This seminar is designed to give students an in-depth and hands-on view of the largest and best-known witchcraft crisis in American history. Although intended primarily for students who are or plan to be History, FGSS, or American Studies majors, it is open to students from all colleges and classes.

After exploring the history of witchcraft in New England, the class will focus exclusively on the 1692 crisis. After reading and discussing major interpretations of it (including my own 2002 book), each student is expected to write an original research paper (8-10 pp) examining some aspect of the 1692 crisis, most likely related to the less-well-known accusations that arose outside of Salem Village, which have been little studied by anyone (including me). When I first taught this course in 2003, the best papers uncovering new material were “published” on the Salem Witch Trials Documentary Archive website (http://etext.virginia.edu/salem/witchcraft); see the “notable people” link. The best papers from 2006, 2010, 2011, and 2012 are on the Cornell Witchcraft collection website: http://ebooks.library.cornell.edu/w/witch//research.html. (Students should look at these papers to see what others who have taken the course have accomplished in previous years.) Again this year I plan to place the best papers on the web, with the authors’ permission. Students today have the benefit of a new edition of the surviving legal records, edited by an international team headed by Bernard Rosenthal, which contains much useful information not previously available to students or scholars.

This course has two key objectives. First, through the detailed study of one topic that has attracted intensive attention from historians, it is intended to familiarize students with historiography and the ways in which historians develop their interpretations. Second, it introduces students to the creative process of doing history themselves—formulating their own questions, searching primary sources for the answers, and writing persuasive papers.

Grading: attendance and class participation are the most important parts of this course, along with the final paper. Accordingly, 50% of the grade will be based on attendance and participation in discussion and in workshop groups in which you will critique your fellow students’ drafts. The other 50% will be divided as follows: 2 short papers, 10% each; final paper, 30%.
Books (for purchase at campus store and Kraftees, and on reserve in Uris Library):

Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*
John Demos, *Entertaining Satan*
Mary Beth Norton, *In the Devil’s Snare*
Elizabeth Reis, *Damned Women*
Bernard Rosenthal, *Salem Story*

On reserve in Uris Library: 2 copies of Rosenthal, et al., eds., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*; volumes of vital records of Massachusetts towns; George F. Dow, ed., *Records of the Quarterly Courts of Essex County*

**Class schedule:**

**Introduction to Witchcraft in New England:**

Aug. 26: course introduction
Aug. 31: Using the U-Va Salem Witchcraft web site (URL above), pick one of the accused witches tried in 1692 by the special Court of Oyer and Terminer (they are listed in appendix I of *In the Devil’s Snare*, pp 315-17). Ask and answer the following questions: why did people think this person was a witch? How did he or she respond to the accusations? Summarize your answers to those questions in a brief (2-3 pp) paper, due in class. (This preliminary assignment will not be graded.) Note: many other web sites contain Salem materials or focus on the 1692 crisis. *This is one is the most trustworthy, though some problems with it will be discussed in class. Rely on others at your peril!*

Sept. 7: NO CLASS; LABOR DAY

The Salem Witchcraft Crisis: Important Interpretations

October 5: Elizabeth Reis, *Damned Women*, 1-92
Oct. 7: Elizabeth Reis, *Damned Women*, 93-end
Oct. 12: FALL BREAK, NO CLASS
Oct. 21: Norton, *In the Devil’s Snare*, 3-155
Oct. 26: Norton, *In the Devil’s Snare*, 155-end

Researching and Developing your own Interpretations:

Oct. 28: NO CLASS; individual appointments with professor to discuss paper topics
November 2: NO CLASS: individual appointments with professor to discuss paper topics
Nov. 4: Preliminary discussion of topics; individual student reports to entire class
Nov. 9: NO CLASS; work on papers; individual appointments with professor
Nov. 11: NO CLASS; work on papers; individual appointments with professor
Nov. 16: discussion in class of first drafts in workshop groups; **drafts must be submitted by email attachment to members of your workshop group and the professor no later than noon on Nov. 13 and sooner if possible.** Grades will be reduced for late submissions! All students are required to read and comment on the drafts of other members of your assigned group; please prepare separate typed comments for each (as well as writing comments on the pages). Send Prof. Norton an email attachment with your written comments on the other papers by members of your group before the class meets. Note: the quality of your comments on your fellow students’ papers will factor into your class participation grade in this course, because helping your classmates improve their papers is part of your role.
Nov. 18: NO CLASS, work on second drafts. Professor available for consultation if desired.
Nov. 23: discussion of second drafts, revised in accordance with comments from your workshop group and the professor. Send these revised papers to all class members, including the professor, by email attachment no later than noon, Nov. 20. In this round, class members should focus on reading papers by those students not in their workshop groups, though of course you can also comment further on those you have already read.
Nov. 26: HAPPY THANKSGIVING!
Nov. 30: NO CLASS; individual appointments with professor, as necessary, re: final drafts
December 2: final reports from all; papers due (2 copies of each; one will be retained, one returned). Please acknowledge the most helpful comments from other class members in your notes!