

The University of British Columbia  
Department of Central, Eastern and Northern European Studies

## CENS 405 (3): Supernatural Folklore

### Acknowledgement

UBC's Point Grey Campus is located on the traditional, ancestral, occupied, and unceded territory of the x̣m̄əθk̄w̄əȳəm (Musqueam) people. I acknowledge the land rights of the Musqueam people, who for millennia have passed their culture, history, and traditions from one generation to the next on this site.

### Course Information

Course Title	Course Code Number	Credit Value
Supernatural Folklore	CENS 405	3 Credits

### Meeting Times and Place

CENS 405/001    Monday, Wednesday 15:30 – 17:00    Buchanan D314

Course Instructor	Contact Details	Office	Office Hours
Tim Frandy	<a href="mailto:tim.frandy@ubc.ca">tim.frandy@ubc.ca</a>	Buchanan Tower 901	Mon 13:00 – 14:00 and by appointment

### Calendar Description

Supernatural folklore and belief, with focus on its role in religion, health, and expressive culture.

### Prerequisites and Co-requisites

No prerequisites or co-requisites

### Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

**LO1:** Identify examples of supernatural traditions in European and Indigenous cultures and analyze them as components of expressive culture situated within specific historical, social, and cultural contexts.

**LO2:** Explain how and why supernatural beliefs have changed over time within popular, academic, legal, medical, religious, artistic, and other contexts.

**LO3:** Analyze and critique ways that specific expressions of the supernatural are linked to epistemologies and ontologies, and evaluate the ways they have been used to stigmatize certain subaltern peoples and to rationalize hegemonic power structures.

**LO4:** Describe, discuss, analyze, and interpret the complex and varied reasons why the supernatural endures even today as a component of our contemporary lives.

**LO5:** Craft effective and nuanced analysis and interpretation of supernatural folklore as a form of expressive belief and culture from a humanistic perspective.

## Course Overview

CENS 405 explores the supernatural as a quintessential element of our modern world. We devour media about ghosts and vampires. People express faith through belief in angels, demons, and miracles. We create emergent supernatural entities and mythologies, like aliens and Slender Man. We heal with faith healing, with New Age techniques, and with traditional practices like shamanism and Vodou. Why does the supernatural continue to exist in what is supposedly a more explained and explainable world? What does our continued fascination with the supernatural say about ourselves and the worlds we inhabit? This course examines the many forms of supernatural belief traditions that people express through traditional genres, through patterns of belief, and through religious practice, looking at how supernatural belief relates to other aspects of worldview, culture, and identity.

CENS 405 will challenge us to engage critically and respectfully with Indigenous experiences, practices and beliefs, and to engage critically with issues of power, privilege and cultural identity to gain a nuanced appreciation for how the supernatural can be (mis)used to rationalize hegemonic power structures, such as colonialism and imperialism, how it can be (mis)used as a tool for stigmatizing marginalized minorities, including Indigenous people, racialized groups, LGBTQ2S+ community members and women, and how it can be (mis)used to trivialize Indigenous spiritual practices.

## Course Format

CENS 405 is a lecture/discussion course. It is designed to be a mid-size course (capped at 50 students), with the instruction and evaluation of students supported by teaching assistants. Course materials (all in English) will be presented in class and online. In-class activities will include lectures, group work, and student presentations. Guest lecturers may be invited to address special course-related topics.

## Learning Materials

No books are required for purchase. All required readings and materials (see Course Reading List below) are posted on our course Canvas site ([canvas.ubc.ca](https://canvas.ubc.ca)).

## Assessment of Learning

Class Participation	10%
Weekly Readings and Assignments	20%
Midterm Exam	20%
Research Project	50%
Project Proposal	10%
Project Presentation	15%
Research Paper	25%

90-100% = A+	76-79% = B+	64-67% = C+	50-54% = D
85-89% = A	72-75% = B	60-63% = C	00-49% = F
80-84% = A-	68-71% = B-	55-59% = C-	

Class Participation (10%) (LO1, LO2, LO3, LO4)

Our in-class pedagogies depend on a mixture of lectures, and in-class discussion of readings. For that reason, it's essential that all students come prepared to discuss the readings. Students will be assessed holistically on their presence, preparedness, and willingness to engage with course materials during in-class discussion and activities. In the event you cannot attend class, please send me an email *in advance of class* as a courtesy, so I can plan accordingly (some activities might not work if there are too few students attending class).

