School of Humanities

Department of History (History)

Special Topic

Witchcraft through the Ages

Miss Madeleine Harwood
Teaching Block 2
Unit Code HIST14024, 20 credits

Unit Description –
We are all familiar with the stereotypical representation of the witch and, with the advent of the Harry Potter phenomenon; we continue to be fascinated by these figures. Pointed hats, broomsticks, black cats and cauldrons are part of an image that young and old still both love and fear – to this day influencing such diverse outputs as the child-friendly ‘Worst Witch’ to the terrifying ‘Blair Witch’. But where have our contemporary perceptions come from?

This unit intends to discover and analyse historical representations of witchcraft in England since the Early Modern period. Through close engagement with a diverse range of sources, the unit aims to develop an understanding of the issues surrounding the subject, and how these have evolved over the years. It will make use of a wide range sources, including treatises, pamphlets, drama, news articles, art and media.

Contact Hours and Mode of Teaching:
10 x 2 hour seminars

Methods of Assessment:
1 x 2 hour exam (100%)

Essential Reading
Davies, Owen, Witchcraft, Magic and Culture, 1736-1951 (1999)
Gibson, Marion, Reading Witchcraft: Stories of Early English Witches (1999)
Sharpe, J. Witchcraft in Early Modern England (2001)

Further Information

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