

# Religion 320—Medieval Christian Thought

## Syllabus and Course Outline

Fall 2009

T/Th. 11:40 a.m. – 12:55 p.m.

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## What "problem" were theologians and other church leaders responding to in their writings and ministry?

### Office Hours

MW 2–4 p.m.

You may also arrange an appointment with me or simply drop in. In many respects email is the best way to communicate with me. A comment however is in order: I only respond to emails during normal LR business hours. Practically speaking, that means 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Monday to Friday.

### Catalogue Description

Major developments in worship, thought, and life of Western Christendom during the Medieval Period from Gregory the Great to the Council of Constance. Special attention will be given to the great saints and theologians whose love of learning and desire for God inspired monastic orders, heroic missionary efforts, the building of cathedrals, the creation of universities, the rise of science and ecclesiastical reform. (Prerequisite: REL 100 or equivalent; 3 credit hrs.)

### Purpose & Objectives

The purpose of this course is:

- to acquaint the student with history and theology of the Medieval period, especially Bernard of Clairvaux, St. Thomas Aquinas, Anselm of Canterbury, Hildegard of Bingen, and Julian of Norwich.
- help students develop skills of thinking and reading critically.
- help students improve communication (esp. writing) skills

The objectives are that the student:

- should be able to discuss and write intelligently concerning Bernard, Thomas, Anselm, Hildegard, and Julian and their theologies
- should be able to use medieval theology and spirituality as a resource for contemporary questions of faith and life
- research, describe, and analyze a Christian doctrine in the theology of a medieval thinker

### Texts

Miles, Margaret R. *The Word Made Flesh: A History of Christian Thought*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005.

*Bernard of Clairvaux: Selected Works*. San Francisco: HarperOne, 2005. ISBN: 9780060750671

McInery, Ralph, ed. & trans. *Thomas Aquinas: Selected Writings*. New York: Penguin, 1998.

Julian of Norwich. *Revelations of Divine Love*. New York & London: Penguin, 1998.

Davies, Brian, and Gill Evans. *Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works*. Oxford World's Classics. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Hildegard of Bingen. *Selected Writings*. Trans. with an intro. by Mark Atherton. New York: Penguin Books, 2001.

Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. 7th ed. University of Chicago Press, 2007.

### Assignments and Evaluation

Course Assignment	Possible Points
Journals	15
Analysis paper #1	20
Analysis paper #2	20
Research paper & related assignments	198
Final Exam	100
Attendance bonus points	25
Other bonus point options	?
Total possible points:	300

The grading scale is as follows:

A	= 263 and higher	B+	= 244–251	C+	= 216–223	D+	= 188–195
A-	= 252–262	B	= 233–243	C	= 205–215	D	= 177–187
		B-	= 224–232	C-	= 196–204	D-	= 168–176
						F	= below 168

You will have some flexibility in which assignments you choose to submit with two exceptions: all students must do the final exam and all students must submit a research paper. There are some rules however:

1. You must earn at least 50% of the total points possible on an assignment in order to earn any points. No points will be recorded for scores of less than 50% earned.
2. Once the due date for an assignment has passed, that assignment may not be turned in.

You'll note that there is considerable "wiggle" room here. You don't need to—nor are you expected to—complete every assignment indicated. There are, if you will, approximately 50 bonus points built in to this schema.

The assignments are explained more fully on LAMP. What follows are brief explanations.

You may submit up to 15 *journal* entries. You may reflect on either class discussion or the readings (or both). This is an "informal writing" assignment.

The *research paper* will focus on either a theological concept or figure and be based on primary sources (there might be exceptions, but please talk to me about this) and use at least two secondary sources. Papers are to be both expository and critical in content.

#### General comments about formal written assignments.

1. All written assignments (i.e. the research paper, any take home tests, or any other work done outside the classroom and handed in) are to be typewritten. Handwritten assignments will not be accepted.
2. Writing matters. Spelling and grammar are one component—but not the only component!—of good writing. Good spelling and grammar contribute to a paper, while poor spelling and grammar detract from it. That said, spelling and grammar are not the end all and be all of good writing. Dennis Baron, in an article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* ("Teaching Grammar Doesn't Lead to Better Writing", May 16, 2003), said it well: "I'm bothered by essays that are mere reports, not critical analyses; by essays that are vague and abstract and don't ring true. I become impatient with essays that tell me either more or less than I need to know about the subject. I hate it when writers use big words they can't control because they think that's what readers want ... readers demand much more than standard English from writers. We want organization, examples, an appropriate level of complexity, a sense of audience awareness. We want writers who not only know something, but who also have something to say. In fact, if writers establish their authority early and

decisively, we tend to overlook the same kinds of grammar glitches that are problematic in less-effective essays." Writing matters. Enough said.

