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<td>Character:</td>
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### Interdisciplinary Studies

by nebulosaxiii

**Summary**

"Hello class. My name is Professor Nebulosa, and I have been granted the honor of reintroducing interdisciplinary witchcraft to the formal education curriculum in the British Isles. Welcome to the first lesson held in Hogwarts in 3 centuries." Professor Nebulosa paused, and distantly noted a few uneasy students glancing towards the door, and even more gaping at the ornate room. Bookshelves scraped the ceiling, mirrored china cabinets filled with knick knacks, trinkets, odds and ends, and shiny baubles caught the eye and trapped it there. Posters covered every inch of wall, detailed star charts and scientific anatomy diagrams, runic tables and obscure diagrams of what looked like circles and squiggles. She glided to the center of the room, an invisible wind ruffling her loose, layered robes.

AU In which the dark side is comprised of obscure, arcane rituals and the proponents thereof are less like wizard nazis and more like magical anarchists. Mostly focused on worldbuilding and magical theory in the modern day, through the lens of a newly introduced class. Less racism, more cross cultural magical theory.
This is set in an AU where Voldemort does not manage to return to his body during the Triwizard tournament. Dumbledore, using the context Harry gave him from his failed attempt, discovered the secret of the Horcruxes and destroyed most of them, and died in the process. Cut to a few years later and the hysteria has died down and the wizarding world is more open to reclaiming traditions stamped out by years of anglicizing colonizers and missionaries. This work aims to look past the sanitized version of magic seen in the children's books. It will contain controversial and occasionally dark magics. The characters are secondary to the magical theory being developed in this wider universe. I'm not gonna pay much attention to the war and all that jazz, but politics might come into play later on when the distinctions between light and dark get blurry and gradient. We'll see how far this plot bunny drags me.

Professor Nebulosa lounged in a plush burgundy leather armchair, legs crossed carelessly and an unmarked book of green leather propped up on her desk as the students filed in. They were badly masking curious glances but mercifully were not whispering, yet. As fifth and sixth years, they had a good grasp on proper manners in the classroom, and they settled down without incident. Her hooked nose peeked out from behind the book, and her fingers tapped the cover impatiently. Those happened to be the only stripe of skin visible beneath many layers of ornate full length robes and wide brimmed witches hat. She scanned the footsteps trickling in, noting the accent colors in the lining of their robes. Majority of emerald and cerulean, flashes of silver and gold and bright canary yellow, even a few deep rubies flared, such a lovely color scheme. She hummed in satisfaction at the relatively good representation, despite the clear cultural divides. As the last chair was scraping into place, she languidly rose to her feet.

"Hello class, and welcome to the first lesson in Witchcraft held in Hogwarts in 3 centuries."
Professor Nebulosa paused, and distantly noted a few uneasy students glancing towards the door, and even more gaping at the ornate room. Bookshelves scraped the ceiling, mirrored china cabinets filled with knick knacks, trinkets, odds and ends, and shiny baubles. Posters covered every inch of wall, detailed star charts and scientific anatomy diagrams, runic tables and obscure diagrams of what looked like circles and squiggles. She glided to the center of the room, a soft wind ruffling her loose, layered robes. She shivered, unaccustomed to the chill of the Scottish Highlands. She pushed such inane thoughts from her mind and subtly waved her wand to cast a silent warming charm. Her eyes scanned the classroom once more, and met most of the students' eyes inquisitively. They were over the shock of their strange surroundings and she took this as a cue to continue.

"My name is Professor Nebulosa, and I have been granted the honor of reintroducing witchcraft to the formal education curriculum in the British Isles. I have studied Witchcraft for the vast majority of my life and I've been deemed worthy to pass this on to the younger generations." She catalogued many confused squints and tilted heads. A shockingly blonde girl, wearing her blue and bronze tie in a bow holding her hair back, smiled serenely. The fiery red head next to her smirked, mirth dancing in her eyes and restless hands toying with her wand. The professor noted their faces carefully, somehow already certain they would be quite adept and beloved pupils.

