Course delivery with respect to the COVID-19 pandemic

Although the intent is for this course to be delivered in-person, the changing COVID-19 landscape may necessitate some or all of the course to be delivered online, either synchronously (i.e., at the times indicated in the timetable) or asynchronously (e.g., posted on OWL for students to view at their convenience). The grading scheme will not change. Any assessments affected will be conducted online as determined by the course instructor.

History 4713G 550: Spiritualism, Seances and the Occult

Dr. Amy Bell Huron University College 2022

Email: abell44@uwo.ca

Class Time: Tuesdays 12:30-2:30, W102

Office Hours: Appointments via Zoom or phone

BACKGROUND:

This course explores the popular Spiritualist movement of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in American, Canada and Great Britain. The movement centered on the belief that life continued after bodily death, and that the spirits of these departed souls could be contacted via trained psychics called mediums during seances. Spiritualism attracted the religiously unfulfilled, grief-stricken relatives of the dead, scientists eager to make new discoveries about the afterlife, women yearning for power and status as mediums and those excited by the theatricality offered by the séance room. This course centres on the questions: what certainties did spiritualists hope to discover, and what frauds did their detractors try to unmask?

Beginning with the famous spirit "knockings" produced by the Fox sisters in New York in 1848, the course traces the spread of spiritualism from the US to the UK and Canada, focusing on séances and the manifestation of occult phenomena. We will examine the works of spiritualist believers and those who sought to research, document, and in some cases expose spiritualists as fraudulent. Topics will include The Society for Psychical Research (SPR), founded in 1886 to investigate paranormal phenomena, spirit photography, the séance room and its manifestations, and famous mediums such as Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831-1891) the founder of Theosophy, Daniel Dunglas Home (1833-1886), Dion Fortune

(1891-1946), founder of The Society of the Inner Light, and Helen Duncan (1897-1956) the last woman to be tried in England under the Witchcraft Act of 1735.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, you should be able to:

- 1. Critically analyze the specific themes of spiritualism, occult and the search for meaning within the broad context of nineteenth and twentieth-century American, Canadian and British history;
- 2. Outline the importance of the spiritualist movement within its contemporary social, scientific, philosophical and cultural context;
- 3. Display close reading and writing skills that will equip you for advanced study; effectively organize your time and meet deadlines;
- 4. Conduct original research using primary and secondary materials, and confidently present your research findings orally and in writing;
- 5. Develop and defend historical arguments by finding your own voice as an historian.

Assignments:

Primary Source Assignment 25% Friday, **Feb. 18** by 11 p.m. Dates Vary Participation 20% Weekly Film Response 10% Monday, **March 14**, by 11 p.m. Friday, **April 8**, by 11 p.m.

All your written assignments will be submitted through OWL.

Required Texts:

Film: *Harry Price, Ghost Hunter* (Student is required to source this: available via Amazon Prime, or DVD rental via Jumbo Video).

Matthew Tompkins, *The Spectacle of Illusion: Deception, Magic and the Paranormal* (2019), available at Western Bookstore.

Other articles are available via OWL, as marked.

Academic Integrity

All your work, including any reading responses, must be based on your own research and in your own words. All assignments will be checked through the anti-plagiarism software Turnitin. The usual penalties for academic offenses will apply.

Late Penalties and Last Day to Submit: Late assignments are penalized 2% per day, including weekends. Essays must be submitted within a week of the deadline; no essays will be accepted after the seventh day (unless the student has been granted Academic Consideration). No late final paper/take-home exams will be accepted. Students must complete the written assignments to pass essay courses. If the written assignments are not handed in, the default grade will be 48% or the cumulative average of the student, whichever is lower.

Academic Consideration: All requests for consideration must first go through Academic counsellors in appropriate Faculty Dean's Office. In-class participation cannot be accommodated.

There are three systems of Academic Consideration at Western/Huron:

- Requests for consideration through Academic Counselling for short and medium-term concerns: https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/academic considerations/
- 3) and longer-term accommodations through Accessible Education: http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible education/index.html

No matter which system the student is registered with, they must contact the course instructor with a request to accommodate within 24 hours of the assignment deadline. It is the prerogative of the instructor to decide the academically appropriate accommodation for that specific course and assignment. Please note that Western's Academic Handbook, Rights and Responsibilities, Accommodation for Students with Disabilities, Section 2 defines "Reasonable Academic Accommodation" as "a form of academic accommodation that addresses the limitations experienced by a student with disabilities in a manner that allows them to meet the essential requirements of a course or program of study, without resulting in undue hardship to the University. There will often be a range of reasonable academic accommodations available, and a student might not be entitled to their preferred accommodation."

