COURSE NARRATIVE:
The occult tradition is a coherent intellectual stream that has roots in religion, philosophy and history and which has tried to bring together widely disparate aspects of Creation within a complex structure of connections, sympathies and affinities. It would come to include the more supernatural elements of normative religion, such as providence, prophecy and millenarianism. At the bottom of all this was the firm conviction that the universe is alive, and that it has an underlying structure, and if only we understood it, not only would that knowledge make us happy, but we might even be able to manipulate its operation. Among the areas to be discussed are: Rosicrucianism, Freemasonry, Swedenborgianism, Spiritualism, Theosophy and the beginnings of Fundamentalism.

3 Sept / 8 Sept: Radical Religion, the Supernatural and the Occult

10 Sept / 15 Sept: Supernatural Supplements to Christianity
- Old Testament, Book of Daniel
- New Testament, Book of Revelation

17 Sept / 22 Sept: The Hermetic Tradition in the Renaissance

24 Sept / 29 Sept: The Rosicrucian Enlightenment
- Fama Fraternitatis (Cassel, 1614) = http://www.sacred-texts.com/sro/rhr/rhr06.htm
- Confessio Fraternitatis (Cassel, 1615) = http://www.sacred-texts.com/sro/rhr/rhr07.htm
Chymische Hochzeit Christiani Rosencreutz (Strassburg, 1616) = http://www.crcsite.org/wedding1.htm
Umberto Eco, Foucault's Pendulum (Milan, 1988), esp. chapter 45

1 Oct / 6 Oct: Millenarianism and the Fifth Monarchy Men

8 Oct / 13 Oct: Isaac Newton (1642-1727) and Radical Religion


22 Oct / 27 Oct: Freemasonry and Occult Conspiracy

29 Oct / 3 Nov: Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) and Swedenborgianism

5 Nov / 10 Nov: Occult Without: Spiritualism and the Re-Enchantment of Nature

12 Nov / 17 Nov: Occult Within: Psychologizing the Esoteric
19 Nov / 24 Nov: Theosophy and the Occult Passage to India
- Peter Washington, Madame Blavatsky's Baboon (London, 1993), chapter 2: 'Maloney and Jack' and chapter 3: 'News from Nowhere'.

1 Dec / 3 Dec: The Occult (Re-)Turn to Religion: The Beginnings of Fundamentalism

Learning Goals:
1. To learn how to see the connections in the history of religion and ideas.
2. To develop research skills.
3. To appreciate the ethos of historical research and writing: never accept what anyone says until you have seen and understood the original source.
4. To be able to express the results of your reading and thinking in academic form and written in an approachable literary style.

Prerequisites: none.

Changes to the Syllabus … due to snow days or the natural evolution of discussion in class: check your messages to see if this has happened.

Summary of Requirements: Two short papers (5-7 pages) (30%); informed class participation, (30%); and final research paper of 15-20 pages (40%), RESEARCH PAPER DUE ON THE LAST DAY OF CLASS. Success in this four-credit course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, papers, discussion sections, preparation for exams, etc.). As this is a seminar, lively discussion is crucial in order to make it a valuable experience. I expect you to come to class each day with a printed page on which you have written what you think are the key issues in the texts we are reading and how you relate to them. You may be called upon to share your thoughts with your fellow students. Furthermore, each session will have a designated ‘discussion leader’, someone who has read more carefully and thought more deeply about the day’s material.

Research Paper: Perhaps the most useful life-skill you learn by studying history is the ability to do research. This means not just looking up the subject on Google, but finding and exploiting the raw materials of history, both primary and secondary, organizing and crafting your findings into a well-written literary construction
including footnote source citation in a uniform style. We will need to meet individually at least once to focus on a topic, and to agree on a basic outline. I will be available for guidance as your work evolves.

Plagiarism will not be tolerated in any form. Professors develop a keen eye for nuances of language and tone that give away even the most subtle of cut-and-paste attempts. You are expected to be honest in all of your academic work. Please consult Brandeis University Rights and Responsibilities for all policies and procedures related to academic integrity. Students may be required to submit work to TurnItIn.com software to verify originality. Allegations of alleged academic dishonesty will be forwarded to the Director of Academic Integrity. Sanctions for academic dishonesty can include failing grades and/or suspension from the university. Citation and research assistance can be found at LTS - Library guides.

Attendance: This is a seminar: attendance is mandatory and will be recorded. Students will be permitted a maximum of two unexcused absences, after which the overall participation grade will be lowered by 1/3 of a letter grade for each day missed. Excused absences, which require notes from University Health Services or resident deans, must be discussed with me. Please be on time, and don’t leave early. If it happens too often, it will affect your grade.

ABOUT NOT LEAVING YOU TO YOUR OWN DEVICES: NO COMPUTERS IN CLASS. I notice that some students become very pious in seminars: they have their hands together and bow their heads, as if praying. I suspect they may be looking at their phones. Many students using laptops pretend to listen but are actually checking their email, looking at WhatsApp, scrolling through Facebook, and laughing at YouTubes of hamsters wearing hats. A study showed that students seated near laptop users were also negatively affected, like people sitting next to smokers. A study by a team of professors at the US Military Academy showed that students who used tablets or laptops did not do as well as students in sections where electronics were banned. There is much evidence showing that taking notes on your computer is not a good way to learn. If you have a documented learning issue for which you require a device, please come talk to me to discuss this.

OFFICE HOURS: My office hours are Tuesdays, 12-1 PM. That being said, I try to be at the University most days, so email me and perhaps we can find a time to meet that suits us both. The best way to get in touch with me is by email: davidkatz@brandeis.edu.

Brandeis seeks to welcome and include all students. If you are a student who needs accommodations as outlined in an accommodations letter, please talk with me and present your letter of accommodation as soon as you can. I want to support you. In order to provide test accommodations, I need the letter more than 48 hours in advance. I want to provide for your accommodations, but cannot do so retroactively. If you have questions about documenting a disability or requesting accommodations, please contact Student Accessibility Support (SAS) at 781.736.3470 or access@brandeis.edu.
If you are having difficulty purchasing course materials, please make an appointment with your Student Financial Services or Academic Services advisor to discuss possible funding options and/or textbook alternatives.