

## **LS740: Bargains with the Devil: The Faust Legend in Literature, Film, and Popular Culture**

Are you intrigued by devil worship, witchcraft, magic and sexuality? Do the devil and all things evil make you curious, or at least make you shudder in an intriguing way? Then this course is great for you. Legends of a pact with the devil have long served as a metaphor for the desire to surpass the limits of human knowledge and power at any cost. Starting with the sixteenth-century Faust Book, which recounts the story of a scholar, alchemist and necromancer who sold his soul to the devil, and extending to the most recent cinematic, musical and literary versions of the devil's pact, this course explores our enduring fascination with the forbidden: evil; devil worship; witchcraft; magic; and sexuality.

The course will examine a wide range of popular legends of the devil's pact as they appear and are variously interpreted in film, music, and literature, from Goethe's *Faust*, one of the classics of world literature, to "Rosemary's Baby," to blues legend Robert Johnson, who supposedly sold his soul to the devil, "The Simpsons," "South Park," "Bedazzled" (the one with Dudley Moore and Peter Cook), and "Angel Heart."

We will be discussing the meaning of evil and the history of the devil; the infernal logic of political systems and ideology (Nazism); witchcraft, magic, and sexuality; the purported link between the devil and music; the devil as cultural interloper; and the devil and self-knowledge

We'll linger over the issues that intrigue us and spend time with the films, music, and literary works which we encounter. The goal will be to blend intellectual and cultural titillation and a substantial acquaintance with the wide-ranging popular legends of the devil's pact to explore some of the burning questions of our time.

The primary printed text will be Goethe's *Faust*, but we will also look at Marlowe's version of the Faust legend and at least one modern adaptation. The course will culminate in an individual project which presents a contemporary rendering of a bargain with the devil.