

**Science and the Supernatural**  
Missouri Western State University  
Department of History and Geography

HON 195  
Fall, 2019

MWF, 9:00-9:50 pm  
Poppewell Hall, 206

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Office: Poppewell 212D and 114D  
Office Hours: MW: 3:30-4:30;  
Tu: 10:00-1:00; by appt

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course seeks to expose students to the scientific process through the lens of the paranormal. In short, how do you study what many consider to be either unreal or unknowable? Through this course, students will both learn and apply a variety of methods in attempts to understand the paranormal. Using directed readings, class discussion, and field trip experiences, students will learn the challenges of applying the principles of science to an entire category considered “uninvestigatable.” Moreover, students will grapple with the question of personal belief and bias and how it affects their role as principal investigators of a variety of phenomena.

### **REQUIRED TEXTBOOK/MATERIALS:**

Loyd Auerbach, *ESP, Hauntings and Poltergeists: a Parapsychologist's Handbook* (ISBN: 9781539131663)

Articles and other readings available for download on Canvas

### **HONORS MISSION STATEMENT:**

The Honors Program at Missouri Western State University provides an enriched educational experience for the exceptional student. The program is designed for the student who enjoys learning, and whose personal goals emphasize the pursuit of understanding and knowledge. Ultimately, the program provides students with academic training and skills which will serve them well in both their chosen careers and their personal lives. Goals of the program are to foster the growth of intellectual inquiry, independence, and initiative in honors participants with an array of learning experiences including special courses, colloquia, and independent research and study. Each honors experience is simultaneously challenging, exciting, and enjoyable.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

Honors Colloquium is designed to stimulate creative and critical thinking about contemporary questions and issues of relevance to students in all academic disciplines. A cross-disciplinary endeavor, the course provides an opportunity to nurture self-development as an educated person responsive to the trends and issues transforming our modern society.

The general goals for the colloquium are: (1) to master materials covered in class; (2) to develop communication skills; (3) to practice creativity in developing new insights; (4) to integrate new ideas with present knowledge; and (5) to develop critically held values based upon the growth of

personal knowledge. Most importantly, the Honors Program intends to foster self-directed learning.

Because of the nature of the course and its goals, Honors Colloquium relies more than most classes on the goodwill and interested participation of the students. The success of each class session depends on each person's preparation for the session as well as his or her willingness to think about and discuss course materials in class. Think of the class as a community of scholars, a community that is critically dependent on the contribution of each of its members.

Our goal as your instructors is to provide you with a fun and interesting critical learning experience that will help you expand your understanding of what it means to be a scholar and a scientist.

## **STATEMENTS:**

- 1. Harassment, Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct:** Consistent with its mission, Missouri Western seeks to assure all community members learn and work in a welcoming and inclusive environment. Title VII, Title IX and University policy prohibit harassment, discrimination and sexual misconduct. Missouri Western encourages anyone experiencing harassment, discrimination or sexual misconduct to talk to someone from the Campus and Local Resources list found in the Student Handbook (<https://www.missouriwestern.edu/studentaffairs/wp.../handbook.pdf>) about what happened so they can get the support they need and Missouri Western can respond appropriately. There are both confidential and non-confidential resources and reporting options available to you. Missouri Western is legally obligated to respond to reports of sexual misconduct, and therefore we cannot guarantee the confidentiality of a report, unless made to a confidential resource. Responses may vary from support services to formal investigations. As a faculty member, I am required to report incidents of sexual misconduct and thus cannot guarantee confidentiality. I must provide our Title IX coordinator with relevant details such as the names of those involved in the incident. For more information about policies and resources or reporting options, please visit the following website: <https://www.missouriwestern.edu/titleix/sexual-misconduct-policy/> (Links to an external site.). Students have received information via email regarding training regarding Title IX. Student employees may have additional required training. Please follow the link in the email sent to your MWSU student account to complete the training. Students who do not complete the training will receive a hold on their account, prohibiting future semester enrollment until the training is complete. These training courses will ensure that all students are appropriately educated about these important regulations.
- 2. Disability Accommodations:** Students seeking accommodations must first provide documentation of needed accommodations to the Accessibility Resource Center (ARC) located in Eder Hall, Suite 203. Once accommodations have been approved by the ARC, students are responsible for notifying their instructors of those accommodations. This should be done within the first two weeks of classes. Accommodations are not retroactive.
- 3. Academic Honesty:** Academic honesty is required in all academic endeavors. Violations of academic honesty include any instance of plagiarism, cheating, seeking credit for another's work, falsifying documents or academic records, or any other fraudulent classroom activity. Violations of academic honesty may result in a failing grade on the assignment plagiarized, failure in the course, or expulsion from the University. When a student's grade has been affected, violations of academic honesty will be reported to the Provost or the

designated representative on the Academic Honesty Violation Report Form. Please see the Student Handbook for specific activities identified as violations of this policy and the student due process procedure. This handbook is also available online at <https://www.missouriwestern.edu/studentaffairs/student-handbook/> ([Links to an external site.](#))

