

## **Textual Bodies in the Study of Religion**

Extraordinary, Exposed Bodies  
REL 630 | Fall 2015

Professor William Robert

Office hours: Monday 1–3 p.m. and by appointment, Tolley Humanities Center 305

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### **Approaches and Aspirations**

This seminar explores intersections of texts and bodies within religious cultures: texts as bodies (from literary corpus to material object), bodies as texts (inscribed and read), and—above all—bodies in texts. Our readings include recent theoretical writings, thirteenth-century Franciscan materials, and sources related to student research interests.

### **Texts**

Angela of Foligno, *Complete Works*

Hélène Cixous, *Coming to Writing and Other Essays*

Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, *The Newly Born Woman*

Hélène Cixous and Jacques Derrida, *Veils*

Francis of Assisi: *Early Documents*, volumes 1 & 2

Sigmund Freud, *The Psychology of Love*

Jean-Luc Nancy, *Corpus*

Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain*

### **Responsibilities**

Imaginative sympathy, hermeneutic charity, close reading, critical acumen, inventive analysis, conceptual precision, linguistic clarity, punctual attendance, active participation, sustained engagement, communal respect, academic integrity

### **Activities and Assessment**

In addition to active participation in our seminar meetings, we will engage in the following activities that afford opportunities to deepen and to assess your learning.

Critical summaries

Throughout the semester, you will share with our seminar critical summaries of 3 supplementary texts (or texts among the additional resources listed). Each summary should be approximately 600 words.

Analytic essays

Analysis's etymological ancestor is *analuô*: to unloose, undo, release. Analysis undoes. It unloosens texts from their discursive sedimentations, releasing their potentials to mean, to signify, to address texts and readers. Each of these essays gives you an opportunity to unloosen a portion of a seminar text by reading it very carefully and by developing an analysis-argument based on that reading and supported by that text. Each essay should be approximately 1200 words.

## Synthetic essay and colloquium presentation

Our seminar will conclude with a colloquium, at which you will present a synthetic essay (and respond to questions about it). Synthesis involves putting together, framing, composing. This essay gives you an opportunity to put together texts to frame a site of investigation or intervention, and then to compose a constructive essay. Your essay should be analytically rigorous and imaginatively insightful, offering new ways of reading and thinking with and through the texts it engages. It should draw upon course texts, secondary sources, and materials from your ongoing research. Your essay should be approximately 2500 words.

These assessed opportunities for learning and achievement (i.e., assignments) will translate into your course grade based on the following weighted valuations:

Active participation	18%
Critical summaries	6%
Analytic essay #1	12%
Analytic essay #2	12%
Colloquium presentation	12%
Synthetic essay	40%

Assignments are due by 3:45 p.m. on the assigned days. Late work will not be accepted. Enrollment in this seminar will indicate your understanding of and agreement to its goals, policies, and requirements. We will follow Syracuse University policies on academic integrity, learning accommodations, and religious observances.

## Office Hours

You can make an appointment for office hours at <https://williamrobert1.youcanbook.me>. (You can also drop by without an appointment.)

## Words for Thought

“Body is the being-exposed of being.” (Jean-Luc Nancy)

“She hadn’t realized the day before that eyes are miraculous hands, had never enjoyed the delicate tact of the cornea, the eyelashes, the most powerful hands, these hands that touch imponderably near and far-off heres. She had not realized that eyes are lips on the lips of God.” (Hélène Cixous)

## Seminar Plan

Weeks 1–6: Theoretical Opening

Bodies as Texts

Extended Engagement with Hélène Cixous

“This Is My Body”

When Bodies and Languages Come Undone

Weeks 7–11: Case Study: Extraordinary, Exposed, Medieval, Franciscan Bodies

The Stigmatized Body of Francis of Assisi

The Wounded Body of Christ

The Mystical Body of Angela of Foligno

Weeks 12–13: Student Research

## Schedule of Meetings, Readings, and Assignments

- 31 August        Sigmund Freud, *Dora* and *Three Essays on Sexual Theory*  
                      Supplementary: Leo Bersani, *The Freudian Body*  
                      Supplementary: Sigmund Freud, *The Schreber Case*
- 7 September     Labor Day
- 14 September    Hélène Cixous, “Sorties”  
                      Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, “The Untenable”  
                      Supplementary: Hélène Cixous, “The Laugh of the Medusa”
- 21 September    Hélène Cixous, *Coming to Writing and Other Essays*
- 28 September    Hélène Cixous and Jacques Derrida, *Veils*
- 5 October        Jean-Luc Nancy, *Corpus* (session on translation)
- 12 October       Elaine Scarry, “The Structure of Torture” and “Pain and Imagining”  
                      Talal Asad, “Pain and Truth in Medieval Christian Ritual”  
                      Talal Asad, “Thinking about Agency and Pain”  
                      Karmen MacKendrick, “Asceticism”  
                      Supplementary: Talal Asad, “Reflections on Cruelty and Torture”
- 19 October       Francis of Assisi, writings  
                      Thomas of Celano, *Life of Saint Francis*  
                      Supplementary: Henri of Avranches, *Versified Life of Saint Francis*  
                      Supplementary: Julian of Speyer, *Life of Saint Francis*  
                      Supplementary: Karmen MacKendrick, “The Multipliable Body”
- 26 October       Thomas of Celano, *Treatise on the Miracles of Saint Francis*  
                      Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, *Major Legend of Saint Francis*

