

Medieval Christianities

REL 310 | Spring 2013

Teaching Team

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Approaches and Aspirations

In 397, Augustine wrote his *Confessions* and fundamentally changed Christianity. In 1517, Martin Luther wrote his *Ninety-Five Theses* and fundamentally changed it again. This course explores some of the dynamic Christianities that emerged in medieval Europe between these seismic events. Focusing on ways of experiencing and embodying these Christianities in the twelfth through fourteenth centuries, we will examine a variety of philosophical, theological, and cultural documents, beliefs, and practices along thematic axes that include divinity and humanity, love and knowledge, monasticism and mysticism, passion and quest, sex and death.

In this course, we will draw on a variety of resources and perspectives as we thoughtfully and carefully explore how medieval Christian thoughts, experiences, traditions, and practices ask and respond to a number of vital, human questions and learn to interpret dynamics of religious convictions, actions, and expressions. The course materials, discussions, and assignments work together in the service of the course's ultimate goals:

- (1) to understand better the nature, diversity, and power of medieval Christianities and their religious expressions;
- (2) to think more deeply and critically about religious materials and experiences and ways of interpreting them;
- (3) to appreciate the difficulties and possibilities inherent in a multidisciplinary study of religion that draws on a variety of approaches, methods, and theories;
- (4) to improve your abilities to read actively, to think critically, and to write successfully;
- (5) to develop a greater appreciation of the humanities and its methods of critical inquiry.

Texts

William of Saint Thierry, *Golden Epistle*

Francis of Assisi, *Complete Works*

Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, *Journey of the Mind to God*

Julian of Norwich, *Showings*

Angela of Foligno, *Memorial*

Additional texts will be available on Blackboard.

Critical Skills

Critical reading, thinking, and writing skills are probably the most important and most applicable skills you can learn in college. As skills, they require practice, so you must learn and practice them to achieve proficiency and, ultimately, mastery. But as skills, they are learnable and can be mastered if you are willing to devote the necessary time and effort. Think of these skills—reading, thinking, and writing critically—as investments that can require large initial deposits but that provide substantial return with interest on those deposits.

Activities and Responsibilities

Punctual attendance

I expect you to be on time for and to attend every class meeting from beginning to end. Attendance affords you opportunities to engage course materials and participants, making it a crucial component of your learning. Your final grade will drop 3 points (e.g., from a 100 to a 97) for each absence after the second. Absences may be excused in documented cases of religious observance, official university business, or critical and unforeseeable emergency.

Active participation

Active participation begins with and depends upon preparation: spending time carefully reading each text, marking important passages, jotting down questions, and engaging the text and its author as conversation partners. Then in class, comment on the passages you marked, ask the questions you jotted down (and others that arise), and engage other class members as conversation partners. Simply showing up is not enough. Our meetings will be dynamic, so come to class ready to interact with the texts and with each another in a collaborative learning environment of inquiry and exploration.

Communal respect

A class comprises a learning community, in which any member's actions affect other members. As a member of this learning community, you should be respectful and responsible in your thoughts and actions. Being respectful and responsible includes preparing for and attending class, listening to others, tolerating personal and intellectual differences, engendering a safe zone of exploration, refraining from eating and using electronic devices, and generally abstaining from any activity not productively contributing to this course. If your behavior is not respectful and responsible in these and related ways, you may be excused from class for the day.

Academic integrity

Academic integrity forms the foundation of any learning community, so it is imperative that you exhibit honesty and integrity as a member of this community. Cheating, in any form and to any degree, is an affront to this community that will not be tolerated. Cheating includes giving or receiving aid when prohibited, plagiarism, fraud, falsification, collusion, or any related act of deception or dishonesty. If you commit such an act, you will receive an XF grade for this course and will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity. For more information, see Syracuse University's Academic Integrity Policies and Procedures (available at <http://academicintegrity.syr.edu>).

