

Religious Studies 329: Christian Mysticism

Prof. Suydam

Ascension 11

PBX 5607

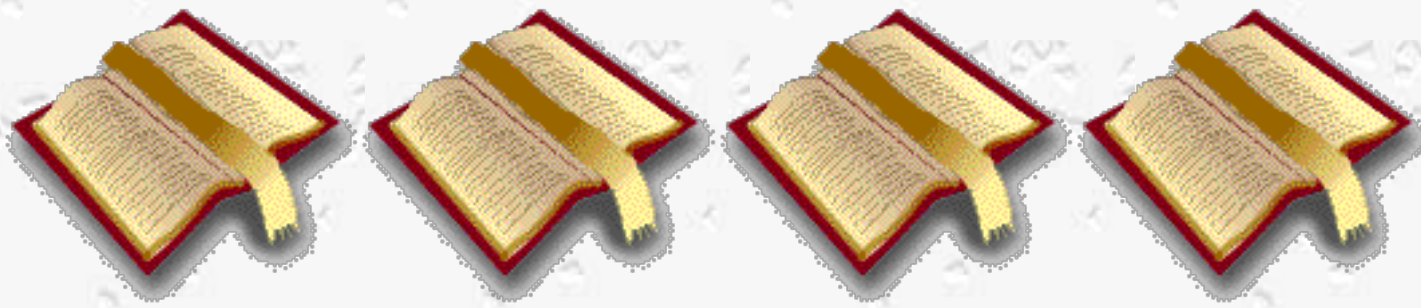
Office Hours T-TH 1-:230 and MW 2:10- 3:00 PM and by appointment



I. Course Aims: This course explores the evolution and development of the Christian spiritual mystical traditions and prayer practices from the origins of Christianity to the present day. How does mysticism differ from Christian spirituality? It analyzes mysticism's origins in philosophical traditions based upon neoplatonic theories as well as the ecstatic practices of early Christians. One goal of the course is to problematize the term "mysticism" and trace its linguistic and philosophical development through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Questions we will be asking include: Is mysticism a solitary or a communal experience? Do mystics who engage in somatic practices (such as copious weeping, bleeding, or fasting) represent a "less pure" variant of mysticism than those who prefer solitary contemplation? Do mystical practices change to reflect new societal values, such as the Protestant Reformation and the Pentecostal movements of today? Is mystical spirituality different for men and women? We will also explore the influence of mystical traditions in "mainstream" Christian spirituality.

Links	Selected handouts
Merriam Webster Online Dictionary	Ten Commandments for Essay Writing
Taize chant: Bless the Lord	Twenty Rules Not to Follow
The Bible Unbound	The Academic Study of Religion
Augustine on the Web	Glossary of Mystical Terms
LBIS and E-Res	

II Texts



Required:

Jantzen, Grace. *Power, Gender, and Christian Mysticism*. Cambridge University Press: 1995

Julian of Norwich: Showings . Paulist Press: 1978

Chadwick, Henry, trans., *St. Augustine: Confessions*. Oxford World Classics: 2008

Zum Brunn, E., and Épiney-Burgard, G., *Women Mystics in Europe*. Paragon House: 1988

--Other texts as noted on E-Res and Web Links

Recommended: full text available on Course Reserve and excerpts available on E-Res:

Bernard of Clairvaux: Selected Writings (trans. By G.R. Evans). Paulist Press: 1987

The Cloud of Unknowing and Other Works. Penguin: 1978

The Shakers, ed. Robley Whitson (Paulist Press, 1983)

Jacob Boehme, The Way to Christ , translated by Peter Erb (Paulist Press, 1978)

Pietists: Selected Writings , edited by Peter Erb (Paulist Press, 1983)

Happold, F.C., *Mysticism: A Study and an Anthology*

Meister Eckhart, The Essential Sermons, trans. Edmund Colledge and Bernard McGinn

Origen: An Exhortation to Martyrdom, etc., trans. Rowan Greer

III Course Requirements

- **Discussions and weekly meditation papers: 25%**

Because critical reading of the primary texts is so important, there will be weekly writing assignments of about 2 typed pages based upon the reading for that week. In the Christian mystical tradition (stemming from monastic practice), reading is viewed as a meditative activity that leads to deeper understanding. These papers will serve as the basis for discussions. Active participation in discussions is a critical component of this class. That being said, you should not come to class if you are sick, especially if you are coughing or sneezing. In that case please email your weekly paper along with questions and comments you would ask in the discussion. Weekly papers cannot be turned in late.

- **Midterm and Final exam: 20% and 30%**

Midterm and final exam questions will be given in advance. Both exams will be take-home and will be due as noted in the syllabus. Both exams must be typed and double-spaced.

