Poster Presentation
Witchcraft Pamphlets
Grace Griffin
Faculty Mentor: Jennifer McNabb
History

Witchcraft pamphlets were a form of cheap print in early modern England that provide modern researchers with valuable information on the stereotypes associated with early modern witches. Pamphlets of the early seventeenth century are of particular interest because of changes in the representation of witches in print after 1590. After that date, stories of witchcraft were written like a dramatic narrative of events instead of a retelling of legal documents. Victims in later pamphlets from the 1600s to the 1640s refused to believe they were bewitched or that they had done anything to provoke the witch. There is no clear answer to why the narrative of the witch changed, but during this later time period, the reporting of witchcraft fell into the hands of amateurs or professionals simply writing for a commission. Pamphlets no longer relied on court documents for source material; instead they focused on emotions and people's beliefs and opinions on witchcraft. My research studies witchcraft pamphlets from the first half of the seventeenth century to examine how they contributed to the changing narrative of the early modern English witch in print. I identified four major themes in the pamphlets: the role of the devil in the narrative; the crimes of which witches were accused; the geographic location of the accused outbreaks of witchcraft; and finally the role of gender in accusations. Focusing on these four areas allows me to argue that the cumulative concept of the early modern English witch underwent significant changes in the seventeenth century.