



**HISTORY 497.01E: THE SALEM WITCH TRIALS
COURSE SYLLABUS: SPRING 2024**



T. H. Matteson, *The Trial of George Jacobs, August 5th, 1692* (1855)
Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts

Instructor: Associate Professor John Howard Smith
Class Location/Time: Sowers Education South 131 / MWF 12:00-12:50 p.m.
Office Location: Ferguson Social Sciences 117
Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m., or by appt.
University Email Address: John.Smith@tamuc.edu

COURSE INFORMATION

Course Prerequisites/Co-requisites: None

Materials – Textbooks, Readings, Supplementary Readings:

Textbooks Required:

- Emerson W. Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft: The Salem Trials and the American Experience*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015. ISBN13: 978-0-19-062780-5
- Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974. ISBN10: 0-674-78526-6
- Richard Godbeer, *The Salem Witch Hunt: A Brief History with Documents*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2011. ISBN13: 978-0-312-48455-2
- Carol F. Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1987. ISBN10: 0-393-31759-5
- Mary Beth Norton, *In the Devil's Snare: The Salem Witchcraft Crisis of 1692*. New York: Vintage Books, 2002. ISBN10: 0-375-70690-9

Supplemental Materials:

Documents available for download from D2L/Brightspace, or distributed in-class.

Course Description:

No event in the history of colonial America is more controversial or magnetic as the Salem Witchcraft Trials (1691-93), prompting historian Mary Beth Norton to refer to it as “the 800-pound gorilla” of colonial American history. However, the strangeness of the event does not come from our present-day assumption of early modern ignorance and Puritan superstitions, but rather from the fact that it was a strange event for the late seventeenth century itself—an anomaly. Through the study of the trial transcripts and related documents of the investigation, as well as a few of the landmark scholarly works on the events of 1691-93, students will learn about the Puritans’ worldview and the socio-political milieu that shaped their reactions to the events leading up to the trials, become intimately familiar with the dynamics of the episode from beginning to end, and assess the historiography of the Salem witch trials in both monographs and articles.

Student Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will be able to form substantive and evidence-driven arguments to propose solutions to problems or explain phenomena using appropriate primary and secondary sources.
2. Student communication will follow conventions of grammar and syntax appropriate to the audience, purpose and message.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Instructional / Methods / Activities Assessments

This course consists of a series of activities and assessments to assist students in achieving the outcomes/objectives for the course and instructional units/modules. Each week students will work on various combinations of readings, discussions, and research.

Attendance & Participation: (100 pts., 30% of course grade)Student Learning Outcomes nos. 1 & 2:

Participation in class discussions is intended to allow students to discuss substantively issues pertaining to the topics at hand, and will serve to inform the Instructor about how well students are absorbing course content. Facility in oral communication will thus be developed through these activities. Regular attendance to class is mandatory, and students intending to perform well in this aspect of the course must come to each class meeting prepared to discuss the day's subjects and ask pertinent questions about the material. Routine absences and/or distractive behavior will negatively impact the participation grade.

Readings Quizzes: (100 pts., 30% of course grade)Student Learning Outcomes nos. 1 & 2:

The readings quizzes are designed to test students' comprehension of the readings for each particular day a quiz is administered, testing the depth of their knowledge of the topic(s) at hand and their analytical skills. Administration will be random, and each quiz will take up no more than 10 minutes of class time at the beginning of each class period. Grading will be on a 0-10 point scale for each quiz, with a running average maintained through the semester that will be adjusted to a score from 0-100 at the end of the semester.

Case Analysis: (100 pts., 40% of course grade)Student Learning Outcomes nos. 1 & 2:

Students will be assigned a dossier of an accused witch containing exact transcripts of the Court of Oyer and Terminer's interrogations and accusers' depositions taken from Bernard Rosenthal, Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt. Students will use these documents, as well as the course readings, to write up an analysis of their accused witch's case that explains how and why they were accused, assess the evidence presented against them, and an explanation of why their case concluded as it did. Students will provided citations of all primary and secondary sources using footnotes, as explained by the Instructor.

Grading

Grading will be calculated using a standard 10-point scale, with course elements weighted accordingly:

90-100	A
80-89	B
70-79	C
60-69	D
0-59	F

Attendance & Participation (100 pts.)	30%
Case Analysis (100 pts.)	40%
Readings Quizzes (10 pts. each)	30%

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

As this course is web-enhanced through D2L/Brightspace, students are asked to follow these links for information about course enhancements:

LMS Requirements:

<https://community.brightspace.com/s/article/Brightspace-Platform-Requirements>

LMS Browser Support:

https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/brightspace/requirements/all/browser_support.htm

ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

This course will be facilitated using D2L/Brightspace, the Learning Management System used by Texas A&M University-Commerce. To get started with the course, go to: <https://leo.tamuc.edu/login.aspx>.