Weekly Readings and Assignments (20%) (LOs depend on topic and almost always include LO1 and LO2)

For each week, you will read ca. two texts (see schedule) and submit a short written assignment on the reading, responding to one or two questions about the readings. These assignments are due every Monday, no later than noon, i.e. 12 PM, and they are contract graded.

Midterm Exam (20%) (LO1, LO2, LO3, LO4)

The midterm exam is a writing-based exam, that explores topics from the first half of the course—with particular emphasis on supernatural legends. It will be taken on the Canvas site. The exam is open book, and questions will be provided at least one week in advance of the exam on a Midterm Exam Study Guide. The exam must be completed by *Friday, March 15, 2024*.

Research Project (LO1, LO2, LO3, LO4, LO5)

Your research project consists of three parts: a proposal, a presentation and a paper on a topic of your choice (see Research Paper). It can be approached in a number of ways: You may, for instance, write your paper 1) based on library research on a supernatural topic; 2) based on supernatural accounts you have collected in interviews from family or friends; 3) look at the primary texts of supernatural accounts produced in online communities; 4) look at pop culture representations of supernatural folklore (for instance focusing on similarities and differences).

This project must be approved by the instructor prior to its submission (see Project Proposal).

Project Proposal (10%) (LO5)

Students will write a short, 150-200 word project proposal (a summary of your general topic, the research questions you're interested in exploring, and overview of the sources you'll use in your project). A short bibliography of 5 sources should accompany your proposal. Students will briefly present their proposals in class for feedback. This assignment is due Friday, February 16, 2024.

Project Presentation (15%) (LO1, LO2, LO3, LO4, LO5)

On the last week of classes, students will share their research with the class in a short 5-minute presentation, which will include the research question(s), the methodology and a discussion of preliminary findings.

Research Paper (25%) (LO1, LO2, LO3, LO4, LO5)

Your research project will culminate in a 10-12 paged (double-spaced) research paper of your own design, on a topic of your choice, so long as it is connected to supernatural folklore and concepts we have

critically explored in the course. This is a chance for you to dig deeper into a topic you're interested in. This paper is due during the scheduled final examination block (tbd).

*All assignments are assessed on 1) command of content, theory and concepts developed in the course; 2) the quality of humanistic analysis and argument presented in the assignment; 3) exercise of independent thought, critique and articulation; 4) the efficacy of communication in the finished product.*

## Overview of Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topic	Assignments
1	1/8, 1/10	Introduction to Folklore & Belief	Weekly Reading and Assignment
2	1/15, 1/17	Monsters Among Us	Weekly Reading and Assignment
3	1/22, 1/24	Hidden People, Little People	Weekly Reading and Assignment
4	1/29, 1/31	Witchcraft in Northern Europe	Weekly Reading and Assignment
5	2/5, 2/7	Ghosts & Spirits	Weekly Reading and Assignment
6	2/12, 2/14	Angels, Demons, and Devils	Weekly Reading and Assignment <b>Project Proposal due Feb. 16</b>
7	2/19, 2/21	Midterm Break	
8	2/26, 2/28	Shamans & Shamanism	Weekly Reading and Assignment
9	3/4, 3/6	Vodou in the German Colonies and New World	Weekly Reading and Assignment
10	3/11, 3/13	Neopaganism	Weekly Reading and Assignment <b>Midterm Exam due Mar. 15</b>
11	3/18, 3/20	The Political Supernatural	Weekly Reading and Assignment
12	3/25, 3/27	Folk Medicine	Weekly Reading and Assignment
13	4/1, 4/3	Ritual Healing	Weekly Reading and Assignment
14	4/8, 4/10	Presentations	<b>Project Presentations</b>
Finals	4/16-4/27		<b>Research Project due (tbd—final exam period)</b>