"Allow me to give y'all some context into my background, as I'm sure you're wondering about my
"I was informally trained as a child in Bruxaria and Stregheria, which are the South American and Italian folk magics, the myths and superstitions and casual rituals of those with a deeper connection to the currents of magical energy. I attended the equivalent of my Hogwarts years deep in the Appalachian mountains (which is in the northeastern United States for those of you rusty on your geography). There are not many true boarding schools in the States, at least not for the younger crowd. We save cohabitation for the dorms in university levels. I do quite envy y'all. We lived at home and attended standard mundane schooling a few days a week, in order to learn the standard reading, writing and arithmetic. I expect eloquence, but I am quite flexible and value artistic self expression over stiff, academic structure. Witchcraft is an intuitive art, and is not easily simplified to the strictest of definitions. Most of the traditions we're studying were passed down orally, and only recently were gathered and written down by anthropologists and historians and academics. A lot of witchcraft is guesswork and experimentation, but that is not to say that it isn't a disciplined art that takes years to master." She glanced at her students, noting a dark skinned boy in the back corner smirking in recognition, toying with an amulet around his neck. Professor Nebulosa couldn't quite make out the inscription, but she sensed the heavy magical presence of it from here. Clearly, he is familiar with some of the more powerful forms of enchanting found in the old arts.

"With a solid intuitive base for my craft, I then achieved my Mastery in witchcraft in the West Coast Academy, usually shortened to the acronym WCA and pronounced Wicca." Professor Nebulosa paused for laughter, but all she received were blank stares and a few tilted heads. She sighed deeply. "Clearly you have not received even a perfunctory glance at modern witchcraft, that one usually kills."

"Witchcraft, in this time, has gotten a rather bad reputation. After the muggle inquisitions and witch hunts, magicals made an effort to distance themselves from the stereotype and eschewed a whole branch of magic. It is generally underestimated and overlooked as low magic, folk lore, women's work. Witchcraft is an umbrella term for any magic that does not use a wand. This includes Herbology, Potions, and Astronomy, as I'm sure you are all familiar with. It also includes Divination, Care of Magical Creatures and Ancient Runes, which you may have taken as an elective here at Hogwarts." She took note of the students who sniffed disdainfully at the mention of women's work, the ones who wrinkled their nose at the mention of Potions and rolled their eyes at the thought of Divination. She turned her large, sunken eyes on them until they sheepishly looked anywhere but her. Her piercing gaze had the uncanny ability to turn anyone transparent.

Professor Nebulosa paced across the classroom once more, the clack of her boots echoing in the silent room as she clearly pondered her words carefully. "However, what has not been taught in Hogwarts are what I like to think of as interdisciplinary studies. The combination of all these branches of wandless magic will create more powerful spells than any one wizard could cast. Incantations are long and fickle, but not as bad as the multilingual runic transcriptions required to cast a proper circle. The potions are complex, with obscure ingredients and delicate poisons, that can cause altered states currently beyond your imagination, of euphoria and melancholy and a cold clarity that cuts through all your previous beliefs." Suddenly, she seemed much older but no less
energetic than usual. She stilled completely, and her eyes gazed past physicality. The students shifted uncomfortably as they were forced to acknowledge that they may see the unthinkable and remember it so vividly as to adopt the same thousand yard stare their professor sported. The professor's abruptly darted around the classroom, and she continued pacing, a fevered glee sparking in her voice and her busy hands occasionally fidgeting with the many charms and talismans hanging from her neck and wrists and pierced ears.

"Wizardry is neat, formulaic, and subdued. Most spells require a solid arithmetical base and precise magical control. Witchcraft is wild, messy, and raw. It requires a rabid ambition, a desperate and intentional grasp for power." She paced past the windows again and hid her sharp smile, from most of them anyways. The wind chimes hanging above her head brought her attention back to earth and she turned to the students once more.

"Wizardry is quite useful for creating charms to wash your dishes for you, that's most certain. I do not intend to minimize the endless conveniences we enjoy thanks to charms and transfiguration, the most precise forms of wizardry. But it does leave something to be desired, in my opinion. It does not yearn for the ephemeral, it doesn't seek the intangible, it doesn't push the bounds of the unknown, or travel into the other realms." She walked along the side of the room, and paused at the window in the back of the classroom, pushing aside a gauzy lilac curtain and examining the skies. It seemed that everyone had a moment of reverent wonder, lost in thoughts inexplicable and vast as they stared at the multitude of abstract stained glass windows, or looked past them to the colorful kaleidoscope they created in the sky. They all indulged in a quiet reverie, a moment of rest to quiet the 6 concurrent trains of thought. Suddenly, Professor Nebulosa turned back sharply and her students snapped back to attention.