3. You should learn and use Turabian footnote style of documentation.
4. You should use gender-inclusive language for people (e.g. "humankind" not "mankind"; "humanity" not "man"). Some folks in some places insist on gender-inclusive language for God; I don't.

The *analysis papers* are short analytical pieces of 2-5 pages in length (500-1000 words). They are not the place to express your agreement (or disagreement) with the thinkers. Jason Byassee (formerly a journalist and now at Duke Divinity School) says:

As I write, I try to help opposing political factions in the church to learn to discern the face of Christ in the other, to see the other not as a political or theological antagonist but as a fellow member of the body of Christ. There is a specific face I look for when I write or interview or take stock of a story—the face of Jesus, which will be present here too, even if in surprising form. To learn to contemplate that face takes time. You have to sit in patience with the face of Christ, and with the faces of others, to see them both in their particularity and in their universality, and to learn to express the one to the other.

The point is to understand the views and positions of others whether or not you agree with them. In his words, look for the face of Jesus in these thinkers even though their ideas might seem awfully foreign—and *weird!*—to you.

There will be occasional *quizzes* and other sundry *homework assignments*. These quizzes and assignments will be based on the readings and will include, but are not restricted to, testing for comprehension of texts (i.e. questions of historical facts) and summaries of readings. It is my conviction that one needs to be acquainted with the social, political, cultural and intellectual background of the Medieval Period in order to adequately understand it. There will also be either homework assignments or online quizzes having to do with library research procedures and proper documentation.

Finally, be sure to keep all papers, tests, and other graded assignments until after you've received your final grade at the end of the semester. Should there be a discrepancy between the grade you think you earned and the grade assigned to you, then you can easily correct it. Also be sure to check your grades on LAMP after every assignment to see that your grade has been recorded.

### Scholarly Expectations

I expect that students

- will genuinely try to *learn* the concepts, principles, and material
- will *come* to class (i.e. will not be absent without excuse) and participate enthusiastically
- will come to class *prepared*: they have read the assigned readings carefully and thoughtfully;
- will not cheat

The primary expectation is that each student wants to learn. Those who are interested merely in getting a good grade and thereby seek only to memorize answers or do the minimal amount of research and preparation necessary will receive less from this class than those who are genuinely try to *learn* the concepts, principles and material. Do not try to do it the easy way or take short cuts: cheating and plagiarizing (or otherwise fraudulently obtaining an acceptable grade) or coming to class unprepared. With respect to cheating and plagiarism (cf. the Academic Integrity Policy in the College Catalog) the consequences are swift and severe. Think of my policy as a "zero-toleration" policy: expect to be immediately dismissed from the course. Those who come to class prepared, who read the assigned readings carefully and thoughtfully, will be rewarded.

It is the student's responsibility to keep abreast of assignments. If you miss class you will be expected to hand in any work or papers that may have been assigned in your absence. Check with a classmate about such assignments. Also there is no provision for late assignments. They are to be submitted in a timely fashion. In the case of excused absence they are due immediately upon your return.

Regular attendance is expected of all members of the class. Attention is called to the *General Catalog*: "Students are expected to attend classes ... No allowed number of absences is automatically granted to a student. Ordinarily, a student will not receive credit if 25% of the scheduled class meetings are missed" (*General Catalog*). I will not normally take attendance. However on several days throughout the semester, I will take attendance. Those present will earn 5 bonus points up to but necessarily 25 points.

Related to the matter of attendance is participation. Students are expected to participate in their learning. Learning is not about the teacher lecturing on facts and data; it is about the student asking questions and seeking to understand.

Education is a communal activity. That means that everybody has to contribute. It's not just about the teacher teaching, the students learning. In my classroom everybody is a teacher; and everybody is a learner. V. Jean Ramsey and Peter D. Couch write:

students who do well in teacher-centered learning situations develop skills of listening attentively, following instructions, taking careful notes, reading quickly with good comprehension, predicting what the teacher wants to hear, and memorizing material. Although these may be important skills, they do not ... adequately prepare individuals for the rapidly changing demands that will be made of them as they enter today's organizations ... It seems to us that traditional teacher-centered classrooms are limited in their ability to prepare [students] to think for themselves, to identify problems and opportunities, and to explore the new. ("Beyond Self-Directed Learning")

Moreover, my opinion is that if I'm to spend the entire period lecturing, I might just as well give you my notes or other reading rather than have you waste your time listening to me. I try to assign lots of "active learning" types of assignments during the class. The advantage of this is that students who have difficulty with the material get help from students who don't have difficulty with the material. Students who understand the material will deepen their understanding by "teaching" other students. Finally there's the advantage that students who successfully complete these assignments and tasks own this knowledge in a way that they wouldn't had they just listened to me talk about it.