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic policies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodation disabilities.pdf

Assignments

Participation: 20% Weekly

Students will gain participation marks by making substantive comments on the course material in class discussion, forums, and comments on other students' presentations. Participation will be marked on ten of the eleven seminars- students have one free pass to miss class with no explanation or notice required (unless the student is presenting that week).

Primary Source Paper 25% Friday, **Feb. 18** by 11 p.m.

For this assignment, students will choose and analyse a relevant primary source, book or pamphlet, 1840-1955, from the Weldon library, or online from the Spiritualism, Sensation and Magic collection through the *Victorian Popular Culture* Database: https://www-victorianpopularculture-amdigital-co-uk.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/Documents/Landing

and place it in the historiographical context of the course. The final paper should be 2,000- 2,500 words (8-10 double spaced pages), and be written in scholarly form, with footnotes or endnotes in the History Department (Chicago) format. Full instructions are on OWL. The source must be chosen by **January 25**, and emailed to the professor for approval.

Primary Source Presentation 15% Dates Vary

Students will sign up to give a ten-minute presentation on their chosen primary source to the class, in Weeks 5-13. Presentations should give a preliminary analysis of the source and its relevance to the course, and engage the other students in discussion. If a student is unable to present on their chosen day, they cannot reschedule and will get partial marks by handing in the written portion of the presentation. If the class is still online by Week 4, the presentations will shift to recorded videos posted to Voice Thread.

Film Analysis

10% Monday **March 14**, by 11 p.m.

Students will compare the film "Harry Price: Ghost Hunter" (2015) and Harry Price Interview (1936) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u6I0JtOQMAA to assess how they represents spiritualism, ghosts and psychic research. Full instructions are on OWL.

Final Paper (Take-Home Exam) 30% Friday **April 8**, by 11 p.m.

Students will be given an essay question to answer with reference to the course readings, themes and discussions. No outside research is required or permitted. No late exams accepted.

Class Schedule:

January 11

Week 1: Introduction (Lecture on Voice Thread)

Discussion on Zoom: 12:30

January 18

Week 2: The Early Spiritualists (Lecture on Voice Thread)

Discussion on Zoom: 12:30

Read: The Spectacle of Illusion: Introduction and Act One: Early Mesmeric

and Spiritualist Phenomenon, pp. 14-51.

And:

Peter Lamont, "Spiritualism and a Mid-Victorian Crisis of Evidence" *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 47, No. 4 (Dec., 2004), pp. 897-920. [OWL]

January 25

Week 3: Magicians, Seances and Power (Lecture on Voice Thread)

Discussion on Zoom: 12:30

Read: The Spectacle of Illusion: Act Two: The Master Magicians, pp. 52-101.

And:

Alex Owen, *The Darkened Room: Women, Power, and Spiritualism in Late Victorian England* (1989), Chapter 3: Star Mediumship: Light and Shadows, pp. 41-75. [OWL]

***Choose primary source document by today (email professor).

February 1

Week 4: Psychic Research and the SPR

Read: Henry Sidgwick, "Inaugural Address to the Society for Psychical Research", 1882 [OWL]

And:

The Spectacle of Illusion: Act Three: The Psychical Researchers, pp. 106-163.

Watch: 1906 film "The Medium Exposed"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A7-LLOVq3xk

*Primary Source Presentations 1

February 8

Week 5: Exposing Frauds: Helena Blavatsky and the Hogdson Report

Read: *The Spectacle of Illusion:* Act Four: The Parapsychological Researchers, 164-195.

And:

Janet Oppenheim, *The Other World: Spiritualism and Psychical Research in England, 1850–1914*. (Cambridge University Press, 1988) Chapter 5: Theosophy and the Occult, pp. 159-185. [OWL]

*Primary Source Presentations 2

February 15

Week 6: Spirit Photography

Read: Simone Natale, *Supernatural Entertainments* (2016): Chapter 6: "The Marvels of Superimposition: Spirit Photography and Spiritualism's Visual Culture" pp. 135-169. [OWL] *Primary Source Presentations 3

*****Primary Source Paper due Friday, February 18 by 11 pm.

February 22

Week 7: Reading Week

March 1

Week 8: 1930s Psychic Research

Read: Joanna Timms, "Ghost-Hunters and Psychical Research in Interwar England," *History Workshop Journal*, 74, (Autumn 2012), pp. 88-104. [OWL] *Primary Source Presentations 4

March 8

Week 9: No Class Meeting.