4. **Grade Appeals:** The Honors Program follows the requirements outlined in the Student Handbook of Rights and Responsibilities. For specific information on the appeals process, contact the Honors Director at 271-4535.
5. **Seeking Help: Assistance with Stress Management/Personal Problems**  
Students wishing to talk with a trained professional regarding relationship issues, mental health, stress, etc. are encouraged to contact the Counseling Center at (816) 271-4327, which is located in Eder Hall room 209 and is open from 8 a.m to 4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday.
6. **Seeking Help: Academic Assistance**  
Students wishing to seek out additional help with their coursework (e.g., reading, math, study skills, course content, etc.) are encouraged to contact the Center for Academic Support at (816) 271-4524 or visit their office located in the Hearnes Center room 213. Additional information is available on their web site at <http://missouriwestern.edu/cas/>
7. **Pregnancy:** Missouri Western State University does not discriminate against any student on the basis of pregnancy, parenting or related conditions. Absences due to medical conditions relating to pregnancy, and recovery from pregnancy, will be excused for as long as deemed medically necessary by a student's doctor. Students will be given the opportunity to make up missed work. Pregnant or parenting students needing assistance should contact the Title IX Coordinator, Adam McGowan at 816-271-4432 in Blum Student Union 228.

### **ATTENDANCE POLICY:**

Missouri Western State University has the expectation that students should be active participants in their coursework. Regular class attendance is considered a key element of participation and an essential part of the educational experience. As such, attendance will be taken daily. In addition, in-class work is a significant part of your grade.

### **CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR:**

Be courteous and professional toward your classmates. Turn off cellphones, engage with the course material, respond to classmates in discussions, and refrain from using laptops unless the use of a laptop is a medical necessity (see section on "accommodations for disabilities"). If a student is found texting or otherwise using their phone during class, there will be a verbal warning. If cellphone usage continues, the student will be asked to leave the classroom and will not be counted as present for that day.

It may seem a bit harsh to ban cellphones and laptops, but studies consistently show that distractions from texts, games, and the internet negatively impact one's grade. Studies also show that students who take notes by hand tend to earn approximately a letter grade higher than those who takes notes electronically.

University Statement: See the Student Handbook section concerning Student Code of Conduct for additional details.

### **INCLEMENT WEATHER AND ILLNESS POLICY**

In the event that the instructor is unable to make it to a scheduled class session, you will be notified through your university email account, when possible. The email will contain instructions for what you are to do in lieu of coming to class that day. We will also try to post a message on Canvas

### **GRADING POLICY AND PROCEDURE:**

Students must earn an A or B in this course to be counted for honors credit. Grades of C or D will still be considered “passing,” but will not be counted for honors credit. Students taking A/CR/U must earn an A in this course for it to be counted for honors credit.

### **Grade Distribution**

Field Trip Assignment	30%
Homework	30%
Quizzes	20%
In-Class Activities	20%

### **Grade Descriptions:**

**Field Trip Assignment:** This course has a retreat planned for September 27-29. There will be a written assignment based on this trip. More details will be available on Canvas later in the semester.

**Homework:** Over the course of the semester you will have several homework assignments. These will be short written responses to questions related to materials that we have covered in class. Think of these as miniature take-home tests. These will be assigned to you in class but will be completed at home.

**Quizzes:** There will be five quizzes throughout the semester. These will be a mixture of multiple choice and/or short answer and will be taken in-class. They will cover readings and lectures.

**In-Class Activities:** Over the course of the semester you will work both alone and in groups to complete in-class activities. These will vary depending on topic. They will be completed during the class period.

### **MIDTERM GRADE REPORTS:**

MWSU policy requires the reporting of midterm grades to students so that they may make informed withdrawal decisions. If you receive a “D” or an “F” on your midterm report, you should set up a meeting to discuss your grade.

### ***CLASS SCHEDULE***

Please note: Reading assignment under each day should be completed before the designated class week. Come to class prepared to answer questions in response to that week’s reading assignment(s). Readings followed by (C) are available on Canvas.