"Witchcraft, on the other hand, purposely eschews most conventions. Everyone's craft is different, there is no absolutely correct answer, and usually no sparks and lights to prove you've cast your spell. Effects are more long term and subtle. It requires astute observations, meticulous record keeping, and a deep knowledge in oneself in order to identify inconsistencies and changes. It requires brutal honesty and expressive reflection. You must be vigilant and militantly observant to track your progress, for it will be slow and subtle." Professor Nebulosa walked to the right side of the room, and indicated to a shelf of mismatched journals, some fat leather bound books and some skinny spiral bound college ruled notebooks. "These are selected works of my personal records, which you may read excerpts of relevant experiments, with my permission of course. You will be expected to keep a similar journal of all your personal works, that will be distinct from your class notes. You will not turn these in like your weekly reflections, and I will only take a quick glance to ensure you have written anything at all in the first place. Honestly, I have found the habit to be rather soothing, and could not imagine life without a few hours a week to reflect and reshape my experiences on paper. Our ancestors were not so lucky, they had to store their wealth of information internally. I mourn all the brilliant discoveries we lost with the death of every isolated cunning woman and rural sheep herder."

"Witchcraft, the subtle craft of the forgotten, has been overlooked for centuries in the wizarding world, for a number of reasons. The greatest was the pressing fear of the muggle witch hunts. Any similarities to muggle "witches" were outlawed in order to maintain the statute of secrecy in the paranoid time that necessitated the statute in the first place. Most wizardry can be contained in books, containing information, and wands, the only conduit they need. Witchcraft requires many physical components, from herbs to potions to incense to crystals to tarot decks to star charts to cauldrons to circles 10 feet in diameter carved into the ground. Witchcraft creates evidence, and evidence can be burned along with their bodies."

"Now, that we are no longer as blindly fearful and the muggles are no longer as bloodthirsty, we can start bringing back the old ways. Wizardry has been sanitized. It disregards the wide varieties of
magic practiced by people who aren't white males, and lately even shuns the spiritual roots. The simple magic of the cunning woman at the end of the lane to the mystical wanderings of shamans deep in the rainforest has nearly been stamped out by colonialism and oppression." At this, a washed out and pinched face blonde scowled, probably at the perceived insult of being compared to a lowly medicineman. Professor Nebulosa raised one sculpted, scathing brow in his direction and at least he had the good sense to look cowed.

"I'm sure some of you may have heard of the controversy Dumbledore stirred when he banned our traditional holiday celebrations and replaced them with the christianized versions. The rituals of Samhain and Yule are half forgotten in this new generation, and I daresay even reaching to your grandparents' generation." At this, the snooty blonde's face smoothed and he cockily jut his chin out, clearly not happy with the recent changes and thoroughly proud of his ancestry and roots. Good, good, she mused, she can work with that. Now onto broadening their range, their scope of valued experiences.

"The interdisciplinary crafts have been warped and abused and misunderstood, to the point of censorship of the more powerful and arcane magics. However, I am certain the most prestigious magical institution can handle power great enough that even muggles can harness it, if they're properly motivated. Magical capacity is not an on/off switch. There are degrees to it, forms of the craft best handled by "squibs" and particularly perceptive muggles. I know this may be difficult to absorb, Britain is an exceptionally hierarchical and stratified society, as we all saw with that self proclaimed dark lord terrorizing your island for the past few decades. But, I digress. I'm not your history teacher and I'm definitely not qualified to touch your politics. I just want to make it clear that the clean distinctions between "dark and light" that you have been inundated with your whole lives is irrelevant in this room. We will forget all preconceived notions of dignified and acceptable magics. We will engage in so called foolish superstitions and uncivilized, unstructured ritual. And, in due time, you will soon come to learn that humans are hardly the most powerful wielders of magic, and you'll have to get comfortable with the humility that entails if you want to get anywhere in your advanced studies. I will not be your greatest teacher, I'm simply the operator of the cosmic directory of knowledge." She noted that most of her students were baffled, even affronted, by that blow to their ego. Only the airy wisp of a girl with silver saucer eyes nodded sagely in response, the ridiculous bow on the top of her head bobbing and flopping along. Professor Nebulosa smiled slyly, delighted at the whimsy the curious little blonde would bring.

"Witchcraft calls on the power of the herbs and crystals and runes used to create the rituals. Witchcraft also calls upon the powers of ethereal beings, not unrelated to the ghosts and poltergeists Hogwarts hosts. They're a similar matter, incorporeal but occasionally visible to human eyes. They are more perceptible to our other senses, but it takes training to interpret those. Depending on who you ask, these entities may be Gods or Angels or Demons or Faerie or anything in between." A few students flinched at the mention of demons, and even more at the mention of Faerie. How intriguing, it seems the British Isles have not forgotten their ancestral experience with the tricksters. The ginger girl with the freckles and sparkling brown eyes seemed especially incensed, eyes narrowing suspiciously, no doubt recalling some questionable encounters with the noncorporeal. The brunette with the hair bigger than Texas instinctively reached for a rosary that wasn't there, no doubt she did not advertise her muggle religion in this oppressively atheistic magical school.

