



# Coven Synergy

## Syllabus & Bibliography

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### Who We Are

Coven Synergy is an Alexandrian coven of the Chthonioi/Symbios lineage, located in Malden, Massachusetts. Our work and worship focuses on the Greek pantheon and uses an adaptation of the British/ Celtic Alexandrian Book of Shadows. We are a gay- and lesbian- friendly coven that does not segregate ritual roles based on the sex of the participant.

### Coven Mission

It is the mission of Synergy to facilitate the personal and spiritual growth of coveners in the Alexandrian tradition, so that Initiates will be well-grounded in the magickal arts, the religious/historical tradition, the Alexandrian community and their own personal devotions. Individual qualities of respect, integrity, compassion, responsibility and service are valued and encouraged to develop throughout our degree process. We expect that some members will form an ongoing core coven focused on devotional work, spiritual development, and training others. Others will receive their training, and will then leave to establish covens of their own, participate in the wider Pagan community, or join in Outer Court activities.

### Coven Ethical Code

Synergy adheres to the Wiccan Rede, the Threefold Law and to the standards of the Alexandrian community. We do not charge money for teaching or ritual. We are mindful of the power differential between Elders and students and so do not allow inappropriate personal, material or sexual exchanges within the context of coven relationships. Exploitative or abusive relationships of any kind are not tolerated.

### Organization

Synergy is a hierarchical coven led by the High Priestess and High Priest, which uses the levels of Pre-Dedicant, Dedicant, First, Second, and Third Degrees. A collaborative process of planning and decision making is encouraged. However, at times the coven leaders may have to make executive decisions in order to ensure the smooth operation and continued progress towards the goals of the coven. No member will be required to do any activity in which he or she is unwilling to participate. The High Priestess is the final arbiter of any disputes which cannot otherwise be resolved. In the following material, HPS refers to High Priestess, HP to High Priest and HP/S refers to the High Priestess and/or High Priest, in their capacities as coven leaders. Coven activities generally take place at the home of the HP/S or at other designated locations.

## Members' Responsibilities

Members of Synergy are expected to attend coven meetings regularly, except in the case of emergency or unavoidable conflicts. Rituals are scheduled well in advance so that coveners may arrange their commitments accordingly. We will meet a minimum of twice a month for Esbats, three times if a Sabbat festival falls in the month. We may also hold one or two other meetings for classes or social activities. Members make a commitment to attendance based on their level of membership. Synergy holds an all-night Yule ritual in which Inner Court are expected to participate; others, as desired by the HP/S may attend. Rituals are generally held on the actual date of the festival or moon, but with two exceptions dates can be adjusted at the timely request and agreement of coven members. Samhain and Yule will always be held on the actual dates. Coven members are expected to take responsibility for leaving the covenstead in order at the conclusion of all coven activities.

Elder members of the coven commit to involvement in the training and support of Dedicants and more junior members. In addition to providing ritual leadership and training, elders teach classes and may take on a portion of a student's training on an individual basis. The HP/S may also ask other members of the extended community to offer classes on areas in which they are especially knowledgeable.

## Training

Synergy exists as a training and devotional coven in the Alexandrian tradition. Training begins at the Pre-Dedicant level. The minimum period typically required to work through to the Third Degree is three years; it is usually longer. Dedicants are assigned a mentor through the Second Degree, who may be the HP/S or another post-second degree initiate. Not all Dedicants will be offered initiation; not all Initiates will progress to the Third Degree. The HPS may decide to conclude the training of any member at any time, should she decide that the fit is not right between the member and Synergy. In the absence of ethical concerns about the member, the HP/S would make every effort to assist the covener in finding appropriate training.

Coveners are expected to take responsibility for their own personal, magickal, and spiritual development. The syllabus makes clear what material should be mastered at each level of training. The mentor will be closely involved with training to offer guidance and support. The role of coven elders is to facilitate and to provide guidance and teaching, but the motivation, energy and direction must come from the covener.

