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
Email: wrobert@syr.edu

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 Bagno, *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: 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)
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)
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?*)
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*
———, “Mysticism, Death, and Desire in the Work of Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément” (in *Religion in French Feminist Thought*)
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*
Jacapone 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 Troung, *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, “Desirious Saints” (in *Queer Theology*)
Cristina Mazzoni, *Saint Hysteria: Neurosis, Mysticism, and Gender in European Culture*
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
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
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