Assessment and Achievement

In addition to participation in class meetings, we will engage in the following activities that afford opportunities to deepen and to assess your learning:

Presentation

The presentation affords a public opportunity to reflect on and interact with the course materials. You will give a formal, researched presentation exploring how a specific cultural institution relates to a particular course text and a corresponding mode of medieval Christianity. Your presentation should demonstrate your critical acumen by analyzing, comparing, questioning, challenging, or extending course materials in conversation with other sources. You should be ready to lead our conversation on the day of your presentation.

Critical summaries

The critical summaries offer you five opportunities to practice and improve your critical reading, thinking, and writing abilities by briefly and keenly summarizing a supplementary reading in relation to the associated course text. You will share your critical summaries with your classmates and me, creating an archive on which we may draw as our course proceeds.

Essays

The essays give you two more formal and extended occasions to practice and improve your critical reading, thinking, and writing abilities by developing constructive analysis-arguments based on textual interpretations and using textual citations to support their claims. They do so by attending to analytic skills, including interpretation, comparison, application, and evaluation.

Learning capstone

Option 1: Final examination

As the capstone of your learning in this course, you may take a final examination, which will provide you with a significant way to demonstrate and use toward analytic and comparative ends your understandings of and creative insights on the texts, concepts, cases, and figures examined in our course.

Option 2: Research project

Alternatively, as the capstone of your learning in this course, you may undertake a research project, which will afford you a chance to dig deeply into and around specific course materials by examining them closely and carefully and within broader contexts (scholarly, historical, theological, cultural, sexual, etc.). Your investigations will culminate in a substantial project, such as a research paper, a significant piece of scholarship that offers your creative insights into these materials as well as the contexts and debates that surround them. You should consult with me about topic and timeline in advance so that your project can be approved and underway by 4 March 2013. You will also give a formal colloquium presentation of your research that engages course materials and that broadens our understandings of those materials by including your constructive analyses of them in terms of particular medieval Christianities.

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

Active participation	15%
Presentation	9%
Critical summaries	9%
Essay #1	12%
Essay #2	15%
Learning capstone	40%

Regardless of which grading option you choose (which you must do in writing by 11 February 2013), assignments are due by 12:45 p.m. on the assigned days. Late work will not be accepted. Exceptions may be granted in documented cases of religious observance, official university business, or critical and unforeseeable emergency. No extra credit will be given. Your continued enrollment in this course will indicate your understanding of and agreement to its goals, policies, and requirements. Your course grade will be calculated based on the following scale:

A+ = 100	B+ = 88–89	C+ = 78–79	D = 60–69
A = 93–99	B = 83–87	C = 73–77	
A- = 90–92	B- = 80–82	C- = 70–72	F = 0–59

Office Hours

Office hours provide opportunities to seek assistance, ask questions, clarify issues, and extend class discussions. I strongly encourage you to use them as a resource, especially if you are having difficulties. You can also email me anytime.

Learning Accommodations

If you think you might need accommodations for a learning disability, please contact the Office of Disability Studies (<http://disabilityservices.syr.edu>) to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. The Office of Disability Services is responsible for coordinating disability-related accommodations and will, as appropriate, issue accommodation authorization letters to students with documented disabilities. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, contact the Office of Disability Services and discuss your situation with me as soon as possible.

Religious Observances

Given the diversity of religious traditions practiced by members of our academic community, Syracuse University protects our rights to observe our respective traditions' holy days. You may make up any required work missed due to a religious observance provided that you notify me via the My Religious Observances option on MySlice by 25 January 2013. For more information, see Syracuse University's Religious Observances Policy (http://supolicies.syr.edu/emp_ben/religious_observance.htm).

