

MIDTERM EXAM

Art 197 Art and the Occult

Answer two of the following questions (choices indicated). Your essays may be as long as you like, but each question should be at least 3-4 pages in length. Your typewritten, double-spaced and stapled paper is due in class on **Wednesday, November 2nd**.

The first part of this class has covered the occult sciences in the Renaissance, in particular tarot, astrology, neo-platonism, alchemy, and magic. Remember that the point of this exam is to demonstrate how much material from this class you have absorbed and how deeply you have thought about it. In discussing these questions, be sure to use specific examples from class materials, perhaps giving a more extended discussion of one or two points as appropriate. You may use modern examples, but do not neglect the material actually covered in class.

In preparing your answers, you may discuss these topics with anyone, but the writing should be your own work entirely. When you refer to class texts, assume my familiarity with the material, so use a short internal reference only if necessary to identify a specific passage, for example:

Prospero gives up his art, saying “But this rough magic I here abjure” (V. i. 50 ff)

Exorcism is a model for magic spells, as Kieckhefer tells us (*Magic in the Middle Ages*, esp. 4-5 and 35.)

The Poemander describes the creation of the universe according to Neo-Platonic principles.

Part I. (30 points) Discuss the occult ideas and meaning in **one** of the following works of art. Images are available in the lectures in the password-protected section of the class website. Be sure to identify fully the work under discussion and describe the significant images.

“Mantegna Tarot”

Albrecht Dürer, *Melencolia I*

Hieronymous Bosch, *Garden of Earthly Delights*

Botticelli, *Primavera*

Illustrations to the *Children of the Planets* (one series of manuscript illuminations by the Housebook Master, another blockbook series by an anonymous artist.)

Part II. (30 points) Write an essay on **one** of the following questions.

1. How do the figures of Faustus and Prospero express the dangers, successes, and overall potential and ideal of the Renaissance magus?
2. One of the great controversies surrounding the occult sciences in the Renaissance concerns the extent to which they are appropriate activities for a Christian. Discuss this issue, being sure to give both sides of the argument and examples.
3. Many of the occult sciences in the Renaissance are based on the idea of the perfectibility of the individual through a process of initiation, testing, and purification, sometimes conceived as a spiritual journey. Discuss using examples that illustrate this idea.