Supplementary: Glenn Burger and Steven Kruger, introduction to  
*Queering the Middle Ages*  
Supplementary: Arnold Davidson, "Miracles of Bodily Transformation,  
or How Saint Francis Received the Stigmata"  
Supplementary: Suzanne Lewis, "Medieval Bodies Then and Now"

- 2 November Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, *Mystical Vine*  
*Meditations on the Life of Christ*  
Thomas Bestul, "The Passion and the Institution of Torture"  
Anne Kirkham and Cordelia Warr, "Wounds in the Middle Ages"  
Flora Lewis, "The Wound in Christ's Side and the Instruments of the  
Passion"  
Supplementary: Aelred of Rievaulx, *Rule for the Life of a Recluse*  
Supplementary: Mark Amsler, "Affective Literacy: Gestures of Reading  
in the Later Middle Ages"  
Supplementary: Vladimir Gurewich, "Observations on the  
Iconography of the Wound in Christ's Side"  
Supplementary: Nancy Thebaut, "Bleeding Pages, Bleeding Bodies"
- 9 November Angela of Foligno, *Memorial*  
Supplementary: Amy Hollywood, "'That Glorious Slit'"  
Supplementary: Karma Lochrie, "Mystical Acts, Queer Tendencies"
- 16 November Angela of Foligno, *Memorial* (session on scholarly methods)  
Luce Irigaray, "La Mystérique"  
Luce Irigaray, "When Our Lips Speak Together"
- 23 November Thanksgiving break
- 30 November Student research
- 7 December Colloquium
- 17 December Colloquium paper due

## Additional Resources

- Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*
- Gail Ashton, *The Generation of Identity in Late Medieval Hagiography: Speaking the Saint*
- Georges Bataille, *Inner Experience*
- Sarah Beckwith, *Christ's Body: Identity, Culture, and Society in Late Medieval Writings*
- Catherine Bell, "Performance" (in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*)
- Charlotte Berkowitz, "Paradise Reconsidered: Hélène Cixous and the Bible's Other Voice" (in *Religion in French Feminist Thought*)
- Leo Bersani, *Is the Rectum a Grave? and Other Essays*
- Bettina Bildhauer, *Medieval Blood*
- Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, *Itinerarium mentis in deum*
- Book of Margery Kempe*
- Kent Brintnall, *Ecce Homo: The Male-Body-in-Pain as Redemptive Figure*
- Rosalind Brooke, *The Image of Saint Francis: Responses to Sainthood in the Thirteenth Century*
- Vern Bullough and James Brundage (eds.), *Handbook of Medieval Sexuality*
- Bill Burgwinkle and Cary Howie, *Sanctity and Pornography in Medieval Culture: On the Verge*
- Virginia Burrus, *The Sex Lives of Saints: An Erotics of Ancient Hagiography*
- Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*
- , *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*
- , *Undoing Gender*
- Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion*
- , "Jesus as Mother and Abbot as Mother" (in *Jesus as Mother*)
- , "Why All the Fuss about the Body? A Medievalist's Perspective," *Critical Inquiry* 22.1 (1995): 1–33
- Jean-Louis Chrétien, "Body and Touch" (in *The Call and the Response*)
- , "The Wounded Word" (in *Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn"*)
- Hélène Cixous, *The Third Body*
- , *Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing*
- John Coakley, "Friars, Sanctity, and Gender: Mendicant Encounters with Saints, 1250–1325" (in *Medieval Masculinities*)
- Andrew Cole and D. Vance Smith (eds.), *The Legitimacy of the Middle Ages: On the Unwritten History of Theory*
- Susannah Cornwall, "Is the Christian Theological Tradition Queer?" (in *Controversies in Queer Theology*)
- Timothy Dean, *Unlimited Intimacy: Reflections on the Subculture of Barebacking*
- Anne Derbes, *Picturing the Passion in Late Medieval Italy*
- Jacques Derrida, *H.C. For Life, That Is To Say ...*
- , *On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy*
- Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern*
- , "Temporalities" (in *Oxford Twenty-First Century Approaches to Literature: Middle English*)
- Carolyn Dinshaw and Karma Lochrie, "Queering History," *PMLA* 121.3 (2006): 837–38