## Course Reading List and Schedule

*All the reading materials are available on the course Canvas site. You are expected to read the materials prior to class and come prepared to discuss them.*

## University and Course Policies

UBC provides resources to support student learning and to maintain healthy lifestyles but recognizes that sometimes crises arise and so there are additional resources to access including those for survivors of sexual violence. UBC values respect for the person and ideas of all members of the academic community. Harassment and discrimination are not tolerated nor is suppression of academic freedom. UBC provides appropriate accommodation for students with disabilities and for religious observances. UBC values academic honesty and students are expected to acknowledge the ideas generated by others and to uphold the highest academic standards in all of their actions.

Details of the policies and how to access support are available on [the UBC Senate website](#).

### Academic Concessions

Under UBC's academic concession policy

(<https://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,329,0,0>), students seeking academic concession for any of three reasons: conflicting responsibilities; medical circumstances; and compassionate grounds, should do the following.

If you miss marked coursework for the first time (assignment, exam, presentation, participation in class) and the course is still in-progress, speak with me immediately to find a solution for your missed coursework.

If you are an Arts student and this is not the first time you have requested concession or classes are over, fill out Arts Academic Advising's [online academic concession form](#)

<https://students.air.arts.ubc.ca/academic-concession-form/> immediately, so that an advisor can evaluate your concession case.

If you are a student in a different Faculty and this is not the first time you have requested concession or classes are over, please consult [your Faculty's webpage on academic concession](#), and then contact me where appropriate.

### Academic Integrity

The academic enterprise is founded on honesty, civility, and integrity. As members of this enterprise, all students are expected to know, understand, and follow the codes of conduct regarding academic integrity. At the most basic level, this means submitting only original work done by you and acknowledging all sources of information or ideas and attributing them to others as required. This also means you should not cheat, copy, or mislead others about what is your work. Violations of academic integrity (i.e., misconduct) lead to the breakdown of the academic enterprise, and therefore serious consequences arise and harsh sanctions are imposed. For example, incidences of plagiarism or cheating may result in a mark of zero on the assignment or exam and more serious consequences may apply when the matter is referred to the Office of the Dean. Careful records are kept in order to monitor and prevent recurrences. A more detailed description of academic integrity, including the University's policies and procedures, may be found in the [UBC Calendar: Student Conduct and Discipline](#).

Students might additionally consult the Purdue Writing Lab for general information on plagiarism, information on safe practices to avoid plagiarism and more:

<https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/researchandcitation/usingresearch/avoidingplagiarism/index.html>

### Academic Accommodation

Academic accommodations help students with a disability or ongoing medical condition overcome challenges that may affect their academic success. Students requiring academic accommodations must register with the [Centre for Accessibility](#) (previously known as Access & Diversity). The Centre will

determine that student's eligibility for accommodations in accordance with [Policy LR7: Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#). Academic accommodations are not determined by your instructors, and instructors should not ask you about the nature of your disability or ongoing medical condition, or request copies of your disability documentation. However, your instructor may consult with the Centre for Accessibility should the accommodations affect the essential learning outcomes of a course.

### **Class Preparedness**

For every class you are expected to have required reading and/or due assignments completed, and are ready to participate in discussions. If you require additional audio/visual equipment for a presentation or project in class, please notify me through email at least 3 business days before the class so that I can reserve the equipment.

### **Academic Freedom**

The classroom is a place for the open discussion of ideas and issues. The points of view expressed by the instructor represent a professional perspective of matters related to Supernatural Folklore, and you and your peers are expected to contribute. However, if at any time you wish to further discuss an issue taken up from class, or do not feel comfortable to engage, please feel free to contact the instructor.

### **Early Alert**

We participate in the Early Alert Program which helps me support students who are facing difficulties that are interfering with school. If you are feeling stressed, please notify the TA or the instructor and indicate that you would like assistance. While we are not trained to help with personal problems, we can get you help from people who are. Any information that they receive from you or us is strictly confidential and is in the interest of your academic success and wellbeing. For more information, please visit [EarlyAlert](#).