

AW 401: FUNGI IN MYTH & MAGICK SYLLABUS

Credits: 3

Pre-requisite: AW 300

Welcome to AW 401: Fungi in Myth & Magick! Fungi have played an important role in magick throughout history, but are often associated with darker magick & poison. In this course, the role of fungi in practical magick is examined, as well as spirits and spells associated with fungi.

Please note that while we may observe some fungi in the wild, in this course, we will *not* be engaging in the foraging or harvesting of ANY wild fungi, both to preserve ecological systems as well as to protect students. Our foci lie in symbolism and esoteric associations, as well as the storied history of fungi in witchcraft and magick.

Lessons

Lesson One: Introduction to Fungi in Magick and Culture

An understanding of fungi is initiated by diving into their biological, environmental, and spiritual significance. Across ancient civilizations, fungi played important symbolic roles. The lesson will explore the cultural nuances that shaped fungi symbolism, the reverence they were given, and their uses in ancient rituals.

Study: The ritualistic use of the Amanita muscaria mushroom in Siberian shamanic rituals.

Lesson Two: Sacred Dualities: Reverence and Fear

The duality of fungi is a recurring theme throughout human history. They were seen as sacred gifts in some cultures, while in others they were omens of danger or even death. This lesson seeks to unpack the cultural, ecological, and spiritual reasons behind these varying interpretations.

Study: The taboo surrounding the Death Cap mushroom in European folklore due to its deadly properties.

Lesson Three: The Shamanic and Mystical Fungi

Shamanic traditions across the world have utilized fungi as tools for spiritual exploration. This lesson takes a deep dive into the psychedelic properties of certain mushrooms, their cultural significance, and the traditions surrounding their use.

Study: The Aztec rituals and myths involving the use of Teonanacatl.

Lesson Four: The World of Myths: Fungi Gods and Spirits

Fungi not only played roles in rituals but were often personified or associated with certain deities and spirits. This lesson explores the mythological narratives built around fungi across different cultures.

Study: The legends surrounding the Fly Agaric in Sami folklore.

Lesson Five: The Dark Side: Toxic Fungi and Their Legends

While some fungi were revered, others were feared. This lesson delves into the various toxic mushrooms, their effects, and the legends and stories surrounding them.

Study: The myths linking the Death Cap mushroom to the deaths of Roman emperors.

Lesson Six: Fairy Rings and Woodland Tales

Fairy rings, naturally occurring rings of mushrooms, have fascinated and intrigued for centuries. The lesson will explore the mythologies, superstitions, and folklore associated with these and other forest phenomena related to fungi.

Study: English and Celtic tales linking fairy rings to portals or dance circles for fairies.

Lesson Seven: Fungi in Modern Magickal Practices

While ancient traditions are often the focus, modern magickal practices have continued to incorporate fungi. This lesson will discuss current rituals, spells, and practices that involve fungi, especially concerning their potent power as a semiotic symbol of witchcraft and magick.

Lesson Eight: Entheogens and Altered States

This lesson will tackle the term 'entheogen', specifically in the context of fungi, discussing how these substances can induce altered states conducive for spiritual or magickal workings.

Study: The use of *Psilocybe cubensis* in neo-shamanic rituals to induce visions.

Lesson Nine: Fungi in Eastern Spiritual Traditions

While the West has its tales, the East is not bereft of fungi folklore and magickal application. This session traverses the landscapes of China, Japan, and Southeast Asia to explore fungi in their mystical contexts.

Study: Lingzhi, the mushroom of immortality in Chinese folklore.

Lesson Ten: Fungi in Native American Lore

Native American cultures have deep connections with the land and its spirits. This lesson delves into how various tribes viewed and utilized fungi.

Lesson Eleven: The Underworld and Fungi: Connections to Death and Rebirth

The underworld in mythology often represents death, rebirth, and transformation. Fungi, emerging from the depths of the soil and their association with decay, have natural ties to these themes. This lesson explores various underworld deities and their possible links to fungi.

Lesson Twelve: Mycelium Network: Magickal Connections and Communications

The vast mycelium networks that lie beneath the ground mirror the interconnectedness of life. This lesson delves into how ancient cultures might have viewed this network and its magickal implications.

Study: The idea of the 'Wood Wide Web' and its potential ancient magickal interpretations.

Lesson Thirteen: Fungi in Dreams: Symbols and Portents

Dreams have always been a bridge to the unconscious and the mystic. How do fungi feature in them? This lesson decodes fungi as dream symbols and their implications.

Study: Amanita muscara in medieval flying ointment recipes.

Lesson Fourteen: Fungi as Gateways: Spirit Realms and Shamanic Journeys

Certain fungi have been employed by shamans to induce visions and journey into other realms. This lesson delves into the history, risks, and rituals associated with such practices.

Study: The Siberian shamanic practices involving the *Amanita muscaria* mushroom.

Lesson Fifteen: Preserving the Magick: Conservation and Sustainable Practices

In an era of ecological challenges, sustainable practices in magick are crucial. This lesson delves into how one can ethically source, use, and propagate magickal fungi.

Study: The importance of cultivating fungi sustainably, considering their ecological role.

Lesson Sixteen: Creating Fungi Talismans and Amulets

Fungi aren't just for consumption or ritual use; they can be incorporated into protective charms or talismans. This lesson provides practical instruction on creating such items.

Praxis: Crafting a protective amulet using a dried mushroom and other correspondences.

Lesson Seventeen: Fungi in Divination: Symbolism and Techniques

Just as runes, tarot cards, and other symbols are used in divination, fungi can be employed in foretelling futures or gaining insights. This lesson introduces techniques and interpretations.

Praxis: Using the shape, color, and species of a mushroom to interpret a sign or omen.

Lesson Eighteen: Incorporating Fungi in Modern Day Magickal Practices

The final lesson revisits the themes of the course and looks at how modern-day practitioners can make fungi a regular part of their magickal practice, aligning ancient wisdom with today's context.



Exercises

- I. **(Lesson 3)** Ethnographic study: students will create a brief survey of a local fungi practices known to them, either through research, survey, personal experience, or another avenue. This will culminate in a brief essay.
- II. **(Lesson 6)** Students will compare two folk or fairy tales regarding fairy rings, and consider the role that fungi play in creating the gateway between worlds, and as symbols of the passage between the realms of the living and the dead.
- III. **(Lesson 8)** Students prepare a literature review on entheogenic use – 5-10 contemporary sources on entheogenic use will be analyzed, reviewed, and then discussed in the course forums.
- IV. **(Lesson 18)** Students will create a magickal biography for a single fungi of their choice. Templates and suggested resources are provided in the associated lesson.
- V. **(Course Project)** Students will create a portfolio for their final project in this course, considering the place of fungi in myth & magick, especially for their personal practices, and give a personal exploration of the fungi archetypes and symbolism.

References & Suggested Reading

The Master Book of Herbalism – Paul Beyerl

The Witch's Cabinet – Corinne Boyer

The Green Mysteries – Daniel Schulke

The Witches' Ointment – Thomas Hatsis

Pharmako/Gnosis – Dale Pendell

Compendium of Symbolic and Ritual Plants in Europe, vol II – Marcel de Cleene, Marie Lejeune

Alraune – The Poisoners' Guild – *Hexen Press*