### **Pre- Dedicant** (Pre-Dedicancy to Dedicant Candidate)

The Pre-Dedicancy is the starting point for new Coveners unless they have been initiated in another Alexandrian Coven. A Pre-Dedicant is not considered an Initiate nor are they a member of the coven. In order to be offered the chance to become a Dedicant, the candidate must have attended six Esbats and three Sabbats with Synergy, must have attended coven classes, must have met with the HP/S and other coven members as requested, must have the support of significant others, must have a schedule which can accommodate the demands of training, and must be personally and spiritually ready to focus on training. In addition, candidates who join Synergy after receiving initiation in another Alexandrian coven will generally be expected to meet the requirements of a Synergy initiate before progressing in the Synergy system.

A candidate will NOT be accepted as a Pre-Dedicant if he/she:

- \* Is under 18 years old, unless parents are willing to meet with the HP/S and give full, written consent for training
- \* Has done little or no self-directed work to explore Wicca as a path
- \* Uses drugs or alcohol abusively, or is in the first year of recovery from substance abuse

- \* Is experiencing major problems with education, career, relationships, health, family
- \* Is primarily interested in forms of spirituality which are not part of Synergy's practice
- \* Cannot work respectfully within a hierarchical system
- \* The HP/S thinks it is not a good match or is not the right time, or other coveners express strong reservations

If the HP/S decides that a prospective Pre-Dedicant is not a good match, she may decide to invite the candidate to open rituals or may help the candidate find open rituals elsewhere.

### **The Role of the Pre-Dedicant**

Pre-Dedicants are not full members of the coven. They are seekers assessing the suitability of the Alexandrian tradition as practiced by Synergy for their personal spiritual path; they are also being evaluated by the HP/S to see if they fit properly within this tradition. As such, Pre-Dedicants will not be asked to pay dues and will not have a significant role in determining coven business such as membership or training policies.

### **Goals of Pre-Dedicant Training**

To introduce the Pre-Dedicant to the basic content of the Alexandrian tradition, so that the Pre-Dedicant may make a fully informed decision as to whether to train for initiation, and so the HP/S can evaluate candidates' suitability for this spiritual path. To introduce the Pre-Dedicant to Alexandrian literature, basic mythology and ceremonial magick, depending on the background of the Pre-Dedicant

### **Duties of the Pre-Dedicant**

Attendance at all New Moon and Sabbat rituals, as well as coven classes (except in the case of emergency or by prior arrangement) until the beginning of Dedicancy or withdrawal to outer court. This requirement does not include initiations, elevations, Samhain or Provider Cycle rituals, which are open to Initiates only. Other arrangements may be made with the approval of the HP/S.

Participate in the Esbat.

Obtain a black robe to wear in Circle with a cord of any color except white, red, green or black.

Obtain and use a BOS/ magickal journal which can be reviewed by mentor. This book shall include a record of rituals attended, comments on readings, and class notes. The book may also be used as a more reflective journal at the Dedicant's discretion.

Set up and use a personal altar

Contribute food for coven gatherings.

Under the supervision of the HPS or Maiden, Pre-Dedicants may be asked to bring cakes, wine or flowers for rituals, set up and take down the Temple, Xerox rituals as necessary or perform other "manual labor" tasks for the coven.

If desired, choose a "magickal" name to be used in Circle and among the larger community.

**Required Readings:** The Dedicant should read each book, keep notes, and discuss each book with mentor. Substitutions may be made with the agreement of the HP/S.

Janet & Stuart Farrar's *A Witch's Bible Compleat*;  
 \_\_\_\_\_, *The Witches' Goddess* Chapters 1-6, 10, 13-23, and the goddesses we  
 invoke in Part III (Gaia, Artemis, Selene, Hecate, Persephone, Demeter, Aprodite, Hestia).  
 \_\_\_\_\_, *The Witches' God* Chapters TBA.

Doreen Valiente's *Witchcraft for Tomorrow*

Eden Gray's *A Complete Guide to the Tarot*.

C.J.M. Hopking's *The Practical Kabbalah Guidebook*

**Required Classes:** To be given by the Elders as needed; material may also be covered with mentor. Classes will include the following and will generally have a practice component.

"Alexandrian Coven History and Structure"; "The Wheel of the Year"; "Wiccan Ethics and Civics"; "Gods by Whom We Swear";

**Mentor:** As a candidate approaches readiness to take the Dedicancy oath, he or she should select an Elder of the coven (post-second or above) to work with. The candidate and potential sponsor should meet privately to discuss their compatibility and should formally agree to work together. Prior to making the Dedicancy oath, the pre-Dedicant should also acquire a "working" athame; this doesn't need to be one's permanent tool at this stage and may be borrowed.