"All mythology and folklore regarding them have some grain of truth. These entities, these gods or demons or saints or fae, these expressions of divinity, exist universally among humans, yes even Muggles. The difference is the cultural lens we view them through. Not all gods are interchangeable, some may be unwilling to work with you and some may demand your attention. Some belong to closed pantheons, that only work with people born into the belief system, or people willing to devote themselves solely to one paradigm. Others are more extraverted, more willing to interact with all walks of life and more entertained by diversity. Either way, they all want something from you in
exchange for the priceless knowledge they are willing to share, if you manage to get in their good graces. This is part of what makes witchcraft so slippery, and dangerous, and supremely powerful." She noted with muted delight the manic gleam in a few of her students eyes. Yes, they were clearly intrigued. Here's hoping she could captivate them enough to tie them down to years of esoteric readings and dry academic texts.

"The first year of lessons will be comprised mostly of theory. We will have a crash course on Ancient Runes, Divination and Care of Magical Creatures, for those who did not take those electives. This will occupy the first two weeks of class, we will be splitting up in order to only spend time on your needs." A good natured groan escaped a few of their lips, but she shrugged it off and continued.

"Once we have sufficiently reviewed, we will begin the course work in earnest. Beginning with the study of cross cultural mythologies, we will begin close to home and spread out from there. The Celtic and Welsh pantheons, the Fae, and the spirits native to the british isles will doubtlessly be the most relevant for most of you. But, I am quite certain some of you may have better luck with the Greco Roman pantheons, the Catholic angels and saints, or perhaps the vast Hindu pantheon, or even the Eastern Asian spirits and entities. The study of these convoluted, divine family trees and legends will occupy the entire first semester." Professor Nebulosa noted the boy in the back corner again, his eyes glinting dangerously, as he continued fiddling with his amulet. Yes, she thought, he most definitely knows something of the old ways and may even have a friend or two already helping him. She recognized the olive undertone to his tanned skin, he clearly spent the summer under a sun much stronger than the one that shone on England. In contrast, the blonde who constantly looked like he needed to sneeze sneered even more at the suggestion of multiple pantheons. His pale ass probably never ventured past Western Europe, and it showed. She hoped by the end of her class that they could all recognize the validity of paradigms not personally held.

"I know this may be intimidating, but I warn you. Do not discount the cultures you feel are irrelevant, or even primitive. Chances are, you will be contacted by an unexpected entity and you need a solid knowledge base to be able to identify them." A handful of students looked scandalized, but an even bigger bucketful sat on the edge of their seats, names dancing on their tongue and previously unexplained phenomena suddenly taking form.

She paused at the center of the classroom, her incessant pacing calmed by the lightening of the subject matter. Laying out a syllabus and outlining study schedules were simple compared to trying to grasp the formless.

"All units are a week long. I expect the reading on the subject to be completed by Monday, the first day of the Unit. I will expect you all to come to class with a question or observation regarding the reading you completed, which will be up for discussion for the whole class or in small groups. This is a very interactive course, comprised of many perspectives and experiences. All of them are valid, and all of them are up for discussion. As such, class participation and attendance is vital. You will be required to turn in a reflection and summary every Friday, based on the readings, class discussions, and personal additions and analyses." Professor Nebulosa noted which students shifted uncomfortably at the prospect of speaking in front of their classmates, as well as the students that seemed all too eager to talk so much they might as well teach the class themselves.

"I will be passing out the syllabus with the unit schedule and all the reading assignments. This will be a heavy course, you will be required to read and research more actively than most of your other classes. I will hold all of you to a high standard of academic self expression, eloquence is absolutely essential in this murky field. It is truly difficult to put words to the subtle, formless and intuitive magics we will explore. There is an unabridged dictionary and thesaurus in the corner," with this said, her various bangles and baubles rattled as she gestured to the massive tome perched on a short
lectern in the corner near the door. A stack of books sat next to it, clearly other frequently used references. Most students blanched as they surveyed the mountains of text they were expected to at least skim.

"That dictionary, thesaurus and encyclopedia is a particularly clever work of charms, developed by an acquaintance of mine in Silicon Valley. Simply write your inquiry on the next available line of parchment. For example, "define asomatous". It will bookmark the appropriate pages. You can also search for broader subjects, and it will summon the relevant books. You are welcome to access it any time that I am not lecturing. If something catches your fancy, write it down and you may have some time to research it later. I will allow 20 minutes at the end of every class for research, and if you prove yourself to be responsible you may borrow relevant texts for a few evenings."

