

CAS RN 242/ HI 203 Fall 2018

Magic, Science, Religion



Illustration accompanying Maimonides' letter against astrology
15th-century Italian Hebrew manuscript known as the [Rothschild Miscellany](#)

Professor: Deeana Klepper

Office: 147 Bay State Road, Room 408

dklepper@bu.edu

Office Hours: Wed 1:30-3:00, Thurs 1:00-2:30, and by appointment

Course Description: This course explores the ways in which boundaries defining and separating magic, science, and religion emerged in western European thought and culture from antiquity through the “Enlightenment” of the eighteenth century, when the definitions as typically employed today were delineated. If, through the seventeenth century at least, the pursuit of scientific understanding and the pursuit of religious understanding were intimately connected, does that mean that there was no difference between science and religion? If

disciplines like astronomy, physics, and medical science were intertwined with astrology, alchemy, and necromancy, does that mean that there was no difference between science and magic? If wise men and women healed sickness with a range of botanical treatments, but they also enhanced those plant-based treatments with specific rituals of power drawn from Christian, Jewish, Muslim, or other traditions, should we understand those treatments as scientific, religious, or magical? How did ideas about God, nature, and the place of humanity in nature change over time? Drawing heavily on primary source texts, we will explore questions like these, bearing in mind distinctions across social, educational, gender, and religious lines. Our exploration will pay particular attention to fundamental assumptions underlying different approaches to knowledge building, which will help us both to appreciate the sophistication of ancient, medieval, and early modern European mentalities and to understand the distinctive character of modern modes of critical thinking. **This course satisfies BU Hub requirements in Philosophical Inquiry, Historical Consciousness, and Critical Thinking. See all learning outcomes for this course at the end of the schedule.**

Assignments and Grading Criteria:

- Much of the learning for this course will take place in the classroom, and so students are expected to attend all classes. Students have three “free” absences, which accommodates absences due to colds and minor illness, personal or family obligations, alarm clock fails, etc. More than three absences without an excuse will result in a 0 for the class participation grade. Serious illness or injury, family emergency, travel for official BU business, and religious observance are all legitimate reasons for absence, and they do not count against the three "free" absences. If you know that you will miss class because you are sick or are away from school for an emergency, please let me know at your earliest convenience.
- Graded work for the class will consist of two short (4- to 5-page) analytical papers, weekly pass-fail reading quizzes (there are 11 on the syllabus, and I will drop one, which gives you a cushion), a midterm exam, and a final exam. In addition, there will also be a grade for participation, which will be based on attendance, preparation of materials for class, and general engagement in the course. Class discussion, and the short analytical papers provide an opportunity to develop critical thinking; the exams assess learning in both historical context and philosophical inquiry; and the essay portion of the exams provide an opportunity for students to apply the historical awareness they have gained to construct their own historical narratives. Weekly reading quizzes ensure that you are keeping up with and understanding the readings, which is necessary in order to build an understanding of the big themes of our course.

Final grades will be determined as follows:

- 5% for class participation
- 10% for the weekly reading quizzes
- 20% for each of the short papers
- 20% for the midterm exam
- 25% for the final.

Grading Scale

Grade	Range	Grade	Range
A	94-100	C+	77-79
A-	90-93	C	74-77
B+	87-89	C-	70-73
B	84-86	D	60-69
B-	80-83	F	1-59

Community of Learning: Class and University Policies

Classroom Etiquette: Late arrivals are distracting so please do your best to be on time. For the same reason, I ask that students only leave the room in the middle of class if it is absolutely necessary. If you know that you will need to leave class early for some reason, please sit near the door and try to exit as quietly as possible. Laptops seem to be a constant source of distraction in the classroom and many studies have now shown that students remember more and perform better in class when they take notes by hand rather than using a computer. I discourage their use in class, but I recognize that some students really do best when they can type their notes or look up terms in the moment that they do not recognize, so I do not ban them outright. However, I will ask you to be respectful of me and other members of the class and avoid using your laptop for things not related to our work.

Honesty and Fairness: All students should familiarize themselves with the Boston University [Academic Conduct Code](#) and adhere to it. Please note that I am **required** to report all cases of academic misconduct to the CAS dean's office.

Make-up Exams: I will only give a make-up exam if a student misses a test because of a *serious* medical problem, family emergency, or official university business. (I will avoid scheduling exams on religious holidays; if I've made an error in scheduling, please let me know as soon as you notice.) In all cases where you know in advance about a conflict, let me know as soon as possible. In the interest of fairness I will follow university policy with respect to scheduling final exams and will hold the final on the date specified by the registrar. Therefore, please do not plan end of semester travel until you know when our final exam will be held.

Students with Disabilities: Any student with a documented disability who requires academic accommodations should contact [Disability Services](#) as soon as possible to request an official letter outlining authorized accommodations. If you suspect that you may have an undiagnosed disability that is interfering with your success in your coursework (or your life), I encourage you to make an appointment with Disability Services to see what options are available to you. You are also welcome to come see me during office hours and I will direct you to the appropriate resources at BU.

