

Religion and the Paranormal Spring 2021

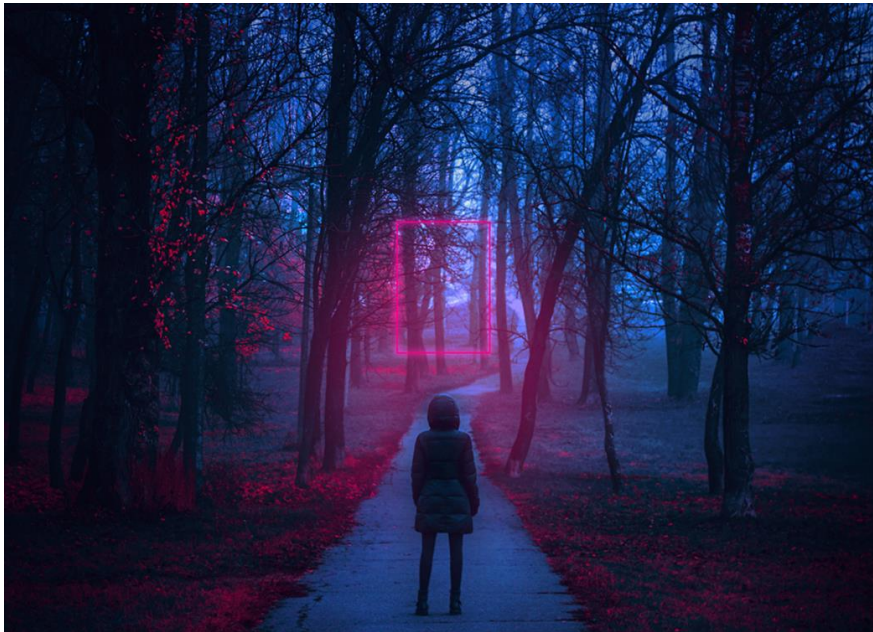
REL 3938 (Writing Rule 4)

Prof. Erin Prophet - eprophet@ufl.edu

Class Time: MWF. 7 (1:55–2:45 p.m.)

Class location: MAT 103 and online via Zoom

Office Hours: Mon: 12:30 pm –1:30 pm; Wed: 12:30–1:30 pm. Fri. 12:30–1:30 p.m. Location: Anderson Hall 130 or online



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 destructuring, 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.

Course Overview

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.

Prerequisite

Achieving sophomore status.

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 Themes

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

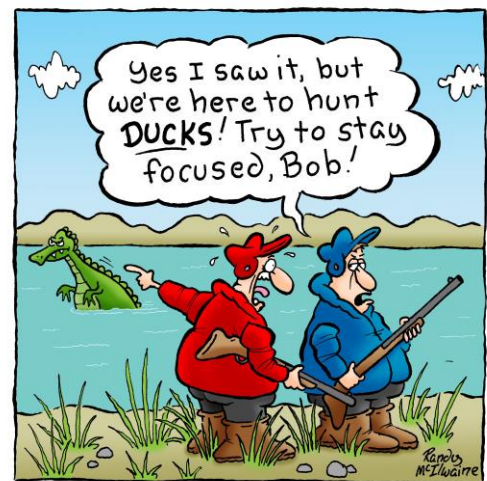
Unit 1: Framings. Explores different historical approaches to the paranormal, including scientific debunking and religious utility of the paranormal, from boundary-setting to proof of divine power.

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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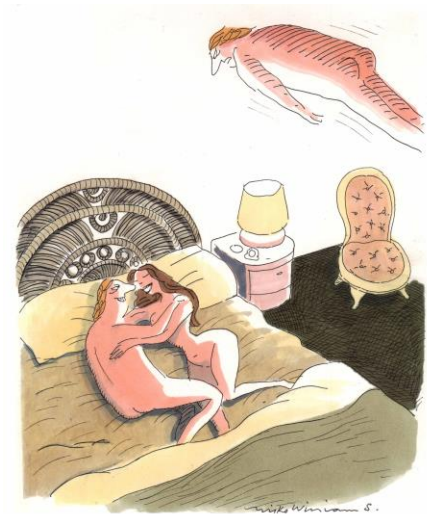
Requirements

This course is centered on reading and discussion. Students will complete (in addition to all assignments for the 2930 section) two papers totaling 4000 words. All students will participate in regular small-group discussion. Students are required to bring the readings to class or be able to access them remotely. 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. Blog posts and unit assessments will reinforce the reading and course lectures.

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.



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

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Assignments and Grading Rubric

- In-class group work
- 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

Grading Rubric

Assignment	Points per Assignment	Percentage Weight
Attendance		15%
In-class group work	10 points ea.	5%
Blog Posts	15 points ea.	10%
Unit recap	3 (30 points each)	5%
Short Topic Paper and research methods assessment	50 points	5%
In-Depth Term Paper	Paper Proposal (50), Outline (50), Paper draft (100); Revised paper (100)	30%
Midterm Exam	100 points	10%
Final Exam	200 points	20%
Total		100%

The course grading rubric follows the standard UF grading scheme.