## Dedicant

Upon satisfactory completion of the above, if approved by the HP/S, the Pre-Dedicant may proceed to Dedicant training. Dedicants also commit to full attendance at all rituals and classes open to non-Initiates. Training will occur over a minimum of a year and a day from the date of the Dedicancy Oath, and given the amount and complexity of the material, will generally take longer.

Dedicancy requires an oath before the coven to engage in a period of serious, sincere practice and exploration in order to fully understand the nature of a commitment to initiation and to identify how his or her spiritual development may best proceed. The oath involves a promise between the Dedicant and mentor which formalizes their relationships. The oath also requires that the Dedicant guard any coven secrets with which he or she may be entrusted. After taking the Dedicancy Oath, the Dedicant will engage in the following program of training in fundamentals of the tradition. At the end of this preparatory training, the Dedicant and HP/S will decide whether the Dedicant will become a First Degree Candidate. At this point, the Dedicant may proceed to Candidate training, may become an invited guest to select rituals, or may decide to explore a different path.

Dedicants and mentors will work together to track progress on requirements. The Dedicant should not wait for the mentor to remind them of requirements but should actively prepare to meet each one. Individual Dedicants may be asked to do individual work particular to their circumstances, background, or personal issues. There will be practical and written examinations, given when the candidate and mentor agree the candidate is ready.

### Goals of Dedicant Training

To develop an intermediate level of proficiency in mythology/theology, ceremonial/ritual techniques, psychic development, Wiccan history and custom, magickal skills, and personal/spiritual development. Dedicancy provides the bulk of the "content" training, which will be further developed between first and second degree. This degree involves a lot of assignments and practical tasks. The goal is to become a well-rounded, well-read, ethical, competent witch and priest/ess in preparation for the status of Initiate. The Dedicant does not have a major role in coven maintenance but is expected to focus full energies on growth, education and development. At the end of this training period, the Dedicant and the HP/S, and the Dedicant's mentor, will decide whether the Dedicant is ready to ask for initiation, which constitutes formal entry into the priesthood of the Old Gods.

**Note:** Please realize that Dedicants should not assume they will automatically progress to Initiation; a fair number of Dedicants will conclude their training before attaining the First Degree. It

is an equally acceptable outcome of Dedicancy to realize that the Alexandrian path or Synergy is not the proper fit for their further spiritual development.

### **Duties and Assignments of the Dedicant:**

At the discretion of the mentor, meet regularly to work on issues related to personal development.

Choose a form of meditation and/or energy work (yoga, Zen, Tai Chi, Reiki, etc.) and practice it regularly for at least three months, and preferably throughout the term of your First Degree. Track practice in your BOS, along with related readings.

Be able to set up the Temple correctly from memory.

Learn and practice the Lesser Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram, the Middle Pillar and energy circulation exercises; lead each for the coven. Practice each daily for at least one month and record experiences.

Research Gaia and Pan and prepare a presentation for the coven

Memorize the Quarter Calls of our tradition.

Describe the Quarter visualizations in detail; be able to draw invoking and banishing pentagrams in each quarter from memory.

Research the six deities we invoke in the East and West; present summary at New Moon.

Choose a form of divination and practice throughout the year (at least once a month). Record in BOS and discuss with mentor. Perform divination for any coven member who requests it during the Yule vigil (and you might expect the HP/S to ask!). Be able to list the Major Arcana in order from memory, with a brief description of the meaning of each card. Pass the Tarot exam, in-class and take-home sections, with a grade of 80% or higher.

Be able to list the signs of the Zodiac from memory, in order and with approximate time periods. Pass the Astrology exam with a grade of 80% or higher.

Choose a form of spellwork; research and practice. Be able to explain how to design and implement an effective spell, what caveats and requirements to include, and explain the use of the Rede and the Law of Return in spellwork. Develop and perform spells in conjunction with your mentor, and record results.

