

21A.211
Essay assignment: The Great Witch Hunt

Due in Class November 25

Write an essay of not less than five double-spaced typed pages that discusses the witch hunt in Europe and Salem Village, bringing out some of the key issues and problems in our understanding. Consider similarities and differences between Salem and Europe. You may also consider what we do *not* yet know, and how the available evidence and different approaches affect our understanding.

Write on not less than three or more than five of the following points. ***You must write on numbers 1 and 2.***

1. social conflicts and value conflicts concerned with economic change, social mobility, charity, and dependence
2. gender roles and accusations against women. (Do ***not*** base your answer solely on Levack's weak discussion of this topic.)
3. images of witchcraft in learned demonology, their evolution, differences from the witch fears of ordinary people and consequences in witch hunting. How demonology was developed and interpreted by scholars, lawyers, and religious leaders.
4. the nature of evidence and legal procedures and political controls or lack thereof over witch trials
5. how witchcraft fears expressed or were influenced by tensions and changes in the world of the accusers
6. the cycles or processes or stages that witch-hunting went through, the kinds of events that set them off, and the place of resistance and skepticism
7. the relative importance of elites and ordinary people, in terms of witchcraft beliefs, pressure to prosecute witches, and the actual carrying out of witch trials

In lectures and class discussions I introduced material not found in the readings and which in a number of instances contradicts or qualifies the readings. You are responsible for this class material, at least for the most important points, though not all the detail.

In your essay, precision and specificity about ideas and facts matter. Better to go back to your sources (readings, class notes) than to be vague or sloppy. Cite your sources specifically. You do not have to accept everything your sources say (even lectures). The more you can discuss the material critically, showing original thought, the better.