You will need your CWID and password to log in to the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact Technology Services at 903.468.6000 or helpdesk@tamuc.edu.

Consistent and reliable access to the Internet is a fundamental requirement for this course.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

Interaction with Instructor Statement:

Office hours are given at the top of this syllabus, and are posted outside of my door. Email is the most reliable method of reaching me outside of my office. Expect a reply within 24 to 36 hours, and replies will only be sent to students' LeoMail accounts. **Do not email me from a personal email account.**

If you are having technical difficulty with any part of D2L/Brightspace, please contact D2L/Brightspace Technical Support at 1-877-325-7778. Other support options can be found here:

<https://community.brightspace.com/support/s/contactsupport>

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

Academic Honesty

It is the policy of the University, the History Department, and the instructor that no form of plagiarism or cheating will be tolerated. Plagiarism is defined as the deliberate use of another's work and claiming it as one's own. This means ideas as well as text, whether paraphrased or presented verbatim (word-for-word). You are neither required nor expected to come up with original ideas about, or new interpretations of, the American Revolution. **Anyone caught cheating or plagiarizing will automatically fail the assignment in question, may summarily fail the course, and could be subject to disciplinary action by the University.** There is an easy way to avoid such a dire fate: take pride in your work, and please take full advantage of the instructor's abundant willingness to help you at every opportunity.

Likewise, no element of the course grade is negotiable or optional. *The instructor's evaluative judgment of tests and examinations is final, and will not be subject to revision except in cases of mathematical error.*

For more, see: [Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.03](#)

Class Decorum

All students must show respect toward the Instructor and the Instructor's syllabus, presentations, assignments, and point of view. Students should also respect each others'

differences. If the Instructor determines that a student is not being respectful toward other students or the Instructor, or is otherwise behaving in an inappropriate manner, it is the Instructor's prerogative to remove the student from the class either temporarily or permanently, as the case requires.

Please refrain from using cellphones during class. Food is not permitted in the classroom, though beverages are permitted. Noncompliance will result in deductions from the participation grade.

Note: Refusal to comply with any of the Instructor's policies will result in immediate deregistration from the course.

Nondiscrimination Notice

Texas A&M University-Commerce will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

Statement on Student Grievances

Students who have questions or concerns about the Instructor's course policies or the conduct either of the Instructor or a classmate should first consult with the Instructor. In the event of a lack of resolution or satisfaction on the matter, the student may bring their concerns to the head of the History Department, Sharon Kowalsky (Sharon.Kowalsky@tamuc.edu). If this does not result in a satisfactory conclusion to the matter, students may bring the issue to the attention of the Associate Dean of Students per procedures outlined on pp. 15-19 of the Student Guide Book.

"Campus Carry" Statement

Texas Senate Bill - 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in Texas A&M University-Commerce buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. **Pursuant to Penal Code 46.035 and Texas A&M University-Commerce Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations.** For a list of locations, please refer to (<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf>) and/or consult your event organizer. **Pursuant to Penal Code 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all A&M-Commerce campuses.** Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.

Statement on the Uses of Artificial Intelligence

Texas A&M University-Commerce acknowledges that there can be legitimate uses of Artificial Intelligence, ChatBots, or other software that has the capacity to generate text, or suggest replacements for text beyond individual words. **However, use of such tools cannot take the place of original composition on academic writing assignments, and therefore is expressly forbidden by the Instructor in this course.** Any discovered and confirmed use of such software constitutes an instance of academic dishonesty, and will result in the same penalties that attend cases of plagiarism. Students are fully responsible for the content of any assignment they submit, including cases in which A.I. was used, and especially in cases where

the A.I. software plagiarized another text and/or misattributed or otherwise misrepresented primary and/or secondary source materials. For further information please consult A&M-Commerce policy 13.99.99.R0.10: Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty.

University Specific Procedures:

Texas A&M-Commerce will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

ADA Statement

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services
Texas A&M University-Commerce
Waters Library 132
Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835
StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu
[Student Disability Resources & Services](#)

Student Conduct

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. (See *Code of Student Conduct from Student Guide Handbook*).

