

**Project II**

**20% of the grade.**

Projects turned in during class on Wednesday, December 9<sup>th</sup>, will be returned by the last day of class. All projects are due by the last day of class, Wednesday, December 14<sup>th</sup>.

Option A      Design your own Tarot

Design a Tarot deck that embodies a unified interpretation of the cards that interests you. You can choose whether your deck's theme is traditional, esoteric, or personal in its symbolism, but you will be graded on how well you understand the traditional purposes of the tarot. In your paper you must include a discussion of the overall theme of your deck and a detailed description of each of the 22 major arcana.. If appropriate, consider how you would illustrate the other 56 cards and how these cards might be used in divination. You must include a fairly detailed design for at least two of the cards, but it is up to you how you will illustrate those. Feel free to draw, use computer graphics, or a magazine collage, as you prefer.

In the occult tradition of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, it was expected that initiates would design Tarot decks for their personal use. Of course, each student would incorporate the specific knowledge taught to them, so that there are similarities in Golden Dawn decks that drawn upon common understandings of astrology, kabbalah, magic, and the tarot itself. Even so, there are dramatic differences between the various decks designed by members of the order. The standard divination deck discussed in Robert Place's book *The History of the Tarot* is the one designed by Arthur Waite and illustrated by Pamela Coleman. Aleister Crowley went in a very different direction with his Thoth Tarot, illustrated by Lady Frieda Harris. In that tradition, many modern artists have designed decks, the most famous probably being Salvador Dali. Nowadays, there is a veritable cottage industry in Tarot deck design, such that nearly every occult tradition is represented in a deck. In the 1970s, Vicki Nobel and Karen Vogel applied feminist spirituality in their Motherpeace deck. Perhaps less esoteric and more post-modern are decks like the Baseball tarot, or the Hello Kitty deck, many of which are published and sold by U.S. Games Systems. Designing a tarot deck can be an exercise of your spirituality, your artistic sense, or simply your wit.

Option B.

Write an 8-10 research paper on a topic of your own choosing, to be approved by the professor. Include a bibliography of your sources in MLA format. Internet sources may be very helpful to you, but make sure that your reference works include books and articles also.

Our library is not very well stocked in the area of the occult, and so finding appropriate sources will be a challenge. Please work with the professor to identify one or two books or articles that can be acquired on Inter-Library Loan and that can provide enough material for this short paper.

## TOPICS

1. Necromancy, in the middle ages. Kieckhefer and others have studied individual texts.
2. Astrology. Continued examination of Renaissance practice.  
Modern attempts to prove (or debunk) astrology  
Astrological symbolism in Bosch.  
Symbolism and meaning behind depictions of deities: Saturn, Venus, Mars
3. Individual Renaissance mages. Study could focus on one or two of their writings, available. Including:  
Marsilio Ficino, particularly *The Book of Life (De Vita Triplici)*  
Cornelius Agrippa, particularly the *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*  
John Dee, particularly CASAUBON's *A True & Faithful Relation of What passed for many Years Between Dr John Dee and Some Spirits*.  
One of the alchemical writers
4. Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn
5. Aleister Crowley, *Book of Thoth*
6. The mysticism of numbers: Pi, Phi (golden ratio)
7. Madame Blavatsky and the Theosophists
8. Occult practices in connection with Surrealism.
9. Freemasonry  
Freemasonry as part of the belief system of the U.S. founding fathers  
Anti-masonic movement (mid-19<sup>th</sup> century) and traces today.
10. Modern Neo-pagan revival, particular under Gardner
11. Occult novels with great influence in defining modern witchcraft  
Dion Fortune, *The Sea Priestess*, or *The Demon Lover*  
Helena Blavatsky  
T.S. Eliot's poetry  
*Ghost Stories of an Antiquary*, M.R. James.