Sorcery and Science in Häxan (The Witch)

Todd Meyers
Assistant Professor
Anthropology

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12:30 PM - 1:30PM
2339 FACULTY/ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Häxan (The Witch) exists as one of the most innovative films to emerge during the silent era and provides a fascinating window into wider debates in the 1920s regarding the use of film in medical and scientific research, the evolving study of religion from historical and anthropological perspectives, and the complex relations between popular culture, artistic expression, and scientific ideas—particularly ideas and concepts in medicine and psychology. Häxan is a singular work on many levels, bearing its own unique relation to all of these issues and yet not reducible to any one of them. This presentation offers an analysis of the scope and influence of Christensen’s remarkable work and an examination of the sources that made Häxan a living cinematic tableau.

Todd Meyers is Assistant Professor of Medical Anthropology in the Department of Anthropology. He is currently a Residency Research Fellow at the Eisenberg Institute for Historical Studies at the University of Michigan. In the past, he has held fellowships and received grants from the National Institutes of Health, the National Science Foundation, and the Andrew Mellon Foundation Population Program. His book, "The Clinic and Elsewhere," on the therapeutic economy of adolescent addiction will be published in January by University of Washington Press. His book on the neurology of Kurt Goldstein, "Experimente im Individuum: Kurt Goldstein und die Fragen des Organismus" - on which he has also presented in the Humanities Center brown bag series - will be published in March by August Verlag, Berlin. The topic for this Brown Bag is from a book, "Benjamin Christensen's Häxan," which he completed this summer with the support of a University Research Grant and a creative catalyst fellowship from the Jerwood Foundation in Scotland. The book is forthcoming from University of Washington Press late 2013.