Final Exam Guidelines

Witchcraze & the End of the Middle Ages in Europe: 
a History of Magic & Cunning Folk

After discussing your reading materials and the documentary “The Burning Times” by Donna Read (available on the LINKS section of your class website), consider the questions below for your final exam debate.

You must participate actively in the oral examination that will take place on Wednesday 17th November, 2021. If your participation is deemed insufficient, you will be required to write a report to make up for the points needed to pass this course.

READ THE QUESTIONS CAREFULLY! Prepare your notes and get ready to speak!

1. During the “Burning Times” powerful institutions like the Church and the State blamed women, the poor, the sick, and those who were somehow found to be “monsters”, for social tension, poverty, and even natural disasters. They were persecuted and accused of supernatural crimes; punished, brutally tortured, and killed. Think of at least TWO similar scenarios in our modern world where our powerful institutions and society victimize those who are different, and explain your choices clearly.

2. In the film “The Burning Times” we see that the invention of the printing press aided greatly in the circulation of printed propaganda against women and alternative religious systems. How do our current print, visual and electronic media contribute to the oppression of modern marginalized and victimized groups? Explain and provide supporting examples.

3. Which area/s of research did you find most significant during our course? Why? Think of all the topics we discussed and studied: religious beliefs, paganism, the witch-hunts, social hysteria, and superstitions (werewolves, vampires, the Devil, etc).
One Story with a Happy Ending…

This marble monument to Judge John Powell (d.1714) is by Thomas Green of Camberwell. He was elected to parliament by the freemen of Gloucester in 1685.

In 1712 Powell presided over the trial of Jane Wenham, one of the last people convicted of witchcraft in England. Jane Wenham of Walkern, in Hertfordshire, had for years been accused by her neighbours of thievery, idleness, swearing, whoring, and witchcraft.

The trial took place on the 4th of March 1712 before John Powell, who expressed his skepticism throughout the proceedings. At one point, when it was alleged that Jane Wenham could fly, John Powell said "there is no law against flying". Despite his efforts Jane was convicted by the jury, and John Powell was required to sentence her to death. However, after pronouncing the sentence of death by hanging, he ordered that she should be kept safe. He then obtained a royal pardon from Queen Anne, and her release from prison. Because it was thought too dangerous for her to return to Walkern she was given a house on the estate of Colonel Plumer at Gilston. After Plumer died she was supported by the Earl and Countess Cowper on their estate at Hertingfordbury.