Schedule of Readings and Assignments

14 January—Introduction

16 January—Getting Medieval

Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, 10.1.1–10.7.11

Benedict of Nursia, *Rule*, Prologue and §§1–7

Carolyn Dinshaw, “Touching on the Past”

Pseudo-Dionysius, *Mystical Theology*

1: A Monk

21 January—Martin Luther King Jr. Day

23 January—William of Saint Thierry, *Golden Epistle*, §§1–92

Caroline Walker Bynum, “Jesus as Mother and Abbot as Mother”

Ruth Mazo Karras, “Sex and the Middle Ages”

C.H. Lawrence, “The Cistercian Model”

Brian Patrick McGuire, “Monastic and Religious Orders, 1100–1350”

Martha G. Newman, “Crucified by the Virtues: Monks, Lay Brothers, and Women in 13th-Century Cistercian Saints’ Lives”

28 January—William of Saint Thierry, *Golden Epistle*, §§93–186; Critical summary #1 due

30 January—William of Saint Thierry, *Golden Epistle*, §§187–248

4 February—William of Saint Thierry, *Golden Epistle*, §§249–300

6 February—Gregorian chant; Presentation #1

8 February—Essay #1 due

2: A Mendicant

11 February—Francis of Assisi, Rules

Christopher Brooke, “Saint Norbert and Saint Francis”

Michael F. Cusato, “Francis and the Franciscan Movement”

Garrett P.J. Epp, “Ecce Homo”

David Matzko McCarthy, “Desirous Saints”

R.W. Southern, “The Friars”

13 February—Francis of Assisi, Letters

18 February—Francis of Assisi, Canticles, Prayers, Exhortations; Critical summary #2 due

20 February—Francis of Assisi, Canticles, Prayers, Exhortations

25 February—Francis of Assisi, Stigmata

Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, “On His Sacred Stigmata”

Arnold I. Davidson, “Miracles of Bodily Transformation, or How Saint Francis Received the Stigmata”

27 February—Cathedral architecture; Presentation #2

3: A Theologian

4 March—Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, *Journey of the Mind to God*

John W. Baldwin, “Theology: The Queen of the Faculties”

Bernard McGinn, "Men and Women in the Franciscan Mystical Tradition"
Jaroslav Pelikan, "Summa Theologica"
Lesley Smith, "The Theological Framework"
R.W. Southern, "The Tradition of Thought"

6 March—Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, *Journey of the Mind to God*; Critical summary #3
due

8 March—Essay #2 due

11–13 March—Spring break

4: A Lay Person

18 March—Julian of Norwich, *Showings*, §§1–20

Alexandra Barratt, "Creating an Anchorhold"

Caroline Walker Bynum, "The Body of Christ in the Later Middle Ages"

Caroline Walker Bynum, "The Female Body and Religious Practice in the
Later Middle Ages"

Karmen MacKendrick, "The Multipliable Body"

Nicholas Watson, "Julian of Norwich"

20 March—Julian of Norwich, *Showings*, §§21–40

25 March—Julian of Norwich, *Showings*, §§41–63; Critical summary #4 due

27 March—Julian of Norwich, *Showings*, §§64–80

1 April—Julian of Norwich, *Showings*, §§81–86

3 April—Relics and Reliquaries; Presentation #3

5: A Mystic

8 April—Angela of Foligno, *Memorial*, §§1–3

Caroline Walker Bynum, "... And Woman His Humanity ..."

Caroline Walker Bynum, "Women Mystics and Eucharistic Devotion in the
13th Century"

Amy Hollywood, "Mysticism and Transcendence"

Amy Hollywood, "Sexual Desire, Divine Desire"

Karma Lochrie, "Mystical Acts, Queer Tendencies"

10 April—Angela of Foligno, *Memorial*, §§4–5

15 April—Angela of Foligno, *Memorial*, §§6–7; Critical summary #5 due

17 April—Angela of Foligno, *Memorial*, §8

22 April—Angela of Foligno, *Memorial*, §9

24 Apr—Colloquium

29 Apr—Colloquium and Conclusion

3 May—Learning capstone due