Reading: Biblical Texts on Sorcery, Magic, and Miracle from the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament [Blackboard]; The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles Peter and Paul, excerpts [Blackboard]; Augustine of Hippo, *City of God* and *On Christian Doctrine*, in Otto and Stausberg, *Defining Magic*, pp. 33-40

Reading Quiz #1

Tues Sept 25: Paganism, Christianization, & Magic in Early Medieval Europe

Reading: Kieckhefer, *Magic*, Chapter 3; Gregory of Tours, Eight Books of Miracles and Books 6 and 10 of *History of the Franks*, reprinted in Rampton, *European Magic and Witchcraft*, pp. 102-104; Anglo-Saxon Charms, reprinted in Rampton, *European Magic and Witchcraft*, pp. 165-168 [Blackboard]

Tuesday, September 25, first paper due, 11:59 PM

Thur Sept 27: Learning, Science, & the Church in the Early Middle Ages

Reading: Richard C. Dales, *The Scientific Achievement of the Middle Ages*, Introduction and Chapter 1; [Richer of Rheims' Journey to the School at Chartres](#) (10th century)

Reading Quiz #2

Tues Oct 2: Twelfth-Century Learning & Arabic Science in Muslim Lands

Reading: A. Ede and L. Cormack, eds., *A History of Science in Society*, 57-73; Excerpts from Maimonides, "Guide of the Perplexed" [Blackboard]; Baghdad in the eleventh-century [Blackboard]

Thurs Oct 4: Twelfth-Century Learning & Arabic Science in Christian Lands

Reading: Kieckhefer, 116-119; Dales, *Scientific Achievement*, Chapter 2 (Adelard of Bath); Excerpt from Peter Abelard, *Sic et Non* [Blackboard]; Stephen of Tournai, An Invective Against the New Learning [Blackboard]; [Jacques de Vitry's description of students](#)

Reading Quiz #3

Tues Oct 9: Monday Schedule: No class

Thurs Oct 11: Observing the Natural World: Experimental Science

Reading: Dales, *Scientific Achievement*, Chapter 3 (Robert Grosseteste); Roger Bacon, *On Experimental Science* [Blackboard]

Reading Quiz #4

Tues Oct 16: Commerce, Global Exchange, and Scientific/Magical/Religious Objects in the 13th Century

Reading: Sharon Kinoshita, *Marco Polo: The Description of the World*

Thurs Oct 18: Midterm Exam in class

Tues Oct 23: Medieval Medicine and Healing

Reading: A female doctor brought to trial in Paris [Blackboard]; Nancy Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine*, Chapters 1 & 2 [Blackboard]

Thurs Oct 25: Astronomy, Astrology, and Astral Magic

Reading: Kieckhefer, 120-133; Dales, *Scientific Achievement*, Chapter 7 (Nicholas Oresme, John Buridan) and also Chapter 8, pp. 139-146; 151 (last two lines on page)-157 (Daniel Morley, Marius); Marsilio Ficino: *Three Books of Life* [Blackboard]

Reading Quiz #5

Tues Oct 30: Alchemy and Alchemists

Reading: Kieckhefer, 133-139; Roger Bacon, excerpts from *Radix mundi (Root of the world)*, in Stanton J. Linden, *The Alchemy Reader*, 111-122 [Blackboard]

Thurs Nov 1: Practical Magic: Thirteenth to Fifteenth Centuries

Reading: Kieckhefer, Ch. 4; Stephen of Bourbon's account of the cult of the Holy Greyhound (St. Guinefort) [Blackboard]

Reading Quiz #6

Tues Nov 6: "Book" Magic: Thirteenth to Fifteenth Centuries

Reading: Kieckhefer, 140-144 and Ch. 7; Honorius of Thebes, *The Sworn Book* [Blackboard]

Thurs Nov 8: Legal Processes Against Magic

Reading: Kieckhefer, Ch. 8; Introduction to *The Trial of Tempel Anneke: Records of a Witchcraft Trial in Brunswick, Germany, 1663*, Peter Morton, ed., Barbara Dähms, trans.

Reading Quiz #7

Tues Nov 13: From Sorceress to Witch: Religion, Science, and Magic in the Time of the Witch Trials

Reading: Documents from the witchcraft trial of Tempel Anneke, pp.

Thurs Nov 15: From Sorceress to Witch: Religion, Science, and Magic in the Time of the Witch Trials

Reading: Documents from the witchcraft trial of Tempel Anneke, pp.

Reading Quiz #8

Thursday, November 15, second paper due, 11:59 PM

Tues Nov 20: From Magic to Science

Reading: Kieckhefer, 144-150; Brian Copenhaver, excerpts from the Hermetic corpus [Blackboard]; Cornelius Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, excerpts from Otto and Stausberg, *Defining Magic*, pp. 54-58

Reading Quiz #9

Thurs Nov 22: Happy Thanksgiving! No class!