- A 94 to 100
- <94 to 90
- B+ <90 to 87
- B <87 to 84
- <84 to 80
- C+ <80 to 77
- C <77 to 74
- <74 to 70
- D+ <70 to 67
- D <67 to 64
- <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](#).

Writing Rule Requirements

Students 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 included in the syllabus.

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 Policies

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 [here](#).

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 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/

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 the physical class or for remote participants unless required for online Zoom access.

Remote Learning Format

Course meetings are hybrid. Those in the classroom are requested to bring their laptops in order to access Zoom and Canvas features during class. Classes will be conducted synchronously, i.e., at the scheduled class time. The [Zoom link](#) for our class is listed in multiple places on the course Canvas site.

For those students online, keep these points in mind while using Zoom:

- In order to provide a dynamic learning environment, all students are encouraged to keep their cameras turned on during class.
- Those who are unable to participate in the synchronous classes for excused reasons may make up missed classes via viewing the recordings of the class. Credit for attendance will require completion of an additional assignment, usually a summary and reflection on the class. However, missing class should be kept to a minimum and must be approved by the instructor in advance.
- Treat Zoom sessions as regular classrooms. Be prepared for class with course materials ready before logging in, be dressed so that you can be seen by others, find an appropriate space (ideally a quiet, distraction-free location with good lighting). Take notes, ask questions, and participate actively in discussions.
- Mute your microphone when you are not speaking. To prevent background noise, feedback, or other audio distractions, it is best to stay muted unless you are engaging in the conversation.
- If you lose your internet connection during class, try reconnecting through Zoom. If you are unable to reconnect, send the instructor an email or a message through Canvas explaining your situation. We will make every effort to accommodate technical or other difficulties.
- If the campus loses power or internet connection during class, I will send instructions through the course Canvas site on how to proceed.

Policy on Recording Remote Learning during COVID

Our class sessions may be audio visually recorded for students in the class to refer back and for enrolled students who are unable to attend live. Students who participate with their camera engaged or utilize a profile image are agreeing to have their video or image recorded. If you are unwilling to consent to have your profile or video image recorded, be sure to keep your camera off and do not use a profile image. Likewise, students who un-mute during class and participate orally are agreeing to have their voices recorded. If you are not willing to consent to have your voice recorded during class, you will need to keep your mute button activated and communicate exclusively using the "chat" feature, which allows students to type questions and comments live. The chat will not be recorded or shared. As in all courses, unauthorized recording and unauthorized sharing of recorded materials is prohibited.

Some classes will include small group breakout sessions in which assignments are completed in class for credit. Students who miss an in-class group assignment may ask the instructor for a make-up assignment. Break-out discussions will not be recorded.

Communication with Instructor

Communication and grading will take place online through Canvas. Please enable Canvas to forward all course announcements and instructor communications to your email so that you stay informed. You may email me directly but communication through Canvas is preferred.

Returned Assignments

Assignments will usually be graded no later than one week after they were due.

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.

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.

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/>

Course Schedule

Day	Topic	Readings	Assignments
Unit 1: Framings			
Week 1 Mon. Jan. 11	Syllabus and Student Learning Goals		
Week 1 Wed. Jan. 13	Methodological Overview	Volk "Introduction"	
Week 1 Fri. Jan 15	Methodological Overview (cont.)	Laycock "Approaching the Paranormal"	In class: Group assignments
Week 2 Mon. Jan. 18	NO CLASS: MLK DAY		
Week 2 Wed. Jan. 20	Scientific Debunking: "Pseudoscience and Superstition"	Sagan <i>The Demon-Haunted World</i> ch. 1 (13-22); Asprem, "The Problem of Disenchantment"	
Week 2 Fri. Jan 22	Religious Debunking: Whose Miracles	Kripal, "Reimagining the 'Super' in the Study of Religion," xv-xxxi	In class: Group work 1
Week 3 Mon. Jan. 25	Religious Debunking: Magic	Bailey, "Magic Contested and Condemned"	Before class: Blog post 1
Week 3 Wed. Jan. 27	Religious Debunking (cont.):	Bader, Baker, and Mencken, "Round Trip to Hell in a Flying Saucer" Hansen, <i>The Trickster and the Paranormal</i> Ch. 1, 18-34	
Week 3 Fri. Jan. 29	The Messiness of Paranormal Phenomena: Haunting NDEs	Volk ch. 1, "On Death and Not Dying"	Research methodology assessment (online, due by midnight)
Week 4 Mon. Feb. 1	Debunking the Debunkers	Hufford, "Rational Supernatural Belief"	
Unit 2: Spirits			

