

Professor Rebecca Moore  
REL S 583 Satan and Satanism  
San Diego State University

## SATAN AND SATANISM ASSIGNMENTS

### I. Participation

By definition this means coming to class prepared and willing to discuss readings and topics. This will be measured through in-class projects and attendance, and not through monopolizing class discussions.

### II. Class Guide

Because this is a graduate course, more responsible levels of participation and leadership are required. All students will be a Class Guide twice during the semester. The Guide will take an assigned reading, analyze it, and prepare a five-slide PowerPoint presentation that includes the following components:

1. The title of the reading and your name
2. The argument of the reading
3. Important points to remember about the reading
4. Strengths and weaknesses of the reading
5. Questions raised by the reading

Each student will present their assigned reading using their PowerPoint production (five slides only) and talking for no more than ten minutes. We can assume that everyone has done the reading so do not re-tell the whole story: tell us what is important and meaningful about the story.

I will reserve the last 15 minutes of each class period to discuss with the following week's presenters the readings that have been assigned. I will also model the five-slide presentations the first two weeks of the semester so you will know how to approach them.

### III. Special Collections Assignment (Subject to amendment)

What is (or are) Special Collections? The Special Collections and University Archive of the SDSU Library house unusual, one-of-a-kind items. The University Archive contains materials directly relevant to SDSU, such as faculty notes and memorabilia, minutes and notes from department and university meetings, and other items relating to the history of SDSU.

Special Collections, in contrast, houses rare, fine, unique, and valuable books, periodicals, manuscripts, and documents which require preservation, security and care in handling. It also holds other valuable historical items such as photographs, prints, postcards, memorabilia, scrapbooks, and oral histories (<http://library.sdsu.edu/scua>).

This is a long way of saying that Special Collections has some very cool stuff. Currently the department has an exhibit of occult material that is owned by the library (<http://library.sdsu.edu/scua/new-notable/odd-scrap-magical-wisdom>). We will be visiting this exhibit on Monday, February 10, 4:00–5:15 p.m., with a guided tour led by the Head of Special Collections Robert Ray.

As a follow up to this tour, you are assigned the following tasks:

1. Identify an item, any item, which you would like to study further.
2. Examine the physical item closely: what condition is it in? old? falling apart? in relatively good condition for something that is 50 or 100 years old?



3. Examine the contents closely: publication information, author, text, illustrations, number of chapters, chapter titles, etc.
4. Read the item closely: what is the subject matter of the item? what is the author's approach to the subject (instructional? informational? advocacy? criticism?).
5. Identify other items through the SDSU Library catalog that seem similar in subject, style, topic, or are written by the same author.
6. Put all of this information in a 2–3 page descriptive paper that might help someone else who is considering doing research on the occult in Special Collections.

In other words, this assignment asks you to evaluate an object (probably a book, magazine, newspaper, or pamphlet) in terms of its physical condition, its actual content, and its historical and literary context. While it is unlikely (though not impossible!) that you will become a university archivist, you can transfer the skills you learn in this assignment to a number of real world situations: evaluation of products, manuals, services, contracts, and so on. In addition, you may find that you would like to do a research paper using materials located in Special Collections, for either this course or another one.

Important note: hours for Special Collections are M–F 10:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Due date = Mar 3

#### IV. Writing Project (your choice, A or B)

##### A. Three 1000-word academic book reviews (about three 4-page papers)

A book review is not the same as a book report. This is a particular genre that has its own unique requirements. Although you may never have to write another book review in your life, the skills you learn doing these are transferable to many occupations. Why? Because doing these trains you how to:

1. Investigate the author (who is he/she? what else have they written? what is their body of work? is this something new, or more of the same?)
2. Investigate the subject matter (what is the subject exactly? what have people said about it in the past? what are they saying about it now? who are the other experts in the field?)
3. Investigate the work itself (what is the argument being made? what evidence is presented? what assumptions or presuppositions are apparent?)
4. Assess the value of the work (what are the strengths? what are the weaknesses?)
5. Recommend the work (either positively or negatively)

If we were to substitute the word “proposal” for “work,” or the word “contractor” for “author,” we could apply the same steps to almost any type of critical evaluation that we might make. We always want to know the track record of the person we are dealing with; we want to know the opinions of others on the same subject, whether building a bridge or creating a childcare center; we need to study the proposal itself and identify where it could go wrong, or what makes it strong; and we ultimately need to come to a decision regarding whether we are going to proceed or not. Is this book worth reading? Is this project worth funding? Is this contract worth signing?