Tues Nov 27: Scientific Revolution

Reading: Steven Shapin, *The Scientific Revolution*, pp. 1-8 and 15-64

Thurs Nov 29: Galileo Galilei: Reading the Book of Nature

Reading: Shapin, pp. 65-80; 135-142; Galileo's Letter to the Grand Duchess Christina [Blackboard]

Reading Quiz #10

Tues Dec 4: Francis Bacon and the New Atlantis: Science as a Collective Endeavor

Reading: Francis Bacon, excerpts from *New Atlantis* and *The Great Instauration* [Blackboard]

Thurs Dec 6: Isaac Newton: Mechanism, Mathematics, and "Occult" Forces

Reading: John Henry, "Newton, Matter, and Magic" [Blackboard] ; Isaac Newton, [General Scholium](#), published as an appendix to the second edition of the *Principia Mathematica* (1713)

Reading Quiz #11

Tues Dec 11: The Enlightened Rationalist in a Superstitious World

Reading: Voltaire, *Zadig* ; Voltaire, "Philosophical Letters" on Newton [Blackboard]; Lauren Gunderson's [webpage on the Marquise Emilie du Châtelet](#)

Final Exam to be held according to registrar's schedule

∞∞∞∞∞∞∞∞∞∞∞∞∞∞∞∞∞∞

Course Objectives and Their Relationship to BU Hub Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, you can expect to be able to:

1. Discuss the relationship between science and religion in ancient, medieval, and early modern contexts and devise sound arguments about contemporary implications. (Meets BU Hub learning outcomes in Historical Consciousness and Critical Thinking).
2. Recognize the human construction of knowledge and assumptions about truth as an aspect of culture, historically and in our own day, and utilize this awareness to analyze worldviews and cosmologies different from your own. (Meets BU Hub learning outcome 2 in Philosophical Inquiry and both learning outcomes in Critical Thinking).
3. Demonstrate knowledge of and draw connections among predominate natural philosophical positions underpinning European intellectual traditions (e.g., Platonic, Aristotelian, Neoplatonic, Mechanistic, etc.), track their use in the work of key natural philosophers and scientists, and compare the forms of reasoning utilized by various thinkers (Meets BU Hub learning outcomes in Philosophical Inquiry and Critical Thinking).
4. Demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of key approaches to magic in ancient, medieval, and early modern contexts, whether articulated or implied, literate or illiterate, encouraged or forbidden, and employ strategies of critical thinking to draw connections with religious and scientific traditions in that same environment. (Meets BU Hub learning outcomes in Historical Consciousness and Critical Thinking).

5. Master vocabulary necessary to understand and discuss Greco-Roman, Germanic, Christian, Jewish, and Muslim theologies, cosmologies, and ritual practices; utilize that vocabulary to read and interpret primary source material. (Meets BU Hub learning outcome 2 in Historical Consciousness).
6. Master vocabulary necessary to discuss and understand changing ways of thinking about God, nature, humanity, and the cosmos in European and Mediterranean contexts (e.g., authority, epistemology, empiricism, microcosm, macrocosm, etc.) (Meets BU Hub learning outcome 2 in Philosophical Inquiry and learning outcome 1 in Critical Thinking.)
7. Map and describe the global context of European religious and intellectual culture, especially cultural exchange with Asia and Africa. (Meets BU Hub learning outcomes in Historical Consciousness).

The following BU Hub Learning Outcomes will be met through our pursuit of the Course Objectives outlined above:

PHILOSOPHICAL, AESTHETIC, AND HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION: Philosophical Inquiry and Life's Meaning

- 1) *Students will demonstrate knowledge of notable works in philosophical thought, make meaningful connections among them, and be able to relate those works to their own lives and those of others.*
- 2) *Students will demonstrate the reasoning skills and possess the vocabulary to reflect upon significant philosophical questions and topics such as what constitutes a good life, right action, meaningful activity, knowledge, truth, or a just society.*

PHILOSOPHICAL, AESTHETIC, AND HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION: Historical Consciousness

- 1) *Students will create historical narratives, evaluate interpretations based on historical evidence, and construct historical arguments.*
- 2) *Students will demonstrate an ability to interpret primary source material (textual, visual, or aural) using a range of interpretive skills and situating the material in its historical and cultural context.*
- 3) *Students will demonstrate knowledge of religious traditions, intellectual paradigms, forms of political organization, or socio-economic forces, and how these have changed over time.*

INTELLECTUAL TOOLKIT: Critical Thinking

- 1) *Students will be able to identify key elements of critical thinking, **such as** habits of distinguishing deductive from inductive modes of inference, recognizing common logical fallacies and cognitive biases, translating ordinary language into formal argument, distinguishing empirical claims about matters of fact from normative or evaluative judgments, and recognizing the ways in which emotional responses can affect reasoning*

processes.

2) Drawing on skills developed in class, students will be able to evaluate the validity of arguments, including their own.