

Religion and the Paranormal Spring 2020

REL 2930, REL 3938 (Writing Rule 4)

Prof. Erin Prophet • eprophet@ufl.edu

Office Hours: Tu: 12:30 pm -1:30 pm, 3-4 pm; Th: 4-5 pm. • Anderson Hall 130

Meeting Time: Tues. 7 (1:55-2:45 p.m.)/ Thurs. 7-8 (1:55-3:50 p.m.)

Meeting location: TUR L007, (Tuesdays); TUR L011 (Thursdays)



The supernatural seems to force us toward religion, while the paranormal merely forces us to say, "I don't know."
—Steve Volk¹

Pseudoscience speaks to powerful emotional needs that science often leaves unfulfilled....Pseudoscience is embraced, it might be argued, in exact proportion as real science is misunderstood...Religions are often the state-protected nurseries of pseudoscience.
—Carl Sagan²

Psi, the paranormal, and the supernatural are fundamentally linked to deconstructing, change, transition, disorder, marginality, the ephemeral, fluidity, ambiguity, and blurring of boundaries. —George P. Hansen³

¹ *Fringe-ology* 2011, p. 4

² *The Demon-Haunted World* 1996, pp. 14-15.

³ *The Trickster and the Paranormal* 2001, 22.

Brief Course Description

As many as three-quarters of Americans hold at least one paranormal belief. What does this tell us about the future of religion? We will examine the paranormal as an “other” category for both religion and science. Organized religion uses it to distinguish the miraculous from unsanctioned activities like witchcraft and the occult. Science frames itself as the opposite of superstition. And yet in a “disenchanted” world, it’s important to ask why we continue to be fascinated with the paranormal, as seen in the explosion of the topic in film (horror, superheroes), television, gaming and manga. This course takes a multi-methodological approach that includes critical theory, folklore studies, laboratory research, and cognitive science. It also examines the role of the paranormal in human experience of healing and psychological transformation. Topics include telepathy, precognition, UFOs, government-sponsored research (US and Soviet), cryptozoology (Bigfoot, etc.), hauntings, curses and taboos, near-death experiences, possession (including erotic encounters), mediums, and channeling. Students will learn to look critically at both the phenomena and attempts to explain them.

The 3938 section will complete two papers and additional reading assignments to engage more deeply with philosophical concepts.

Course Objectives

Students will be introduced to major theoretical approaches in the study of religion through the lens of the paranormal, become acquainted with pivotal figures and movements, and approach critical questions such as:

- What are the various and contested ways the *paranormal* or *supernatural* are understood, and what is their relationship with organized religion?
 - What are the culturally specific aspects of paranormal belief?
 - How can we think about the various scientific attempts to study and verify/or cordon off the paranormal from acceptable science?
 - What role does the paranormal play in personal transformation and developing meaning and purpose?
 - What role has paranormal experience played in narratives of liberation from political and cultural oppression in the context of race, gender and sexuality?
- How have our discourses, attitudes, and paranormal practices been shaped by, and shaped religions?



“It’s entirely your choice: a crop circle followed by a probing, or a probing followed by a crop circle.”

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Students will complete the course with a broad knowledge of academic approaches to the paranormal, acquainted both with pivotal figures, movements, and critical questions.

Course Outline and Learning Modules

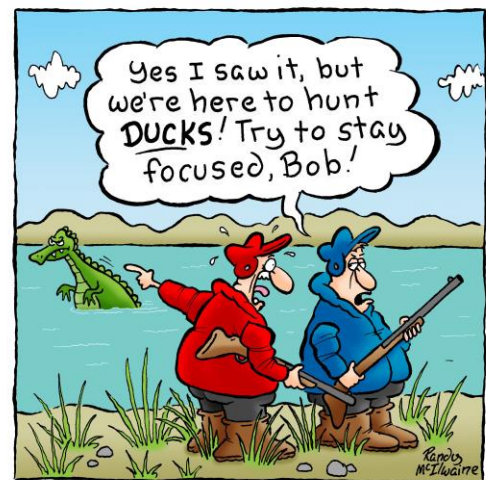
Unit 1: Framings. Explores different historical approaches to the paranormal, including scientific debunking and religious utility of the paranormal, from boundary-setting to proof of divine power.