Mental Health Services

The Counseling Center at A&M-Commerce, located in the Halladay Building, Room 203, offers counseling services, educational programming, and connection to community resources for students. Students have 24/7 access to the Counseling Center's crisis assessment services by calling 903-886-5145. For more information regarding Counseling Center events and confidential services, please visit www.tamuc.edu/counsel.

COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR

Jan. 10-19: Introductions

Jan. 10: Course Introduction

Jan. 12: Salem as Symbol

Godbeer, *The Salem Witch Hunt*, Introduction (pp. 1-5)

Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, Introduction and chap. 1

Jan. 15: Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday—No Class Meeting

Jan. 17: The European Religious Background

Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith*, chap. 1 (handout)

Jan. 19: Puritanism in Old and New England

Joseph A. Conforti, *Saints and Strangers*, chap. 1 (pp. 33-53, handout)

Jan. 22-26: A World of Wonders

Jan. 22: A "World of Wonders", Part I

Godbeer, *The Salem Witch Hunt* (pp. 7-16, 37-38), docs. 1-5

Jan. 24: A "World of Wonders", Part II

Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, chap. 1

Godbeer, *The Salem Witch Hunt*, docs. 6-7

Jan. 26: Defining and Prosecuting Witchcraft in Seventeenth-Century America

Godbeer, *The Salem Witch Hunt* (pp. 25-29)

Jan. 29-Feb. 2: The City on a Hill

Jan. 29: Saints and Strangers

Conforti, *Saints and Strangers*, chaps. 1 (remainder) & 2 (handout)

Jan. 31: The Dominion of New England

Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, chap. 2 (to p. 56—stop at "five years later.")

Godbeer, *The Salem Witch Hunt*, doc. 8

Feb. 2: The Glorious Revolution and the Second Indian War

Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, chap. 2 (remainder)

Godbeer, *The Salem Witch Hunt*, doc. 9

Feb. 5-9: Salem Village vs. Salem Town

Feb. 5: Naumkeag

Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, chap. 3 (pp. 69-77)

Petition of the Salem Farmers to the General Court, 1670 (handout)

Feb. 7: A Poisoned Pulpit

Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, chap. 3 (pp. 78-89—stop at "and other chores.")

Petitions of Some Salem Villagers to the General Court, 20 Oct. & 25 Oct. 1679; Order of the General Court, 28 Oct. 1679 (handout)

Feb. 9: Enter Rev. Parris, Stage Left

Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, chap. 3 (remainder)

Samuel Parris, *Cursed Be He That Doeth the Work of the Lord Deceitfully* (1689)—handout

Feb. 12-16: Accusers and Accused

Feb. 12: Scandalous Persons

Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, chaps. 4-5

Godbeer, *The Salem Witch Hunt*, docs. 12-14, 28-31, 41

Feb. 14: Venomous and Malignant

Godbeer, *The Salem Witch Hunt*, docs. 15-18, 32, 42

Feb. 16: Raising Spirits

Godbeer, *The Salem Witch Hunt*, docs. 19, 33-35, 43, 61-62

Feb. 19-23: The Court of Oyer and Terminer

Feb. 19: "men of ordinary talent"

Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, chap. 6

Godbeer, *The Salem Witch Hunt*, docs. 20, 27, 36-40

Feb. 21: "expect the justice of exemplary punishment"

Godbeer, *The Salem Witch Hunt*, docs. 54, 60, 64-68, 70

Feb. 23: "guilty of innocent blood"

Godbeer, *The Salem Witch Hunt*, doc. 80

Feb. 26-Mar. 1:

Feb. 26: "that horrible and tremendous judgment"

Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, chap. 7

Godbeer, *The Salem Witch Hunt*, doc. 82-83, 85, 89

Feb. 28: "I cannot but condemn . . ."

Godbeer, *The Salem Witch Hunt*, docs. 86-88

Mar. 1: "It were better that Ten Suspected Witches should escape, than that one Innocent Person should be Condemned."

Increase Mather, *Cases of Conscience* (handout), pp. 32 (begin at "As for the judgment")-59 (stop at "the World of them.")

