s Movement

Doreen Valiente, selections from *Witchcraft for Tomorrow* (1978).

Margot Adler, selections from *Drawing Down the Moon* (1979).