Watch: Harry Price: Ghost Hunter (2015) and Harry Price Interview (1936). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u6I0JtOQMAA

***** **Film Analysis** due Monday, **March 14**, by 11 p.m.

March 15

Week 10: Helen Duncan

Read: Simon Featherstone, "Spiritualism as Popular Performance in the 1930s: the Dark Theatre of Helen Duncan," *New Theatre Quarterly*, 27:2 (May 2011), 141-152. [OWL]

*Primary Source Presentations 5

March 22

Week 11: World War Two and Dion Fortune

Read: Dion Fortune, *The Magical Battle of Britain*, ed. Gareth Knight, pp. 1-24, pp. 60-64. [OWL]

*Primary Source Presentations 6

March 29

Week 12: Poltergeists in London

Listen: "The Enfield Poltergeist" (45 minutes) *BBC: The Reunion* Sue MacGregor reunites a group of witnesses to the Enfield Poltergeist, a strange series of 'paranormal events' which started to occur at a council house in north London in 1977.

https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b09yck6b

*Primary Source Presentations 7

April 5

Week 13: Conclusion

Read: The Spectacle of Illusion: Act Five: The Psychology of Illusion, pp. 196-213, and Coda pp. 214-217.

*Primary Source Presentations 8

***** Final Paper (Take Home Exam) Due Friday April 8 by 11 p.m. No late papers accepted.

RULES AND REGULATIONS

The History Department has specified that:

- 1. All written assignments are to be submitted electronically following your professor's instructions. Students are responsible for making sure they are familiar with each professor's policy on electronic submissions.
- 2. Footnotes, endnotes and bibliographies are to be prepared according to the Departmental Guide (which follows).
- 3. Late marks are calculated on the paper copy submitted to OWL Late penalties are calculated according to calendar day, including Saturdays.
- 4. In first and second year courses lateness will be penalized as follows: First day late -- 3 marks deduction. Each subsequent calendar day late -- 2 marks per day deduction.
- 5. Third and fourth year seminars will be penalized for lateness at the rate of half a grade (5%) per day.
- 6. No paper or seminar will be accepted if it is more than seven calendar days late.
- 7. Extensions will only be given for assignments **worth more than 10%** with medical documentation submitted through Academic Counseling.
- 8. Students must complete the written assignments worth more than 10% to pass essay courses. If the written assignments are not handed in, the default grade will be 48% or the cumulative average of the student, whichever is lower.

Guide to Footnotes and Bibliographies: Huron History Department

Footnotes have several purposes in a history paper:

- 1- They acknowledge your use of other peoples' opinions and ideas.
- 2- They allow the reader to immediately find your reference.
- 3- They give authority for a fact which might be questioned.
- 4- They tell the reader when a source was written.

Footnotes can appear either at the bottom of the page or collected together at the end of the essay where they are referred to as endnotes. The numeral indicating the footnotes should come at the end of the quotation or the sentence, usually as a superscript. ¹

¹ They should be in Arabic, not Roman numerals or letters.

A footnote gives four main pieces of information which are set off by commas in the following order:

- 1. Author (surname *after* initials or first name),
- 2. Title
 - o The title of a book is underlined or written in *italics*.
 - The title of an article is put within quotation marks, followed by the periodical in which it was published, underlined or in *italics*
- 3. Place and date of publication in parentheses (),
 - o A fuller reference will include the publisher after the place of publication.
 - o Article citations do not include the place of publication and publisher.
 - 4. Page number (including volume number if necessary)

For example:

¹J.M.S. Careless, *Canada*, *A Story of Challenge* (Toronto, Macmillan Co. of Canada, 1970), 207.

²Basil Davidson, "Questions about Nationalism", *African Affairs* 76 (1977), 42.

In subsequent references, a shorter reference can be used. It should include the author's last name, a meaningful short title, and page numbers. For example:

³Careless, Canada, 179-206.

Where the reference is *exactly* the same as the preceding one, the Latin abbreviation *ibid*. can be used; where it is the same, but the page number is different, use *ibid*., followed by the relevant page number. However, the short title form is preferable for subsequent references and the use of other Latin abbreviations such as *op.cit*. is not recommended.

Examples:

a) for a book by a single author: Author, title (place of publication: press, year), p#.

Elizabeth Wilson, *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 324.

b) for an article in a book that has chapters by different people: Author, "title of chapter," in title of book, ed. editor's name (place of publication: press, year), total pages of article, page number you are referencing.

Elizabeth Heinemann, "The Hour of the Woman: Memories of Germany's 'Crisis Years' and West German National Identity," in *The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany*, 1949-1968, ed. Hanna Schissler (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 21-56, 34.

c) for an article in a journal, magazine, or newspaper: Author, "title of article," title of periodical, vol. #, issue # (year): total pages, the page you are referencing.