- Carolyn Dinshaw et al., "Theorizing Queer Temporalities: A Roundtable Discussion," *GLQ* 13.2–3 (2007): 177–95
- Anne Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality* Michel Fehrer (ed.), *Fragments for a History of the Human Body* (3 vols.)
- Abigail Firey (ed.), *A New History of Penance*
- Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, vols. 1–3
- , "1 March 1978" (in *Security, Territory, Population*)
- Carla Freccero, *Queer/Early/Modern*
- , "Queer Times" (in *After Sex?*)
- Elizabeth Freeman, "Time Binds, or Erotohistoriography," *Social Text* 84–85 23.3–4 (2005): 57–68
- Sigmund Freud and Joseph Breuer, *Studies in Hysteria*
- Stephen Garton, *Histories of Sexuality*
- Gertrud of Helfta, *Herald of Divine Love*
- Valentin Groebner, *Defaced: The Visual Culture of Violence in the Late Middle Ages*
- Jeffrey Hamburger and Anne-Marie Bouché (eds.), *The Mind's Eye: Art and Theological Argument in the Middle Ages*
- April Harper and Caroline Proctor (eds.), *Medieval Sexuality: A Casebook*
- Amy Hollywood, "Gender, Agency, and the Divine in Religious Historiography," *Journal of Religion* 84.4 (2004): 514–28
- , "Mysticism, Death, and Desire in the Work of Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément" (in *Religion in French Feminist Thought*)
- , "The Normal, the Queer, and the Middle Ages," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 10.2 (2001): 173–79
- Amy Hollywood and Patricia Beckman (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism*
- Lynne Huffer, *Are the Lips a Grave?*
- Luce Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*
- Jacopone of Todi, *Lauds*
- François Jullien, *De l'intime: Loin du bruyant Amour*
- Ruth Mazo Karras, *Sexuality in Medieval Europe: Doing Unto Others* (2nd ed.)
- Jonathan Kemp, *The Penetrated Male*
- Arnaud de La Croix, *L'érotisme au Moyen Âge*
- Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*
- Jacques Le Goff and Nicolas Truong, *Une histoire du corps au Moyen Âge*
- Sara Lipton, "Images and Their Uses" (in *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, vol. 4)
- Karmen MacKendrick, *Divine Enticement: Theological Seductions*
- , *Word Made Skin: Figuring Language at the Surface of Flesh*
- David Matzko McCarthy, "Desirous Saints" (in *Queer Theology*)
- Cristina Mazzoni, *Saint Hysteria: Neurosis, Mysticism, and Gender in European Culture*
- Bernard McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism: Men and Women in the New Mysticism (1200–1350)*
- Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*
- , "The Intertwining—The Chiasm" (in *The Visible and the Invisible*)
- Robert Mills, "Queering the Un/Godly: Christ's Humanities and Medieval Sexualities" (in *Queering the Non/Human*)

———, *Suspended Animation: Pain, Pleasure, and Punishment in Medieval Culture*  
Jean-Luc Nancy, *Corpus II: Writings on Sexuality*  
———, *Noli me tangere: On the Raising of the Body*  
Jesse Njus, "Performing the Passion: A Study on the Nature of Medieval Acting"  
Henk Oosterling and Ewa Plonowska Ziarek (eds.), *Intermedialities: Philosophy, Art, Politics*  
Diane Perpich, "Corpus Meum: Disintegrating Bodies and the Idea of Integrity," *Hypatia* 20.3 (2005): 75–91  
Kim Phillips and Barry Reay, *Sex Before Sexuality: A Premodern History*  
Sara Ritchey, *Holy Matter: Changing Perceptions of the Material World in Late Medieval Christianity*  
Michael J.P. Robson (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Francis of Assisi*  
Jacques Rossiaud, *Sexualités au Moyen Âge*  
Gayle Salamon, "The Bodily Ego and the Contested Domain of the Material," *differences* 15.3 (2004): 95–122  
Margaret Schaus (ed.), *Women and Gender in Medieval Europe: An Encyclopedia*  
Octavian Schmucki, *The Stigmata of Saint Francis of Assisi*  
Joan Wallach Scott, "Gender as a Useful Category of Historical Analysis"  
Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Queer and Now" (in *Tendencies*)  
———, "Thinking Through Queer Theory" (in *The Weather in Proust*)  
Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*  
Paul Thoby, *Le crucifix*  
Alessandro Vettori, *Poets of Divine Love: Franciscan Mystical Poetry of the Thirteenth Century*  
Margot Weiss, *Techniques of Pleasure: BDSM and the Circuits of Sexuality*