

21A.211

Study Questions on the European Witch Hunt
Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*
Chapters by Robin Briggs, Deborah Willis

How did different aspects of witch beliefs come together in one stereotype? How did they affect the course of the witch trials?

What were the key changes in law and legal procedure that made the witch hunt possible? What was the role of *weakness* in political and judicial systems?

What were the differences between secular legal procedures on the European continent and those found in England and the Inquisition, and why were they important?

What was the unholy synergy between prosecutors on the one hand and theologians and legal scholars on the other? between torture and the development of the witch stereotype?

In what ways did religion in this period, and especially changes in belief and conflict between Catholics and Protestants affect the witch trials? In what ways was religion irrelevant?

Where did the impetus for witch hunting come from? Who pushed or resisted?---the upper classes, lower classes, both?

What does Levack see as the social profile of accused witches? How does he explain the predominance of women among the accused? Do you think his explanation is adequate? How do the points of view of Willis and Briggs differ from Levack concerning gender? Why does Willis emphasize the role of mother?

How is witch hunting connected to village economic relations, especially gifts, loans, and charity? Do we have any ideas today about curses and blessings from beggars?

What are the dynamics of witch hunting: how were hunts set off, and how did they progress?

How did people resist or cast doubt on witch hunts? Was resistance effective? (Important material on this question not in the readings will be introduced in class.) How could people call on science/religion/humanistic studies/psychology to counter witch accusations?

Why did the trials end, either in one locality or in Europe more generally?

What do changes through time and differences from one country and region to another tell us about the nature of the witch craze? How do they help us figure out causes and dynamics?