Explore psychic skills, including scrying, astral projection, past life regression, telepathy, telemetry, telekinesis, precognition, and aura reading. Be able to assess your talents; develop a moderate level of skill in at least one form. Be prepared to demonstrate!

Participate in Yule vigil

If you have a particular animal or symbol that you associate with your magickal self, do research on its history and science, and present to the coven.

### **Required Readings:**

*The Homeric Hymns*

Dion Fortune's *Secrets of Dr. Tavener*; *Psychic Self-Defense*; *Sea Priestess*; *Goat-foot God*

Thomas Tryon's *Harvest Home*

Katherine Kurtz's *Lammas Night*  
 Euripide's *The Bacchae*  
 mythology readings covering Deities invoked by the coven

Be familiar with: Leland's *Aradia*, Apuleius' *Golden Ass*, Regardie's *Golden Dawn*.

Read selections from Kraig's *Modern Magick* and Ashcroft-Nowicki's *Ritual Magic Workbook* as agreed upon with mentor

Choose books on Kabbalah, spellwork, tarot, energy work, meditation; read, take notes and discuss with mentor, who will assist in reading selection according to the background of the Candidate

### **Required Classes :**

"The Structure of the Esbat"; "Secrets and Mysteries: Oathbound Material: Part I"; "Wiccan Tools and Weapons"; "Beginning Breathing and Visualization"; "Power and Energy", "Quarter Visualizations"; "Magickal Self"; "Meditation"; "Kabbalah I" "Magickal Oops!"; "Divination"; "Spellwork"; "Psychism"; "Theology"; "Lesser Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram"

Upon satisfactory completion of these requirements, the Dedicant will ask for a meeting with the mentor, HP and HPS, and will demonstrate readiness for initiation. Ordinarily the Mentor will serve as the Dedicant's Initiator. Personal development requirements include evidence that you are using what you learn to stabilize your life and to grow in mental, emotional, material/physical, and spiritual aspects of your life. You must also show that your ability to use your passion and magickal will is evident in your life.

## **First to Second Degree Training**

A First Degree Initiate is considered a full member of the coven, and may attend all rituals except Second and Third Degree elevations. The Initiate may serve as Maiden or Summoner, should these offices be available. Ordinarily, a First Degree Initiate would participate in the Provider Cycle but would not take a principal role. A First Degree Initiate does not serve as a Mentor, but may, at the request of the HP/S, contribute to a pre-dedicant or Dedicant's training.

The period from First to Second Degree is designed to facilitate the Initiate's development as a fully participating member of the coven and of the community. Initiates represent Synergy in the larger Alexandrian community and will learn the skills and responsibilities to do this well. Elevation to the Second Degree is traditionally a surprise, given when the HP/S decide that the Initiate is ready. Second Degree elevation concludes formal training unless the Initiate decides to train for coven or larger community leadership. Initiates may be asked to pay nominal dues to increase or maintain the coven treasury, or may contribute in kind through providing cakes, wine, flowers, candles, or other supplies as needed by the coven. They may also continue to participate in or supervise activities assigned to Dedicants.

The Mentor will take a lower-profile role during this period, but should be actively in contact with the Initiate. In particular, the Mentor in collaboration with the HP/S would address any issues related to personal development of the Initiate.

### **Goals of the Second Degree Candidacy:**

To develop skills in coven management, ritual leadership (magickal and mundane), to meet the wider Alexandrian community, to develop skills in teaching, and to further magickal/spiritual/personal development. To deepen the commitment to the service of the Old Gods as a priest or priestess.

### **Duties & Assignments of the Second Degree Candidate:**

Be drawn down on in each direction; drawn down each direction on mentor. Record experience, thoughts and subsequent dreams in BOS.

Become competent in moving and directing energy; continue practice in martial arts or energy work until energy skills are developed to the Mentor's satisfaction

Take an Officer role in all (or nearly all) rituals during the year

Memorize the Charge and deliver from memory at least once when drawn down upon

Participate in the Provider Cycle; keep a journal of experiences, thoughts, and dreams during the cycle and discuss with mentor. Be able to discuss the meaning and purpose of each PC ritual.

Develop and explain your Birth Chart. Know what your sun and moon signs are, and what your Chart suggests about your personality, challenges and strengths. Computer assistance is allowed, provided you can account for the weaknesses in any computer program.

