

# MICROBES MAKE THE WORLD GO AROUND

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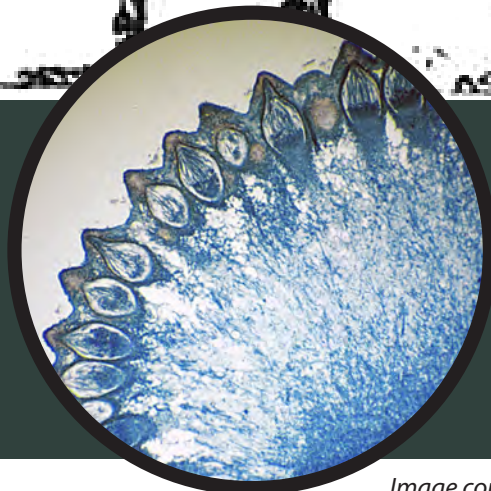
Tu/Th 10-11am

CCN: 71152

Professor N. Louise Glass



Although often unseen, microbes are everywhere! This course covers the role that microbes, including archaea, bacteria, protists and fungi, play in terrestrial, marine and extreme environments and their effect on the geochemistry of the earth. In addition, we will explore the profound effects of microbes on human and plant health and how microbes have changed the course of human history.



The Salem Witch Trials (above) erupted after accusations were made by eight young women who claimed to be suffering from strange symptoms characterized by violent muscle spasms, vomiting, delusions, hallucinations, crawling sensations on the skin, and a host of other symptoms—to them, a product of witchcraft. Scholars now believe that such symptoms were a result of ergot poisoning, caused by the fungus *Claviceps purpurea* (left), which affects rye, wheat and other cereal grasses. At that time, rye was the staple grain of Salem. The rye crop consumed in the winter of 1691 to 1692—when the first unusual symptoms began to be reported—could easily have been contaminated by large quantities of ergot. These, and other clues, build a substantial case of ergot poisoning that is hard to ignore.

Image courtesy of George Barron and the University of Guelph (<https://atrium.lib.uoguelph.ca/xmlui/handle/10214/5726>)



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