Mar. 4-8:

Mar. 4: "the Lord ordered the late horrid calamity"

Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, chap. 8

Godbeer, *The Salem Witch Hunt*, docs. 90-94

Mar. 6: "Hidden Works of Darkness"

Godbeer, *The Salem Witch Hunt*, docs. 95-99

Mar. 8: Case Analysis Instructions

Rosenthal, et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt* (handout), pp. 64-86

Mar. 11-15: Spring Break

Mar. 18-22: *Salem Possessed, Part I*

Mar. 18: Neighbors against Neighbors
Boyer and Nissenbaum, Prologue and chaps. 1-2

Mar. 20: Afflicted Village
Boyer and Nissenbaum, chap. 3

Mar. 22: Factional Conflict
Boyer and Nissenbaum, chap. 4

Mar. 25-29: *Salem Possessed, Part II*

Mar. 25: Two Families
Boyer and Nissenbaum, chaps.5-6

Mar. 27: A Pilgrim in Bethlehem?
Boyer and Nissenbaum, chap. 7

Mar. 29: The Lure of Madame Bubble
Boyer and Nissenbaum, chap. 8 and Epilogue

Apr. 1-5: *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman, Part I*

Apr. 1: "vehement suspissyon of her . . . famillyarryty with the devill"
Karlsen, chaps. 1-2

Apr. 3: "a distressed Widow and Orphanes"
Karlsen, chap. 3

Apr. 5: "the devil was in her"
Karlsen, chap. 4

Apr. 8-12: *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman, Part II*

Apr. 8: "joynt heirs of salvation"
Karlsen, chap. 5

Nov. 18: "a godly Commonwealth"
Karlsen, chap. 6

Nov. 20: "Brands pluck't out of the burning"
Karlsen, chap. 7 and Epilogue

Apr. 15-19: *In the Devil's Snare, Part I*

Apr. 15: "Under an Evil Hand"
Norton, Introduction and chaps. 1-2

Apr. 17: "Pannick at the Eastward"
Norton, chap. 3

Apr. 19: "The Dreadfull Apparition of a Minister"
Norton, chap. 4

Apr. 22-26: *In the Devil's Snare, Part II*

Apr. 22: "Endeavors of the Judges"
Norton, chaps. 5-7

Apr. 24: "All Sorts of Objections"
Norton, chap. 8

Apr. 26: "New Witch-Land"
Norton, Conclusion

Apr. 29: What Does It All Mean?

Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft*, chap. 9

Case Analysis Final Draft Due May 3**RESEARCH PAPER PARAMETERS AND POLICIES**

Format: The Case Analysis must be composed using Microsoft Word, with a file suffix of .doc or .docx. **No Adobe Acrobat (pdf) or Google Docs documents will be accepted.**

Length of Final Draft: 12-15 pp. (*excluding* the bibliography). ***Stiff penalties will be enforced for papers that are less than 10 pages in length. Do not include a title page.***

Format for Components: 1" margins all around, full justification of text, 12 pt. Times New Roman font for main text, 10 pt. Times New Roman for footnotes. See the Style Guide for greater details concerning mechanics.

Bibliography for the Rough Draft: No fewer than three (3) secondary sources (books and articles), and no fewer than seven (7) primary sources. Any of the course texts may be used—in fact, it is expected—and primary source documents from the *Salem Witch Hunt* text may be used and count as distinct sources.

Bibliography of Final Draft: No fewer than five (5) secondary sources (books and articles), and no fewer than ten (10) primary sources.

Citation of Sources: Footnotes or endnotes—no MLA or APA allowed!

The composition and submission of the two components of the Case Analysis (revised rough draft and final draft) will constitute the total grade for the paper project like so:

1. Rough Draft: 30 pts.
2. Final Draft: 70 pts.

I expect both components to be submitted ON TIME, and only the most extraordinary—and **documented**—excuses will lead me to allow late submissions without penalties. ***Failure to submit either component will result in a 0 for the assignment.***

Regarding the rough draft, this will be subjected to peer review, meaning that once collected, it will be redistributed to two or three of your classmates, whose job will be to read the draft and make whatever comments and suggestions they deem necessary. If a student suspects that any of his or her partners are less than diligent in editing their paper, please bring this to the attention of the Instructor.

Concerning Turnitin

All students' rough and final drafts of their paper will be run through Turnitin (www.turnitin.com), a web-based plagiarism detection program included in D2L/Brightspace. It scours the Worldwide Web and its database of all submissions (over 150 million so far) for

evidence of “lifted” material indicative of plagiarism, including signs of the use of Artificial Intelligence tools such as ChatGPT. It generates a report that notes the percentage of material that appears in other places, and highlights all examples along with the sources from which they came.

I do not employ this service based on a prior assumption of guilt or nefariousness on the student’s part, but rather as an aid to students learning how to avoid committing overt and incidental plagiarism, and students are asked to trust me to know how to use this service wisely and without prejudice. Please see Turnitin’s FAQ page for answers to how the service works, after which you may consult with me for further information and assurances.