Day	Topic	Readings	Assignments
Week 4 Wed. Feb. 3	Possession and Power	All: Gustafsson, "The Problem," ch. 1 3938: Keller, "Spirit Possession" pp. 66-75	
Week 4 Fri. Feb. 5	Possession and Power (cont.)		In class: Film clips, Group work 2
Week 5 Mon. Feb. 8	Spiritualism	Blum, <i>Ghost Hunters</i> Prelude and ch. 1, "The Night Side" Crabtree, "Mesmerism and the Psychological Dimension of Mediumship," pp. 9-18	Before class: Blog post 2; Unit 1 Recap (before midnight)
Week 5 Wed. Feb 10	Telepathy, Hypnosis and Psychical Research	Moore, "Psychical Research as Psychology—from William James to James Hyslop," 133-156. 3938: Crabtree, "Mesmerism," pp. 18-29	
Week 5 Fri. Feb. 12	Telepathy (cont.)	Sheldrake ch. 2, "Dogs" Hansen ch. 10, 117-129, "Prominent Psychics"	Group work 3
Week 6 Mon. Feb. 15	Anthropology of Ghost Hunting	Kelly, Mediums and Apparitions Guest speaker	Short Topic Paper (due before class online)
Week 6 Wed. Feb. 17	Channeling and Automatic Writing	Bradby, "Channeling—The Cinderella of the New Age?" 340-346; 340-361.	Before class: Blog post 3
Week 6 Fri. Feb. 19	Channeling and Automatic Writing cont. and Review for midterm		
Week 7 Mon. Feb. 22	MIDTERM	Midterm covers readings for weeks 1-6	
Unit 3: Veridical Approaches			
Week 7 Wed. Feb. 24	Veridical approaches 1: ESP and Psi	Horn, Preface, ch. 1-2 (1-8, 15-52)	In class: Review midterm

Day	Topic	Readings	Assignments
Week 7 Fri. Feb. 26	NO CLASS		
Week 8 Mon. Mar. 1	Veridical approaches (cont.): PEAR and Psi	Horn, epilogue; Radin, 148-157 Horn, ch. 8 (optional) Jahn and Dunne, 195-201	
Week 8 Wed. Mar. 3	Veridical approaches 2: Cold War, Russian psychics, Remote Viewing	Horn, ch. 9, 177-199 3838: Kripal, "The Remote Viewing Literature and the Imaginal"	
Week 8 Fri. Mar. 5	UFOs and Veridical Approaches	Kean, <i>UFOs</i> , Preface (xi-xii), Introduction (1-14), ch. 24, "Governor Fyfe Symington and the Movement Towards Change" (247-261).	
Unit 4: Interpretive Approaches			
Week 9 Mon. Mar. 8	UFOs and Folklore	Pasulka, "From Purgatory to the UFO Phenomenon"	
Week 9 Wed. Mar. 10	UFOs (cont.)	Vallee, <i>Passport to Magonia</i> , "Nurslings of Immortality," 135-164.	In class: Group work 4
Week 9 Fri. Mar. 12	Psychological Approaches	Hewett, "The Psychoanalytic Occult in Freud and Contemporary Theory"	Before class: Unit 3 Recap (online) Due by midnight: Term Paper Proposal
Week 10 Mon. Mar. 15	Psychological Approaches (cont.)	Film	Before class: Blog post 4
Week 10 Wed. Mar. 17	Supernatural and Race	Finley, "The Supernatural in the African American Experience"	
Week 10 Fri. Mar. 19		Guest speaker	Group work

Day	Topic	Readings	Assignments
Week 11 Mon. Mar. 22	Demons and Daemons through Culture	Bastian, "Mami Wata, Mr. White, and the Sirens off Bar Beach: Spirits and Dangerous Consumption in the Nigerian Popular Press"	Before class: Blog post 5 Final Paper outline due
Week 11 Wed. Mar. 24	NO CLASS		
Week 11 Fri. Mar. 26	Hinduism and the Paranormal	TBA	
Week 12 Mon. Mar. 29	Synchronicity	TBA	
Week 12 Wed. Mar. 31	Synchronicity (cont.)	TBA	Group work 6
Unit 5: Experiential Approaches			
Week 12 Fri. Apr. 2	Cryptozoology	Loxton and Prothero, "Cryptozoology: Real Science or Pseudoscience?"	Before class: Blog post 6
Week 13 Mon. Apr. 5	Cryptozoology cont.	Loxton and Prothero, "The Yeti"	
Week 13 Wed. Apr. 7	Erotics and Religion	Homewood, "The Supersensual Supernatural: Sexual Spirits in the History of Christianity"	Unit 4 Recap
Week 13 Fri. Apr. 9	Erotics and Religion (cont.)	Film	Group Work 7
Week 14 Mon. Apr. 12	Erotics and Alien Abduction	Strieber and Kripal, <i>The Super Natural</i> , ch. 8, "Pain," and 9, "Super Sexualities"	Term paper draft due in class
Week 14 Wed. Apr. 14	Supernatural Yoga	Jacobsen, "Extraordinary Capacities in the Religions of South Asia: Yoga Powers and Cosmology"	Before class: Blog post 7

Day	Topic	Readings	Assignments
Week 14 Fri. Apr. 16	Superpowers and Superheroes	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 8
Week 15 Mon. Apr. 19	Superpowers and Superheroes (cont.)	Kripal, "Reimagining the 'Super,'" pp. xxxi-xliii	Before class: Blog post 8
Week 15 Wed. Apr. 21	Review for Final		Due in class: Revised term paper
Week 15 Fri. Apr. 23	No class	Reading Day	
	FINAL EXAM	TBA	

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.