Gale Stokes, "The Social Origins of East European Politics," *Eastern European Politics and Societies* 1, 1 (1987): 30-74, 65.

d) for an old work that has been reissued: Try to find a way to include the original publication date somewhere. The easiest method is to use brackets.

Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Trans. and ed. James Strachey (New York: Avon Books, 1965 [1900]), 175.

Bibliography

All the works you consulted, not just those cited in the footnotes, should be included in the bibliography. You may be required to prepare an annotated bibliography, in which you comment on the contents, utility, or worth of each source. If so, make sure you understand what the instructor expects, in particular the length as well as the nature of each annotation.

Generally, list the sources in alphabetical order, by author. The format for a bibliography is similar to that for footnotes, except that the author's surname *precedes* the other names and initials, periods instead of commas are used to divide the constituent parts, publication data is not put in brackets, and pages numbers are not included except in the case of articles where the full page reference is necessary. For example:

Careless, J.M.S. *The Union of the Canadas. The Growth of Canadian Institutions* 1841-1857. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1967.

Davidson, Basil. "Questions about Nationalism". African Affairs 76 (1977), 39-46.

Sources: University of Toronto Guide to Undergraduate Essays. http://www.history.utoronto.ca/undergraduate/essays.html#footnotes. Accessed October 22, 2012.

Professor Julie Hessler's Guide to Footnotes: http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~hessler/. Accessed October 22, 2012.



Appendix to Course Outlines: Academic Policies & Regulations 2021 - 2022

Mandatory Use of Masks in Classrooms

Students will be expected to wear triple layer non-medical masks at all times in the classroom as per Huron policy and public health directives. Students are now permitted to drink water in class by lifting and replacing the mask each time a drink is taken. Students will be able to eat and drink outside of the classroom during scheduled breaks.

Students unwilling to wear a mask as stipulated by Huron policy and public health directives will be referred to the Dean's Office, and such actions will be considered a violation of the Huron Student Code of Conduct.

Pandemic Contingency

In the event of a COVID-19 resurgence during the course that necessitates the course delivery moving away from face-to-face interaction, all remaining course content will be delivered entirely online, typically using a combination of synchronous instruction (i.e., at the times indicated in the timetable) and asynchronous material (e.g., posted on OWL for students to view at their convenience). Any remaining assessments will also be conducted online at the discretion of the course instructor. In the unlikely event that changes to the grading scheme are necessary, these changes will be clearly communicated as soon as possible.

Student Code of Conduct

Membership in the community of Huron University College and Western University implies acceptance by every student of the principle of respect for the rights, responsibilities, dignity and well-being of others and a readiness to support an environment conducive to the intellectual and personal growth of all who study, work and live within it. Upon registration, students assume the responsibilities that such registration entails. While in the physical or online classroom, students are expected to behave in a manner that supports the learning environment of others. Please review the Student Code of Conduct at: https://huronatwestern.ca/sites/default/files/Res%20Life/Student%20Code%20of%20Conduct%20-%20Revised%20September%202019.pdf.

Prerequisite and Antirequisite Information

Students are responsible for ensuring that they have successfully completed all course prerequisites and that they have not completed any course antirequisites. Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Attendance Regulations for Examinations

A student is entitled to be examined in courses in which registration is maintained, subject to the following limitations:

1) A student may be debarred from writing the final examination for failure to maintain satisfactory academic standing throughout the year.

2) Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course (after due warning has been given). On the recommendation of the Department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course. The Dean of the Faculty offering the course will communicate that decision to the Dean of the Faculty of registration.

Review the policy on Attendance Regulations for Examinations here: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/exam/attendance.pdf.

Statement on Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following website: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf. The appeals process is also outlined in this policy as well as more generally at the following website: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/appealsundergrad.pdf.

Turnitin.com

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (http://www.turnitin.com).

Statement on Use of Electronic Devices

It is not appropriate to use electronic devices (such as, but not limited to, laptops, cell phones) in the classroom for non-classroom activities. Such activity is disruptive and distracting to other students and to the instructor, and can inhibit learning. Students are expected to respect the classroom environment and to refrain from inappropriate use of technology and other electronic devices in class.

Statement on Use of Personal Response Systems ("Clickers")

Personal Response Systems ("clickers") may be used in some classes. If clickers are to be used in a class, it is the responsibility of the student to ensure that the device is activated and functional. Students must see their instructor if they have any concerns about whether the clicker is malfunctioning. Students must use only their own clicker. If clicker records are used to compute a portion of the course grade:

- the use of somebody else's clicker in class constitutes a scholastic offence
- the possession of a clicker belonging to another student will be interpreted as an attempt to commit a scholastic offence.