The professor paused to take a breath and check in with her students. A girl with a bushy main sat in the front row, craning her neck back to gaze hungrily at the wealth of knowledge so close. The Professor smiled indulgently, she surely will be a delight, or at least an entertaining contributor. The magic sparked around her, almost tangibly. Actually, it might be quite literally sparking, turning to electricity and running down those curls to make her hair stand nearly on end. She was certain to be a firecracker and the professor was not surprised to see the red and gold tie primly knotted snugly around her neck.

"I did my best to limit the dry and ancient texts, for now. Most of our required readings were written by my contemporaries, who did the tedious work of translating and analyzing and tweaking ancient magics to better suit our purposes. Many of these are limited edition copies, gifted to me by the scholars that spent years working on them."

The professor's eyes narrowed dangerously and she pinned each student to their seat with the power of her glare, one by one.

"I must warn you to treat the books lovingly and carefully. Many of these are from my own private collection, and they are well warded against damage, but they are hard to come by and I will be most displeased if I leave here with a smaller collection than I arrived with." A skittish boy in the back row gulped loudly, sporting a stain on his shirt large enough for her sharp eyes to notice from the front of the room. "I am happy to share my knowledge with you, and extend an open invitation to follow your curiosities wherever they lead you, as long as you allow me to follow your progress and guide you through the dangerous waters you'll be diving into." She gave one last appraising glance before relaxing and softening her gaze. "Hogwarts used to have an extensive and enviable collection, however your beloved former headmaster purged it of the most intriguing and informative books on the subject. I believe the majority of them live in the department of mysteries, but you didn't hear that from me." Professor Nebulosa winked and spun on her heel. "Y'know, I did consider becoming an unspeakable, but its so terribly boring to keep it all to yourself. I'd much rather share knowledge, even if it is with angsty teenagers," she murmured, not entirely consciously.

"Spring semester will be focused on methods of communication. This includes passive and active. Active communication consists of techniques to get the attention of your target entities, and the ability to clearly and eloquently express yourself to them. Passive communication is the art of listening, through a large variety of mediums. Not every medium may be compatible for you or your entity, so we will overview them in broad strokes. These methods include interpreting the stars, the cards, the runes, the bones, the movements of the birds, the patterns in fumes and the swirling depths of black mirrors and bubbling brews." At that, she patted the cabinet of curios closest to her desk. Upon further inspection, it was filled with alternate foci, pendulums and cauldrons and idols.

"You will be learning all of this and more this year, and the following 3 years, should you decide to pursue your NEWTs. Technically, you are permitted to take only one year, receive your OWL in
theoretical witchcraft, and call it quits. However, you will therefore not be certified to practice in private, and if you are caught you will face serious consequences from our dear Ministry. Now, I do not entirely agree with that punishment, but I do agree that supervised experience is essential. This is not standard procedure, in many other countries, especially the colonies that had their practices stamped out by the brutal boots of English invasions, they teach witchcraft to practitioners of all ages and provide safe and supervised environments to practice. There are many covens in the States, to varying degrees of secrecy and accessibility. I happen to have handfuls of contacts in most branches, which may prove useful to you should you prove yourself competent enough to keep up with the big boys. If you are an apt pupil, I may even write recommendations and help connect you to Mastery apprenticeship programs." At the mention of networking, a few students perked up and raised their eyebrows hopefully at her. She silently bemoaned England’s lackluster higher education, and swore to herself to push the brightest of the bunch into carrying on the torch of obscure and highly specialized interdisciplinary studies. Maybe she could convince some friends from the Academy to help her whip England back into shape.

"Witchcraft is exceptionally dangerous. The hybrid of disciplines leaves much room for interpretation, yes, and even more room for disastrous results. Inexperienced practitioners risk hauntings, possessions, and absolute lunacy if they are unprepared for the burden of what they invoke. Anyone caught dabbling in matters far over their head will answer to me, and it will not be pleasant. With that said, if you are drawn to matters far over your head, just tell me. I’d be delighted to point you in the right direction, recommend readings and supervise any extracurricular practice."

"You have one more class period before deciding to commit to a year of OWLs. I will be going more in depth to give a cursory exploration of the interesting and intriguing aspects. You will have a fair amount of freedom in this class, to explore areas that are more aligned with your specific interests."

"Any questions?" Her sharp gaze scanned the awestruck and speechless classroom, saw their gears churning too hard to put two thoughts together, so she broke the fourth wall and looked to the readers.

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