Practice Tarot until you can do a basic spread without relying only on the interpretation offered in books (although a thoughtful integration of printed interpretations is acceptable); be able to divine both global and specific questions, and demonstrate a level of sophistication in interpretation. Experiment with several different kinds of spreads and know when to use each.

Be able to draw the Tree of Life from memory, including all god names, sphere names, and attributes as given in our tradition.

Join the SEF during the period of training from First to Second Degree and participate.

Attend two meetings of the SEF, including at least one weekend retreat. Take responsibility for actively participating in the mundane work involved in retreats, such as cooking, cleaning, planning, etc. Synergy Initiates are expected to pull their weight in community events, practically and magickally.

Attend at least one ritual each with two of our related covens (Symbios, Spawn Far, Grove of the Mists, Chthonioi, NFND) Discuss experience with mentor.

Participate in at least one First Degree initiation in our coven or one of our related covens.

Be able to lead the approach to the Astral Temple and discuss the changing and unchanging aspects of the Temple.

Participate in leading at least one public Open ritual with SEF elders, including serving as an Officer

Attend the Lammas Games at least once

Take a leadership role in planning and organizing the Yule Vigil

Lead one project for coven development (i.e., series of elemental visualizations, astral temple work, coordinate *Shining Paths* study group). This should be an extended project, not a one-time workshop. This activity should lead to an area of expertise, for which the Initiate can become a coven resource.

Choose a ritual from the archives of our tradition, plan, and lead.

Write a ritual in the style of our tradition, organize and lead.

Assist in planning and carrying out at least one SEF public activity that is not a ritual, such as the Lammis Games or fund raising events. Demonstrate ability to follow through with commitments from planning to cleanup without undue supervision by Elders.

### **Required Readings**

Amber K.'s *Covencraft*  
 Ashcroft-Nowicki's *New Book of the Dead*  
 Judy Harrow's *Wicca Covens*

Bracelin, J. L. *Gerald Gardner: Witch*

Dion Fortune's *Psychic Self-Defense*  
 Dion Fortune's *Through the Gates of Death*  
 Dion Fortune's *Training and Work of an Initiate*  
 Dion Fortune's *Esoteric Orders and Their Work*  
 Dion Fortune's *Ritual Magic*

Dion Fortune's *Magical Qabala*

Gerald Gardner: *High Magic's Aid*.

Gerald Gardner: *Witchcraft Today*  
 Hesiod's *Theogony*  
 Ronald Hutton's *Triumph of the Moon*  
 Johns, June. *King of the Witches: The World of Alex Sanders*

Reed, Ellen Cannon. *The Witches' Qabala*.

Starhawk's *Pagan Book of Living and Dying*  
 Symonds, John. *The Great Beast: The Life and Magick of Aleister Crowley*

Arachne & Canopus: "On Tradition", "Clan of the Otter"

Selections from "Modern Magick"

Readings as agreed upon with HP/S on divination, Kabbalah, mythology, Craft skills

### **Required Classes:**

"Rites of Passage"; "Kabbalah II"; "The Provider Cycle", "The Great Rite", "Carrying Godforces", "The Astral Temple", "Coven Roles"; "Secrets and Mysteries: Oathbound Secrets, Part II"

## **Second To Third Degree Training:**

The Second Degree confers Elder status, allows the Initiate to attend all coven rituals except Third Degree elevations, and is the appropriate terminal degree for a covener who does not wish to take on major leadership responsibilities within the larger community. Elders may act as mentors and Officers within the coven, may serve as Maiden or Summoner, and may function as HP/S if the usual HP/S are not available or as requested. Elders may take a role in training and evaluating new coveners. After elevation to the Second Degree, the Initiate may begin discussions with the HP/S about whether to train for the Third Degree.

Traditionally, a second-degree Initiate may initiate others in our lineage. However, we discourage this practice in the absence of the intent to provide leadership and training to new Initiates (typically

demonstrated through a commitment to Third Degree training.) A second degree Initiate may, with the permission of the HP/S, initiate a working partner to the second degree as appropriate.