Unit 2: Spirits. Examines the experience of spirit possession and hauntings, including their relationship to gender and power dynamics. Examines some of the early scientific attempts to study them.

Unit 3: Veridical Approaches. Reviews twentieth-century research aimed at proving the existence of psychic phenomena, including the laboratories at Duke and Princeton, as well as US and Soviet government sponsored research into psychics and UFOs.

Unit 4: Interpretive Approaches. From the imagination to the psyche, various approaches to the paranormal have side-stepped the question of the truth of paranormal activity and focused instead on the folkloric, literary and political potentialities of the paranormal.

Unit 5: Experiential Approaches. What is it like to experience a paranormal event? From erotic encounters to alien abductions and yoga “superpowers,” this unit looks at the various ways that the lives of individuals have been transformed through their frightening or awe-inspiring encounters with a transcendent other.



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Requirements

This course is centered on reading and discussion. For the 2930 section, writing is limited to blog posts and exam essay questions. The 3938 section will complete (in addition to all assignments for the 2930 section) two papers totaling 4000 words, and additional reading assignments. All students will participate in weekly small-group discussion. Students are required to bring the readings to class or be able to access them on a laptop. Excerpts from films and documentaries about the class topics will also be screened during class before or after discussion. In order to ensure an optimum learning experience for the entire class, please do not take this course if you are not prepared to do the reading and engage in thoughtful discussion.

A high priority will be placed on the quality of preparation, participation, and thus also attendance. To ensure careful preparation, knowledge of material will be assessed weekly. Regular assessments and blog posts will reinforce the reading and course lectures.

Assignments (2930)

- In-class online assessments (weekly)
- In-class group work (weekly)
- Blog and discussion posts (online)
- Unit assessments (3)
- Midterm exam: Multiple choice, short answer and essay in class mid-term exam; see class schedule for details.
- Final: Multiple choice, short answer and essay final exam; see class schedule for details.

Assignments (3938)

- In-class online quizzes and assessments (weekly)
- In-class group projects (weekly)
- Blog and discussion posts (online)
- Unit assessments (3)
- Midterm exam: Multiple choice, short answer and essay in class mid-term exam; see class schedule for details.
- Final: Multiple choice, short answer and essay final exam; see class schedule for details.
- Writing: Two papers: a 5-page short topic paper and a 10-page term paper, and a research methodologies assessment

Readings: All readings will be provided on the Canvas website

Recommended Texts

Volk, Steve. *Fringeology: How I tried to Explain Away the Unexplainable—And Couldn't*. HarperOne. 2011.

Horn, Stacy. *Unbelievable: Investigations into Ghosts, Poltergeists, Telepathy, and other Unseen Phenomena, from the Duke Parapsychology Laboratory*. New York: HarperCollins. 2009.

Grading Rubric, 2930

| Assignment | Points per Assignment | Percentage Weight |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| In-class assessments | 14 (5 points ea.) | 15% |
| In-class group work | 13 assignments (20 points ea.) | 15% |
| Unit recap | 3 (30 points ea.) | 5% |
| Blog Posts | 13 blog posts (15 points ea.) | 25% |
| Midterm Exam | 150 points | 15% |
| Final Exam | 200 points | 25% |
| Total | | 100% |

Grading Rubric, 3938

| Assignment | Points per Assignment | Percentage Weight |
|---|---|-------------------|
| In-class assessments | 14 (5 points ea.) | 10% |
| In-class group work | 13 assignments (20 points ea.) | 10% |
| Blog Posts | 13 blog posts (15 points ea.) | 10% |
| Unit recap (optional) | 3 (30 points each) | 0% |
| Short Topic Paper and research methods assessment | 60 points | 5% |
| In-Depth Term Paper | Paper Proposal (50), Outline (50), Paper draft (100); Revised paper (100) | 25% |
| Midterm Exam | 150 points | 15% |
| Final Exam | 200 points | 20% |
| Total | | 100% |

Use of Technology

During class, electronic devices may be used only for note-taking or participation in the course, such as accessing readings or completing online polls. Headphones may not be worn in class.