Academic Consideration for Missed Work

Students who are seeking academic consideration for missed work during the semester may submit a self-reported absence form online provided that the absence is **48 hours or less** and the other conditions specified in the Senate policy at

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_illness.pdf are met.

Students whose absences are expected to last **longer than 48 hours**, or where the other conditions detailed in the policy are not met (e.g., work is worth more than 30% of the final grade, the student has already used 2 self-reported absences, the absence is during the final exam period), may receive academic consideration by submitting a Student Medical Certificate (for illness) or other appropriate documentation

(for compassionate grounds). The Student Medical Certificate is available online at https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf.

All students pursuing academic consideration, regardless of type, must contact their instructors no less than 24 hours following the end of the period of absence to clarify how they will be expected to fulfill the academic responsibilities missed during their absence. Students are reminded that they should consider carefully the implications of postponing tests or midterm exams or delaying submission of work, and are encouraged to make appropriate decisions based on their specific circumstances.

Students who have conditions for which academic accommodation is appropriate, such as disabilities or ongoing or chronic health conditions, should work with Accessible Education Services to determine appropriate forms of accommodation. Further details concerning policies and procedures may be found at: http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/.

Policy on Academic Consideration for a Medical/Non-Medical Absence

(a) Consideration on <u>Medical Grounds</u> for assignments worth *less than 10%* of final grade: Consult Instructor Directly and Contact Academic Advising

When seeking consideration on **medical grounds** for assignments worth *less than 10%* of the final course grade, and if the student has exceeded the maximum number of permissible Self-Reported absences, the student should contact the instructor directly. The student need only share broad outlines of the medical situation. The instructor **may** require the student to submit documentation to the academic advisors, in which case she or he will advise the student and inform the academic advisors to expect documentation. If documentation is requested, the student will need to complete and submit the <u>Student Medical Certificate</u>. The instructor may <u>not</u> collect medical documentation. The advisors will contact the instructor when the medical documentation is received, and will outline the severity and duration of the medical challenge as expressed on the Student Medical Certificate and in any other supporting documentation. The student will be informed that the instructor has been notified of the presence of medical documentation, and will be instructed to work as quickly as possible with the instructor on an agreement for accommodation.

(b) Consideration on Non-Medical Grounds: Consult Huron Support Services/Academic Advising, or email huronsss@uwo.ca.

Students seeking academic consideration for a **non-medical** absence (e.g. varsity sports, religious, compassionate, or bereavement) will be required to provide appropriate documentation where the conditions for a Self-Reported Absence have not been met, including where the student has exceeded the maximum number of permissible Self-Reported. All consideration requests must include a completed Consideration Request Form. Late penalties may apply at the discretion of the instructor.

Please review the full policy on Academic Consideration for medical and non-medical absence at: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_illness.pdf. Consult <a href="https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_polici

Support Services

For advice on course selections, degree requirements, and for assistance with requests for medical accommodation, students should email an Academic Advisor in Huron's Student Support Services at https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/.

Department Chairs, Program Directors and Coordinators are also able to answer questions about individual programs. Contact information can be found on the Huron website at: https://huronatwestern.ca/contact/faculty-staff-directory/.

If you think that you are too far behind to catch up or that your workload is not manageable, you should consult your Academic Advisor. If you are considering reducing your workload by dropping one or more courses, this must be done by the appropriate deadlines. Please refer to the Advising website, https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/academic-advising/ or review the list of official Sessional Dates on the Academic Calendar, available here: http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/SessionalDates.cfm.

You should consult with the course instructor and the Academic Advisor who can help you consider alternatives to dropping one or more courses. Note that dropping a course may affect OSAP and/or Scholarship/Bursary eligibility.

Huron Student Support Services: https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/

Office of the Registrar: https://registrar.uwo.ca/

Student Quick Reference Guide: https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/#1

Academic Support & Engagement: http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/

Huron University College Student Council: https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/beyond-

classroom/hucsc/

Western USC: http://westernusc.ca/your-services/#studentservices

Mental Health & Wellness Support at Huron and Western

University students may encounter setbacks from time to time that can impact academic performance. Huron offers a variety of services that are here to support your success and wellbeing. Please visit https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life-campus/student-services/wellness-safety for more information or contact staff directly:

Wellness Services: huron.uwo.ca Community Safety Office: safety@huron.uwo.ca

Chaplaincy: gthorne@huron.uwo.ca

Additional supports for Health and Wellness may be found and accessed at Western through, https://www.uwo.ca/health/.