**Goals of the Third Degree candidacy:**

To establish relationships with the larger Alexandrian and pagan community, with the intent of becoming an active participant and/or leader. To develop skills necessary to form a teaching group or coven. To learn to develop and teach classes to the public, Dedicants, and Initiates of our tradition. To learn the meaning and techniques involved in initiations/elevations. To make a deep and lasting commitment to the worship and service of the Old Gods and Their people.

**Duties & Assignments of Third Degree candidates**

Third Degree candidates will actively assist the HP/S in planning the year's course of study for Dedicants and Initiates in the coven, and will teach a selection of classes. They will teach, at a minimum, beginning and intermediate classes on Kabbalah, Coven History, Structure of the Esbat, Gods by Whom We Swear, Carrying Godforms, Great Rite, and LBR. Candidates may be assisted by, and will be observed by, the HP/S. Candidates will be assessed as to their mastery of the material and their skills at teaching. Candidates are expected to have more than a basic level of mastery in each area taught; i.e., the candidate would not simply repeat class notes from their own training.

Volunteer to take a significant role in planning and facilitating two SEF retreats, or equivalent. At least one role should involve planning and leading a ritual for the group at the retreat. Third degree candidates are expected to assume responsibility and leadership for the "mundane" tasks at the retreats, from set-up to clean-up, along with other Elders in the community.

Become familiar with the contents of the coven archives. Select at least one ritual from our tradition, plan, invite Alexandrian Initiates from other covens, and lead. Demonstrate an understanding of the responsibility of passing on traditional material as well as designing appropriate variants.

Write and lead a Sabbat ritual based on the BoS and other traditional materials.

Write a major ritual for the coven. This may be a celebration of a patron or coven deity, a rite of passage, a substitute for one of our traditional Sabbats, or a ritual pathworking.

Candidates will actively mentor Dedicants and Initiates in the coven, and will assist with screening potential new members.

Help lead three public rituals with SEF (or other) elders.

Take major roles in first and second degree initiations within our community.

With the guidance of the HP/S, develop and carry out a project which integrates your training in a form that benefits the wider community. Develop a written proposal, present to HP/S and have approved before beginning. This should develop proficiency that is both relevant to the Candidate and represents a significant resource to the community.

Examples:

*Write a set of rituals that can be used at public opens, including Sabbats and/or rites of passage; make sets available on a password-protected web-site.*

*Study the evolution of various rituals from the BoS and Lucifer through our coven and our sister covens; write up your findings and present to the community.*

*Ask the SEF board what major project the community needs to have done and facilitate, with the help of others as needed.*

*Write up a syllabus and class notes/handouts for an 8-week Wicca 101 for the public.*

Contribute an article on any appropriate subject to a pagan publication, such as the SEF Messenger, Horns & Crescent, or a publication with wider circulation.

Assist in teaching Dedicant, First and Second Degree classes.

### **Required Readings:**

Third degree candidates should read widely in order to develop classes, continue their own specialization, and participate in wider projects. Readings, such as the non-fiction of Dion Fortune and Alice Bailey, should build on previous work and represent advanced study. During this period, the candidate should review materials in the coven archives. Materials may be Xeroxed from the archives at this time, and the BOS we received from Summanus may be copied.

### **Classes for Third Degree Candidates**

In addition to teaching, candidates will participate in advanced classes as offered by the larger pagan and/or new age community, as interests suggest. The Initiate should meet with the HP/S to learn processes related to initiation/elevation and should demonstrate understanding of the magickal and mundane processes, as well as the responsibilities involved.

When all requirements are complete, and upon the approval of the HP/S, the Third Degree Candidate will write and lead his or her Third Degree elevation ritual, including required elements from our tradition.

## **Third Degree Initiates**

Third Degree Initiates are empowered to start their own Alexandrian coven and to pass on initiation through our lineage. Coven leaders are expected to stay in touch with other coven leaders of our tradition, but other than that they may develop their covens as they will. Third Degree Initiates may also choose to remain within Synergy as Elders. This would be particularly appropriate if the Initiate were serving in a major capacity within the larger community; i.e., running public classes and rituals, coordinating a community service project, heavily involved in SEF, etc. Third Degree Initiates who leave the area may start their own covens elsewhere, and are encouraged to stay in touch to some extent with the Boston community if possible.

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(note: should be reconciled with later revisions on other computer...8/06)