Course Contract

By accepting this syllabus, you are agreeing to participate in frank discussions of many matters that are commonly avoided in public and considered offensive or disturbing by some. These include—but are by no means restricted to—unusual phenomena such as hauntings, alien abductions, as well as ritual practices that are forbidden by some religions, including witchcraft and magic, and accounts of encounters that may be erotic, terrifying, or disturbing. If you are not ready to critically discuss such matters, do not take this course.

Disability Policy

Any student with a documented disability seeking academic adjustments or accommodations (including those involving the use of technology) is requested to speak with me during the first two weeks of class. All such discussions will remain as confidential as possible. Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the



"Damn! Of all the times to have an out of body experience!"

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instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester. The Disability Resource Center may be contacted here: 352-392-8565; www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/

Canvas Reading Assignment Pages are Authoritative

Course reading assignments may be modified. The syllabus distributed at the beginning of class may be updated. The course reading assignment pages on Canvas are the operative and binding version, so to be sure of your assignment, check Canvas rather than the version distributed at the beginning of class. The course assignments and weighting will remain as they are in the syllabus, though due dates may be adjusted. Students should set up their Canvas account so that they receive instructor announcements via Canvas directly in their email.

Attendance

The quality of this course depends on the insights of every participant. Only in exigent circumstances may students be absent. In such cases, such an absence should be pre-approved by the instructor and the reasons documented. Students are also expected to be punctual out of courtesy and respect for the class. Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

Returned Assignments

Assignments will usually be returned to students no later than one week after they were due. At the end of the semester, unreturned course work will be available for pickup in Dr. Prophet's office in Anderson 130 for 60 days after the official date that grades are posted by the registrar. After this time, they will be recycled.

Grading Policies

The course grading rubric follows the standard UF grading scheme.

- A 94 to 100
- A- <94 to 90
- B+ <90 to 87
- B <87 to 84
- B- <84 to 80
- C+ <80 to 77
- C <77 to 74
- C- <74 to 70
- D+ <70 to 67
- D <67 to 64

- D- <64 to 61
- E <61 to 0

The course instructor reserves the right to lower or raise course grades based on classroom contributions or upon absences. There is no A+ grade. Grades are not rounded up; for example, a 93.85% is an A- and not an A; grades are consistent with UF policy:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

Late or Missing Assignments

Late assignments will be penalized and may not receive credit.

Academic Dishonesty

Students engaged in any form of academic dishonesty, as defined under the "Academic Misconduct" section of the Student Discipline Code, may fail the course and will be subject to other disciplinary measures.

Humanities Credit

This course meets the requirements for the University of Florida's Humanities credit. Humanities courses provide instruction in the history, key themes, principles, terminology, and theory or methodologies used within a humanities discipline or the humanities in general. Students will learn to identify and to analyze the key elements, biases and influences that shape thought. These courses emphasize clear and effective analysis and approach issues and problems from multiple perspectives. A minimum grade of C is required for general education credit.

Course Evaluations

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>

Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>

Writing Rule Requirements

REL 3938 student will receive credit for 4000 words of writing rule requirement. The writing component of the course includes two papers and an online research methodologies assessment (pass-fail, which can be retaken until the student passes). The papers are graded both with a numerical points grade and a Satisfactory (S) or Unsatisfactory (N) grade. Students who receive an unsatisfactory on a paper will have one additional opportunity to revise and resubmit. Papers will be graded based on the rubric below:

Writing Assessment Rubric

| | SATISFACTORY (Y) | UNSATISFACTORY (N) |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| CONTENT | Papers exhibit at least some evidence of ideas that respond to the topic with complexity, critically evaluating and synthesizing sources, and provide at least an adequate discussion with basic understanding of sources. | Papers either include a central idea(s) that is unclear or off- topic or provide only minimal or inadequate discussion of ideas. Papers may also lack sufficient or appropriate sources. |
| ORGANIZATION AND COHERENCE | Documents and paragraphs exhibit at least some identifiable structure for topics, including a clear thesis statement but may require readers to work to follow progression of ideas. | Documents and paragraphs lack clearly identifiable organization, may lack any coherent sense of logic in associating and organizing ideas, and may also lack transitions and coherence to guide the reader. |
| ARGUMENT AND SUPPORT | Documents use persuasive and confident presentation of ideas, strongly supported with evidence. At the weak end of the Satisfactory range, documents may provide only generalized discussion of ideas or may provide adequate discussion but rely on weak support for arguments. | Documents make only weak generalizations, providing little or no support, as in summaries or narratives that fail to provide critical analysis. |
| STYLE | Documents use a writing style with word choice appropriate to the context, genre, and discipline. Sentences should display complexity and logical sentence structure. At a minimum, documents will display a less precise use of vocabulary and an uneven use of sentence structure or a writing style that occasionally veers away from word choice or tone appropriate to the context, genre, and discipline. | Documents rely on word usage that is inappropriate for the context, genre, or discipline. Sentences may be overly long or short with awkward construction. Documents may also use words incorrectly. |
| MECHANICS | Papers will feature correct or error-free presentation of ideas. At the weak end of the Satisfactory range, papers may contain some spelling, punctuation, or grammatical errors that remain unobtrusive so they do not muddy the paper's argument or points. | Papers contain so many mechanical or grammatical errors that they impede the reader's understanding or severely undermine the writer's credibility. |

Course Schedule

| Day | Topic | Readings | Assignments |
|------------------------|--|--|--|
| Unit 1: Framings | | | |
| Week 1 Tue. Jan. 7 | Syllabus and Student Learning Goals | | |
| Week 1 Thu. Jan. 9 | Methodological Overview | All sections: Volk "Introduction" 3938: Laycock "Approaching the Paranormal" | In class: Assessment 1 (general knowledge, no reading required) Group assignments (sorting box) |
| Week 2 Tue. Jan. 14 | Scientific Debunking: "Pseudoscience and Superstition" | All: Sagan <i>The Demon-Haunted World</i> ch. 1 (13-22); 3938: Asprey, "The Problem of Disenchantment" | In class: Assessment 2 |
| Week 2 Thu. Jan 16 | Religious Debunking: From Miracles to Magic | All: Kripal, "Reimagining the 'Super' in the Study of Religion," xv-xxxi 3938: Bailey, "Magic Contested and Condemned" | In class: Group work 1 3838: Research methodology assessment (online, due by midnight) |
| Week 3 Tue. Jan 21 | Religious Debunking (cont.): | All: Bader, Baker, and Mencken, "Round Trip to Hell in a Flying Saucer" 3838: Hansen, <i>The Trickster and the Paranormal</i> Ch. 1, 18-34 | Before class: Blog post 1 In class: Assessment 3 |
| Week 3 Thu. Jan. 23 | The Messiness of Paranormal Phenomena: Haunting NDEs | All: Volk ch. 1, "On Death and Not Dying" | In class: Group work 2 |
| Week 4 Tue. Jan. 28 | Debunking the Debunkers | All: Hufford, "Rational Supernatural Belief" | Before class: Blog post 2 In class: Assessment 4 |
| Unit 2: Spirits | | | |
| Week 4 Thu. Jan. 30 | Possession and Power | Keller, "Spirit Possession" | In class: Group work 3 |
| Week 5 Tue. Feb. 4 | Spiritualism | All: Blum, <i>Ghost Hunters</i> Prelude and ch. 1, "The Night Side" 3938: Crabtree, "Mesmerism and the Psychological Dimension of Mediumship," pp. 9-18 | Before class: Blog post 3; Unit 1 Recap In class: Assessment 5 |

