

Religion, Mysticism and the Body

Rel 320 Moo1
MW 2:15-3:35

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Why do we associate self-inflicted pain with redemption? Suffering with grace? A tortured body with glory? Through a focus on philosophy, mysticism, art and contemporary theory on the body, these are questions this course will address. The course will begin in the classical era and make its way through some of the most controversial figures in Christianity's history—saints, artists, and prophets. All such figures are desirous of God, but what does it mean for the body to desire god? What does it mean to claim or depict in art the presence of God in flesh, bones and muscle? This course will force us to rethink religion in terms of the body, not the body in terms of religion.

Texts

- *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Friedrich Nietzsche (translated by Walter Kaufmann).
- *The Life of St. Antony*, by Athanasius (translated by Robert C. Gregg).
- *Meditations*, by Marcus Aurelius (translated by Gregory Hays).
- Course reader. Available at Quick Copy in on Marshall street.
- Additional texts and articles will be available through Blackboard**

Requirements

1) **Participation**—because this course is a seminar, we will treat it as such. Participation will be required to get a good grade, and I will expect that you come to each seminar having read the required reading. Attendance—I expect you to attend all class meetings. Your final grade will drop one-third of a letter grade (e.g., from a B to a B-) for each unexcused absence after the second. Provide an official note from your dean, health services, coach, etc., to excuse missed classes.

2) **Essays**—you will be required to write three essays, *each 5-6 ds pages in length*. Improvement in writing and conceptual organization will be factored into your overall grade. It is expected that your writing get better over the course of the semester. You can choose your topic, or I can provide direction.

3) **Monday responses**—these are due in class on the assigned day. Don't email them unless you are not going to be in class and have a documented excuse. Select a quote from the assigned reading and analyze it in light of the reading as a whole. Agree or disagree with the quote strongly. Present your case. These will be shared in class. They are to be no longer than *1 ds page*. Please do not go over. These will be graded on a check check-minus scale.

Grading

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|-------------------|-----|
| Participation/Att | 20% |
| Monday Responses | 20% |
| Essay 1 | 20% |
| Essay 2 | 20% |
| Essay 3 | 20% |

Expectations

Office hours—please use them. Come and ask questions, to clarify a point in class, or any other issue.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity forms the foundation of any academic community. As a member of the Syracuse University community, it is imperative that you value and exhibit honesty and integrity in all academic endeavors. Cheating, in any form and to any degree, is a dishonest act that is an affront to this community, and it will not be tolerated. This includes giving or received aid when prohibited, fraud, plagiarism (the use of another's language, ideas, information, or other work without proper acknowledgment), forgery or falsification, collusion, or any other deceptive or dishonest act related to academic work. Any student who commits such an act will fail this course and will be reported to the academic integrity officer. (For more information, see Section 1.0 of the University Rules and Regulations as well as the Academic Integrity Policies and Procedures, available at <http://academicintegrity.syr.edu>.) I also expect that you treat your fellow students with respect.

Disabilities

If you have a documented disability that might affect your performance in this course, please confer with me and with the Office of Disability Services as soon as possible.

Investing the Body

Week 1

Aug 31st, Mon: Syllabus and Introduction.

Sept 2, Wed: "The Body of the Condemned," Foucault, pgs. 3-33 (Blackboard).

Week 2

Sept 7, Mon: Labor Day, *no classes*.

Sept 9, Wed: Ignatius, "Letter to the Romans." (Cr) "The Passion of Saints Perpetua and Felicity." (Cr) **Monday Response due.**

Week 3:

Sept 14, Mon: "Docile Bodies," Foucault. (Cr)

Sept 16, Wed: "Subversive Bodies, Invented Selves" and "Modern Primitive and the Deployment of the Other," from *In the Flesh*, by Victoria Pitts. (Cr).

Week 4:

Sept 21, Mon: *No classes*, Eid ul-Fitr.

Sept 23, Wed: *I Am My Body*, Moltmann-Wendell (Cr).

Monday Response due.

Martyrdom of Construction

Week 5

Sept 28, Mon: *No classes*, Yom Kippur.

Sept 30, Wed: *Meditations* Books 2 thru 7. **No Monday response due.**

Week 6

Oct 5, Mon: *Meditations*, books 7 till end. **First essay Due.**

Oct 7, Wed: *Life of Antony*, pgs 29-65.

Week 7

Oct 12, Mon: *Life of Antony*, pgs. 65-99.

Oct 14, Wed: Peter Brown, "The Desert Fathers." (Bb)

Week 8

Oct 19, Mon: *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

Oct 21, Wed: *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

Week 9

Oct 26, Mon: *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

Oct 28, Wed: "A God Dances through Me: Isadora Duncan on Friedrich Nietzsche's Reevaluation of Values," by Kimerer La Mothe. (Cr).

Aesthetics of the Body

Week 10

Nov 2, Mon: Da Vinci, "Short Treatise on Painting." (Bb).

Nov 4, Wed: Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life." (Cr)

Week 11

Nov 9, Mon: *Postmodern Heretics*, Eleanor Heartney (Cr). **No Monday Response.**

Nov 11, Wed: "Dim Stockings," by Agamben (Bb). "Writing the Moving Body: Nancy Stark Smith and the Hieroglyphs." (Cr) **Second Essay Due.**

Week 12

Nov 16, Mon: Andres Serrano, Deleuze on Francis Bacon.

Bernini. Kristeva, "Powers of Horror." (Bb)

Nov 18, Wed: "Eternal Flesh: The Resurrection of the Body," Mackendrick (Cr). Nancy, *Theses* (Bb).

Week 13

Nov 23, Mon: Deleuze, "How do You Make Yourself a Body Without Organs?" (Bb).

Nov 25, Wed: Spring break, *no classes*.

Desire of the Body

Week 14

Nov 30, Mon: Film: *The Power of Art*.

Dec 2, Wed: Selections from St Teresa of Avila, *Autobiography* (Bb).

Week 15

Dec 7, Mon: Simone Weil, "The Love of God and Affliction." (Cr). Bataille, *Eroticism* (Cr).

Dec 9, Wed: *Eroticism*, Chapter 5.

Week 16

Dec 14, Mon: Whitman, "The Body Electric" (Cr). Deleuze, "Whitman."

Wed: Exam reading period. TBA.

Week 17

Exams Dec 15-21. **Third Essay Due.**

****Texts listed under each date will be discussed that day****
****Monday Responses will be due each week, unless noted otherwise****