The five steps listed above are the elements required in this assignment. We will work through the first review together, by evaluating Jeffrey Burton Russell's *The Prince of Darkness*. Should you choose this path you will then review the original source for one of the readings in *Meeting the Shadow*. The final review will come from one of the books listed in the very extensive bibliographies appearing in *The Devil's Party*. You might also select one of the books listed in the footnotes or bibliographies of other assigned readings.

Deadlines are as follows:

- Mar 10 First Review (of *The Prince of Darkness*)  
Apr 14 Second Review (of an original book excerpted in *Meeting the Shadow*)  
May 9 Third Review (of a book noted in *The Devil's Party* or from another assigned reading)

I am of course happy to meet with you at any time as you are working on your book reviews. We will be somewhat working together on the first one, as you learn what is involved in the process.

B. One 5000-word research paper (about 20 pages)

What is a research paper? Different disciplines have different requirements and expectations. I think it is more helpful to think of this assignment as an “academic article,” that is, an article being written for a scholarly journal. If you decide to pursue this assignment, one of the first tasks is to select the journal in which you would like to see your article published. This dictates both audience and approach: *History of Religion* has a different spin on Satan than does the *Journal of Popular Culture*, while *Nova Religio*, which focuses on new religions, would definitely differ from *Harvard Theological Review*, which focuses on theology. In short, decide for whom you are writing.

An article is not a report, thus, it is not (merely) “Satan in Persian Religions” or “Modern Satanists in the former Yugoslavia.” An article makes an argument about something:

1. It advances research by identifying something previously unnoticed or introducing something unknown.
2. It takes issue with one line of thought, showing why it is weak or incorrect.
3. It provides more evidence in support of the prevailing scholarly consensus.

These are the three main approaches taken in scholarly articles, although there are variations on these themes. You usually need to do some extensive research before you are able to decide which approach to take.

Three possible sources for developing a topic include the “Permissions and Copyrights” section of *Meeting the Shadow*, the bibliographies that follow each article in *The Devil's Party*, or the footnotes or Works Cited sections of other assigned readings. Another approach is to take the research in which you are currently engaged as a major (e.g., Comparative Literature) and investigate a topic that advances your own knowledge of the field. What interests you? What do you want to learn more about? Which article or articles appealed to you?

Deadlines are as follows:

- Mar 10 Preliminary Annotated Bibliography. This will include at least five books and five academic articles. A two- or three-sentence annotation for each work will indicate that you have examined the item and have evaluated its usefulness to your project. In addition, the bibliography will note at the top of the first page which journal you have decided to write for.
- Apr 14 Literature Review. This will consist of at least three pages (double-spaced) that describe and assess the state of research about your topic. Three pages seem like the bare minimum required by a 20-page paper. This review will identify themes, trends, and issues you have noted in your reading of the sources. It is not simply an expanded annotated bibliography, but rather a discussion of the “state of the question” concerning your topic.
- May 9 Final paper. This paper—or shall we say article—will follow the citation format for the journal you have selected as your publication venue. Thus, you may have to use footnotes, endnotes, or parenthetical citations, depending on the journal.

These deadlines give you two opportunities to check in with me: first, as you are gathering sources and second, as you are trying to identify what the sources are all saying. I am open to meeting with you more frequently than this regarding your paper.

V. Two Essay Exams

Test # 1 is scheduled for March 17 and will run from 4:00 to 5:15 p.m. You will be given two sets of questions, with three questions in each set. You will be asked to write on one question from the first set, and one question from the second. Class will resume at 5:30 p.m. after the test.

Test # 2 is scheduled for May 12 and follows the same format, but you will have from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. to complete the exam.