| Day | Topic | Readings | Assignments |
|---|--|--|---|
| Week 5 Thu. Feb 6 | Telepathy: Myers, James and SPR | All: Moore, "Psychical Research as Psychology—from William James to James Hyslop," 133-156. 3938: Crabtree, "Mesmerism," pp. 18-29 | In class: Group work 4 3938: Short Topic Paper (due before class online; submit paper copy in class) |
| Week 6 Tue. Feb. 11 | Channeling and Automatic Writing | Bradby, "Channeling—The Cinderella of the New Age?" All: 340-346; 3938: 340-361. | Before class: Blog post 4 In class: Assessment 6 3938: Short Topic Papers returned |
| Week 6 Thu. Feb. 13 | Telepathy (cont.) and Review for Midterm | All: Sheldrake ch. 2, "Dogs" 3938: Hansen ch. 10, 117-129, "Prominent Psychics" | In class: Group work 5 |
| Week 7 Tue. Feb. 18 | MIDTERM | Midterm covers readings for weeks 1-6 | Due before class: Blog post 5 |
| Unit 3: Veridical Approaches | | | |
| Week 7 Thu. Feb. 20 | Veridical approaches 1: ESP and Psi | All: Horn, Preface, ch. 1-2 (1-8, 15-52) | In class: Review midterm Group work 6 Before midnight: 3938, Revisions to Short Topic Paper due |
| Week 8 Tue. Feb. 25 | Veridical approaches (cont.): PEAR and Psi | All: Horn, ch. 8, epilogue; Jahn and Dunne, 195-201 3938: Jahn and Dunne, "The PEAR Proposition" (pages TBA) | Due before class: Blog post 6 In class: Assessment 8 |
| Week 8 Thu. Feb. 27 | UFOs and the Government | All: Kean, <i>UFOs</i> , Preface (xi-xii), Introduction (1-14), ch. 24, "Governor Fyfe Symington and the Movement Towards Change" (247-261). | In class: Group work 7 Due by midnight: 3938: Term Paper Proposal |
| No class March 1-7 (spring break) | | | |

| Day | Topic | Readings | Assignments |
|---------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Week 9 Tue. Mar. 10 | Veridical approaches 2: Cold War, Russian psychics, Remote Viewing | All: Horn, ch. 9, 177-199 3838: Kripal, "The Remote Viewing Literature and the Imaginal" | Due before class: Blog post 7 In class: Assessment 9 |
| Unit 4: Interpretive Approaches | | | |
| Week 9 Thu. Mar. 12 | UFOs and Folklore | Pasulka, "From Purgatory to the UFO Phenomenon" 3938: Vallee, <i>Passport to Magonia</i> , "Nurslings of Immortality," 135-164. | Before class: Unit 3 Recap (online) In class: Group work 8 |
| Week 10 Tue. Mar. 17 | Psychological Approaches | All: Hewett, "The Psychoanalytic Occult in Freud and Contemporary Theory" | Before class: Blog post 8 In class: Assessment 10 3838: Final Paper outline due |
| Week 10 Thu. Mar. 19 | Supernatural and Race | All: Finley, "The Supernatural in the African American Experience" | In class: Group work 9 |
| Week 11 Tue. Mar. 24 | Demons and Daemons through Culture | All: Bastian, "Mami Wata, Mr. White, and the Sirens off Bar Beach: Spirits and Dangerous Consumption in the Nigerian Popular Press" 3938: Masquelier, "When Spirits Start Veiling: The Case of the Veiled She-Devil in a Muslim Town of Niger" | Before class: Blog post 9 In class: Assessment 11 |
| Unit 5: Experiential Approaches | | | |
| Week 11 Th. Mar. 26 | Erotics and the Poltergeist | All: Laursen, "The Poltergeist at the Intersection of the Spirit and the Material" 3938: Kripal, "The Traumatic Secret" | In class: Group work 10 |
| Week 12 Tue. Mar. 31 | Erotics and Religion | Homewood, "The Supersensual Supernatural: Sexual Spirits in the History of Christianity" | Before class: Blog post 10, Unit 4 Recap In class: Assessment 12 |