Finally check your email and the LAMP site regularly. I will often clarify assignments or make other important announcements.

### Procedure

The readings are of two types: historical background (the Miles text) and primary sources (the texts from Anselm, Thomas, Julian and Hildegard). It is expected that the student will have prepared for class by, at minimum, reading the required texts.

The reading assignments will be supplemented by lectures. Especially on days in which the reading is from the primary sources, the student should expect to participate in class discussions. Be prepared to ask questions and respond to questions concerning the relevance, significance and importance of the readings.

I reserves the right to assign other homework at my discretion. You can expect this right to be exercised.

## Class Schedule

Day 1	Introduction	
Day 2	Eastern Orthodoxy	Miles, 115–23
	John of Damascus, "Orthodox Faith", ch. 16 ("Concerning Images")	<a href="http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf209.iii.iv.iv.xvi.html">http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf209.iii.iv.iv.xvi.html</a>
	Gregory of Nyssa, "Great Catechism", 27-8	<a href="http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf205.xi.ii.xxix.html">http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf205.xi.ii.xxix.html</a>
Day 3	Early Medieval West	Miles, 123–33
	Gregory of Tours, "The Conversion of Clovis" from <i>History of the Franks</i>	<a href="http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/gregory-clovisconv.html">http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/gregory-clovisconv.html</a>
	Bede, selections from <i>Conversion of England</i>	<a href="http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/bede1.html">http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/bede1.html</a>
	Boethius, selections from <i>Consolation of Philosophy</i>	<a href="http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/con-phil.html">http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/con-phil.html</a>
Day 4	"St. Patrick"	Video—bring popcorn ☺
	Ninth & Tenth Centuries in the West	Miles, 134–40
Day 5	Early Scholasticism	Miles, 140–6
	Anselm: <i>Proslogium</i>	Anselm, 82–104
Day 6	<i>Anselm</i> : Why God Became Human	Anselm, 260–2; 270–89; 318–24
Day 7	Twelfth-century Theology, Scholarship, and Piety	Miles, 147–59
Day 8	Bernard of Clairvaux	Bernard,
Day 9	Bernard of Clairvaux	Bernard,
Day 10	Hildegard of Bingen	Video—bring popcorn ☺
Day 11	Hildegard of Bingen	Hildegard, ix–xliii (passim), 1–32
Day 12	Hildegard of Bingen	Hildegard, 41–46, 51–52, 65–85
Day 13	Hildegard of Bingen	Hildegard, 89–105, 139–45, 171–76
Day 14	The Thirteenth Century: Theology and the Natural World	Miles, 159–64
	Thomas Aquinas	Miles, 164–74
	Aquinas (Scripture)	Aquinas, 5–17
Day 15	Aquinas (Proof of God's Existence)	Aquinas, 243–56
Day 16	Aquinas (Creation & Human Will)	Aquinas, 360–7, 551–64
Day 17	Aquinas (Cosmology, Anthropology, and	Aquinas, 749–70

Ethics)

Day 18	Gothic Cathedrals	Miles, 174–83
	Late Medieval English Mysticism	Miles, 186–93
Day 19	Aquinas-Luther Conference	
Day 20	Julian of Norwich	Julian, vii–xxxiii, 39–86
Day 21	Julian of Norwich	Julian, 87–134
Day 22	Julian of Norwich	Video—Bring popcorn 😊
Day 23	Julian of Norwich	Julian, 135–80
Day 24	Preliminary Drafts Due!!	
Day 25	German Mysticism	Miles, 193–98
Day 26	Mysticism in Italy and Flanders	Miles, 198–204
Day 27	Fourteenth-century Realism and Nominalism	Miles, 205–10
Day 28	Medieval Piety and Heresy	Miles, 210–23
Day 29	The Conciliar Movement	Miles, 224–7
Day 30	TBD	
	Research Papers Due!	
	Final Exam (8:00 a.m.)	