### **Week 1- (8/26-8/28): The Science of Ghostbusting**

- Auerbach, "Introduction"
- Auerbach, "Section One: Chapter One"

**Week 2- (9/2-9/4): Defining the Natural, Supernatural, and Preternatural**

- Keith Harary, "We Have Seen the Paranormal . . . and It Is Us," *Psychology Today* (June 12, 2009)

**NO CLASS ON MONDAY, SEPT 2 IN HONOR OF LABOR DAY**

**Week 3- (9/9-9/11): Exploring the Parasciences**

- Auerbach, "Section One: Chapter Two"
- Gerald L. Eberlein, "Mainstream Sciences vs Parascience: Toward an Old Dualism?" *Journal of Scientific Exploration* Vol. 7, No. 1 (1993)

**QUIZ ON MONDAY, 9/9**

**CLASSROOM VISIT FROM DR. DEKA ON WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 11**

**Week 4- (9/16-9/18): The Scientific Method and Parascience Critics**

- Auerbach, "Section One: Chapter Three)
- AJ Carlson, "Science and the Supernatural," *The Scientific Monthly* Vol. 59, No. 2 (August, 1944)
- Michael Sherner, "What is Pseudoscience? Distinguishing Between Science and Pseudoscience is Problematic," *Scientific American* (September 1, 2011)

**NO CLASS, MONDAY, SEPT. 16. MORE INFORMATION INCOMING FROM DR. DEKA**

**Week 5- (9/23-9/25): Bias Week**

- Victor Benassi, et. al., "Occult Belief: Seeing is Believing" *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* Vol. 19, No. 4 (December, 1980)

**MANDATORY HONORS RETREAT: FRIDAY, SEPT. 27-SATURDAY, SEPT. 28. MORE INFORMATION FORTHCOMING**

**Week 6- (9/30-10/2): I Ain't 'Fraid of No Ghosts**

- Auerbach, "Section Two: Chapter One"
- Tiffanie Wen, "Why Do People Believe in Ghosts?," *The Atlantic* (Sept. 5, 2014)

**QUIZ ON WEDNESDAY, 10/2**

**Week 7- (10/7-10/9): Okay, Maybe I'm a Little 'Fraid of Some Ghosts**

- Auerbach, "Section Four," All Chapters

**Week 8- (10/14-10/16): This House is Bad: Case Studies**

- Auerbach, "Section Three," All Chapters"

**RETREAT ASSIGNMENT DUE ON WEDNESDAY, 10/16**

**Week 9- (10/21-10/23): Spiritualism**

- Peter Lamont, "Spiritualism and a Mid-Victorian Crisis of Evidence" *The Historical Journal* Vol. 47, No. 4 (December, 2004)
- Maggie Fox, "Confession" *New York World* (October 21, 1888)

**QUIZ ON WEDNESDAY, 10/23**

**Week 10- (10/28-10/30): What an Excellent Day for an Exorcism: Demons and Demonology**

- Mark Oliver, "The Exorcism of Marthe Brossier" *Ancient Origins* (August 18, 2018)
- Timothy C. Thomason, "Possession, Exorcism, and Psychotherapy," Published online at Northern Arizona University
- Amy Van De Castele, "A Dark Calling: The Story of Ed & Lorraine Warren," *Winterwind Productions*
- Richard Gallgher, "As a Psychiatrist, I Diagnose Mental Illness. Also, I Help Spot Demonic Possession," *Washington Post* (July 1, 2016)

**Week 11- (11/4-11/6): It's Just a Bunch of Hocus Pocus?: Witchcraft**

- TBD

**Week 12- (11/11-11/13): The Blood is the Life: Vampires**

- G. David Keyworth, "Was the Vampire of the Eighteenth Century a Unique Type of Undead Corpse?" *Folklore* Vol. 117, No. 3 (December, 2006)
- Radu Florescu and Raymond McNally, "Vampirism: Old World Folklore" in *In Search of Dracula: The History of Dracula and Vampires*. Houghton Mifflin Company. Boston: 1994.

**QUIZ ON WEDNESDAY, 11/13**

**Week 13- (11/18-11/20): They're Coming to Get You Barbara: Zombies**

- Elizabeth MCalister, "Slaves, Cannibals, and Infected Hyper-Whites: The Race and Religion of Zombies," *Anthropological Quarterly* Vol. 85, No. 2 (January, 2012)

- Brian Crecente, "Infection vs. Resurrection: The New Science of the Zombie," *Kotaku* (April 9, 2010)
- Kate Baggaley, "Why Are Scientists so Obsessed with Studying Zombies?" *Popular Science* (January 11, 2017)

**Week 14- (11/25-11/29): Thanksgiving break!**

**NO CLASSES THIS WEEK. ENJOY THE BREAK!**

**Week 15- (12/2-12/4): Making Sense of It All**

- TBD

**QUIZ ON WEDNESDAY, 12/4**

**Week 16- Final Exam: FRIDAY, DEC 13: 8:30-10:30 AM**