| Day | Topic | Readings | Assignments |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|---|---|
| Week 12 Th. Apr. 2 | Erotics and Alien Abduction | All: Strieber and Kripal, <i>The Super Natural</i> , ch. 8, "Pain," and 9, "Super Sexualities" | In class: Group work 11 3938: Term paper draft due in class (paper copy) |
| Week 13 Tu. Apr. 7 | Supernatural Yoga | All: Jacobsen, "Extraordinary Capacities in the Religions of South Asia: Yoga Powers and Cosmology" | Before class: Blog post 11 In class: Assessment 13 |
| Week 13 Thu. Apr. 9 | Superpowers and Superheroes | All: Kripal, <i>Mutants and Mystics</i> , ch. 1, 1-5, 22-30; 3938: Kripal, <i>Mutants and Mystics</i> , ch. 1, 1-30; ch. 4, "Mutation: X-Men Before their Time," 173-216. Optional: Kripal, <i>The Flip</i> , ch. 3, "Consciousness and Cosmos" | In class: Group work 12 |
| Week 14 Tu. Apr. 14 | Cryptozoology | Loxton and Prothero, "Cryptozoology: Real Science or Pseudoscience?" | Before class: Blog post 12 In class: Assessment 14 |
| Week 14 Th. Apr. 16 | Cryptozoology cont. | Loxton and Prothero, "The Yeti" | In class: Group work 13 |
| Week 15 Tu. Apr. 21 | Review for Final | Kripal, "Reimagining the 'Super,'" pp. xxxi-xliii Discussion 3938: Final paper due | Before class: Blog post 13 Due in class: 3838, Revised term paper (paper copy) |
| Week 15 Th. Apr. 23 | No class | Reading Day | |
| Th. Apr. 30 | FINAL EXAM | 12:30 – 2:30 pm | |

Reading List

- Asprem, Egil. 2017. "The Problem of Disenchantment and Modern Transformations of the Supernatural." In *Religion: Super Religion*, edited by Jeffrey J Kripal, 27–42. Macmillan Interdisciplinary Handbooks. Farmington Hills, MI: Gale Cengage Learning.
- Bader, 2017. Christopher D., Joseph O. Baker, and F. Carson Mencken. *Paranormal America (Second Edition): Ghost Encounters, UFO Sightings, Bigfoot Hunts, and Other Curiosities in Religion and Culture*. NYU Press, Chapter 5.
- Bailey, Michael D. 2017. *Magic: The Basics*. London: Routledge, Chapter 3.
- Bastian, Misty L. 1998. "Mami Wata, Mr. White, and the Sirens off Bar Beach: Spirits and Dangerous Consumption in the Nigerian Popular Press." In *Afrika und das Andere: Alterität und Innovation*, edited by Heike Schmidt and Albert Wirz, 21–31. Hamburg: Lit Verlag.
- Blum, Deborah. 2007. *Ghost Hunters: William James and the Search for Scientific Proof of Life After Death*. Penguin, 2007.
- Bradby, Ruth. 2015. "Channeling—The Cinderella of the New Age?: A Course in Miracles, the Seth Texts, and Definition in New Age Spiritualities." In *Handbook of Spiritualism and Channeling*, edited by Cathy Gutierrez, 340–61. Leiden: Brill.
https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004264083_017.
- Crabtree, Adam. 2015. "Mesmerism and the Psychological Dimension of Mediumship." In *Handbook of Spiritualism and Channeling*, 7–31.
https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004264083_003
- Finley, Stephen C. 2017. "The Supernatural in the African American Experience." In *Religion: Super Religion*, 231–246.
- Hansen, George P. 2001. *The Trickster and the Paranormal*. Xlibris Corporation, 2001. Chapters 1, 10.
- Hewitt, Marsha Aileen. 2017. "The Psychoanalytic Occult in Freud and Contemporary Theory." In *Religion: Super Religion*, 43–60.
- Horn, Stacy. 2009. *Unbelievable: Investigations into Ghosts, Poltergeists, Telepathy, and Other Unseen Phenomena, from the Duke Parapsychology Laboratory*. Harper Collins, 2009.
- Homewood, Nathanael J. 2017. "The Supersensual Supernatural: Sexual Spirits in the History of Christianity." In *Religion: Super Religion*, 341–326.
- Hufford, David. 2017. "Rational Supernatural Belief: Debunking the Debunkers." In *Super Religion*, 3–25.
- Jacobsen, Knut A. 2017. "Extraordinary Capacities in the Religions of South Asia: Yoga Powers and Cosmology." In *Super Religion*, 125–138.
- Jahn, Robert and Brenda Dunne. 2007. "The PEAR Proposition." *Journal of Scientific Exploration*. 3(3) May 2007, 205–226. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.explore.2007.03.005>
- Kean, Leslie. 2011. *UFOs: Generals, Pilots, and Government Officials Go on the Record*. Crown Publishing Group. Preface, Introduction, ch. 24.
- Keller, Mary. 2015. "Spirit Possession." In *Handbook of Spiritualism and Channeling*, ed. Cathy Gutierrez. Leiden: Brill. 66–86. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004264083_006.

- Kripal, Jeffrey J. 2011a. *Authors of the Impossible: The Paranormal and the Sacred*. University of Chicago Press.
- 2011b. *Mutants and Mystics: Science Fiction, Superhero Comics, and the Paranormal*. University of Chicago Press.
- 2015a. "Secret Lives of the Superpowers: The Remote Viewing Literature and the Imaginal." In *Handbook of Spiritualism and Channeling*, 419–43.
https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004264083_020.
- 2015b. Kripal, Jeffrey J. "The Traumatic Secret: Bataille and the Comparative Erotics of Mystical Literature." In *Negative Ecstasies: Georges Bataille and the Study of Religion*, ed. Jeremy Biles and Kent L. Brintall, 153–168, New York: Fordham University Press,
- 2017. "Introduction: Reimagining the Super in the Study of Religion" in *Religion: Super Religion*, xv–xlvi.
- 2019. *The Flip: Epiphanies of Mind and the Future of Knowledge*. Bellevue Literary Press.
- Laursen, Christopher. "The Poltergeist at the Intersection of the Spirit and the Material: Some Historical and Contemporary Observations." In *Religion: Super Religion*, 311–326.
- Laycock, Joseph P. 2014. "Approaching the Paranormal." *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 18, no. 1 (August 1, 2014): 5–15.
<https://doi.org/10.1525/nr.2014.18.1.5>.
- Loxton, Daniel, and Donald R. Prothero. 2013. *Abominable Science!: Origins of the Yeti, Nessie, and Other Famous Cryptids*. Columbia University Press.
- Masquelier, Adeline. 2008. "When Spirits Start Veiling: The Case of the Veiled She-Devil in a Muslim Town of Niger." *Africa Today* 54(3), Spring, 39–64.
- Moore, R. Lawrence. 1977. *In Search of White Crows: Spiritualism, Parapsychology and American Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Pasulka, Diana Walsh. 2017. "From Purgatory to the UFO Phenomenon: The Catholic Supernatural Goes Galactic." In *Religion: Super Religion*, 375–388.
- Radin, Dean. 2010. *The Conscious Universe: The Scientific Truth of Psychic Phenomena*. Harper Collins.
- Sagan, Carl. 2011. *The Demon-Haunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark*. Random House Publishing Group.
- Sheldrake, Rupert. 2011. *Dogs That Know When Their Owners Are Coming Home: And Other Unexplained Powers of Animals*. Three Rivers Press.
- Strieber, Whitley and Jeffrey J. Kripal. 2016. *The Super Natural: A New Vision of the Unexplained*. New York: Tarcher Penguin.
- Vallee, Jacques. 2014. *Passport to Magonia: From Folklore to Flying Saucers*. Daily Grail Publishing,
- Volk, Steve. *Fringe-Ology: How I Tried to Explain Away the Unexplainable-And Couldn't*. Harper Collins, 2011.

Films and Documentaries

We will watch short excerpts from a number of films and documentaries in class.
Below is a selection of films that relate to the topics we will be discussing.

Possession/Haunting

The Exorcist. Dir. William Friedkin. 1973.
The Others. Dir. Alejandro Amenábar. 2001.
The Babadook. Dir. Jennifer Kent.
The Haunting. Dir. Robert Wise. 1963.

Psychic Powers

The Conjuring. Dir. James Wan. 2013.
K-PAX. Dir. Ian Softley. 2001.
Phenomenon. Dir. Jon Turteltaub. 1996.
X-Men. Dir. Bryan Singer. 2000. Marvel Entertainment Group.

UFOs and Aliens

Close Encounters of the Third Kind. Dir. Steven Spielberg. 1977
Lifted. Dir. Gary Rydstrom. 2011.

Websites

Center for Inquiry <https://skepticalinquirer.org/>
Society for Psychical Research (UK) <https://www.spr.ac.uk/>
International Consciousness Research Laboratories: <http://icrl.org/>

Additional resources, such as links to podcasts, music, slideshows, video, music, and websites, will be made available during the course. Students are encouraged to send the instructor their own ideas for resources.