- **Term paper: 25%**

The term paper is an opportunity for you to pursue a topic in greater detail than class time allows. It will give you the chance to read, analyze, and write clearly about a particular mystic or topic that interests you. Each student is expected to choose a particular aspect of Christian mysticism that they would like to learn more about. You are not expected to do outside research, but to read and analyze more of a particular mystic's writings in greater depth than class time allows. Topics are due March 22 (10 points). The preliminary draft is due April 17 (40 points). Final draft is due April 26 (50 points). All deadlines are final.

IV Topics

PART I: ORIGINS

Week 1: January 14 and 16: Introduction: What is mysticism? Ways of Knowing

Example: [Hildegard of Bingen](#), [Meister Eckhart](#)

Handout: [The Roman Empire, 1- 300 C.E.](#)

[Definitions of Mysticism](#)

Reading: Happold, *Mysticism*, introduction (E-Res), pages 18-34

January 18: Judaism, mystery religions, Christianity; Ways of Knowings

Reading: Jantzen, *Power, Gender, and Christian Mysticism*, pages 1-18

[Platonic Philosophy](#)

[Plato's Cosmology](#)

Week 2: January 21 nd 23: Greek Intellectual Thought: Plato and Plotinus

Reading: Plotinus excerpts:

[Fourth Ennead, Tractate 1: On the Essence of the Soul](#)

[Fifth Ennead, Second Tractate: the Origin and Order of the Beings](#)

[Fifth Ennead, Fifth Tractate: On the Nature of the Good](#)

[Second Ennead, Fourth Tractate: Matter : Through #10](#)

[Sixth Ennead, Fourth Tractate: On the Integral Omnipresence of the Authentic Existent : through fifth tractate, #5](#)

Jantzen, *Power, Gender, and Christian Mysticism*, pages 26-58

January 25 : Origen

Reading: Origen, Introduction to *The Song of Songs* (E-Res)

Jantzen, *Power, Gender, and Christian Mysticism*, 59-85

[Second Century: Christians in Conflict](#)

[Origen and the Mystical Tradition](#)



[Origen's Three-Fold Path](#)

Week 3: January 28 and 30: Gnosticism and Roman Christianity

Reading: "Hymn of the Robe of Glory": [poem version](#), [prose version](#)

Jantzen, *Power, Gender, and Christian Mysticism*, 85-95

[Valentinian's Cosmic Scheme](#)

[Gnostic Glossary](#)

[Features of the Proto-Orthodox Churches](#)

February 1 : Orthodoxy takes shape: Constantine and monasticism; Augustine

Reading: Chadwick, *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, book 1

[Rome Becomes Christian](#)

Week 4: February 4,6,8: Augustine and the Pseudo-Dionysius Augustine

Reading: Pusey, *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, books 7-10, 12

[Augustine: Major Ideas](#)

The Pseudo-Dionysius

Readings: Pseudo-Dionysius, [The Mystical Theology](#)

[The Heavenly Hierarchy, chapter 1](#)

[The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy](#)

Jantzen, *Power, Gender, and Christian Mysticism*, 95-109

PART II: MEDIEVAL MYSTICISM: MYSTICISM OF THE HEART

Week 5: February 11,13, 15: Twelfth-Century Stabilization

Feb. 11 and 13 : The Twelfth Century Stabilization; Hildegard of Bingen and Bernard of Clairvaux

Reading: *Women Mystics*, "Hildegard of Bingen" Jantzen, *Power, Gender, and Christian Mysticism*, 157-188

Bernard of Clairvaux, [On Loving God](#)

February 15 : Bernard of Clairvaux and Beatrice of Nazareth

Reading: Bernard of Clairvaux, [On Loving God](#), and Sermons (P/Class)

Reading: Jantzen, *Power, Gender, and Christian Mysticism*, 123-133

Reading: *Women Mystics*, "Beatrice of Nazareth"

[Class insights about Hildegard](#)

Week 6: February 18,20, 22: New Kinds of Piety



St. Bernard's Apology for the Failure of the Second Crusade

Feb. 18 : Waldensians, Cathari, Franciscans

Heresy

Excerpts from St. Francis

Feb. 20 : Hadewijch of Antwerp and the Beguines

Reading: Women Mystics, "Hadewijch of Antwerp"

Queen Reason

A Hadewijch Glossary

Feb. 22: Marguerite Porete

Reading: Women Mystics, "Marguerite Porete"

MIDTERM HANDED OUT IN CLASS PART III:

MEDIEVAL MYSTICISM: INTERIOR MYSTICISMS

Week 7: Feb. 25, 27, March 1: Meister Eckhart

Feb. 25 and 27 : Meister Eckhart

Reading: Meister Eckhart, selections (E-Res)

March 1: Eckhart, Hadewijch, and Porete

Common Vocabulary in Eckhart, Hadewijch and Beatrijs

Midterm due March 1

-----SPRING BREAK-----

Week 8: March 18, 20, 22: English mystics

March 18: the *Cloud of Unknowing*

The Language of Ineffability

March 20 and 22: Julian of Norwich

Reading: Julian, Revelations of Divine Love

PAPER TOPICS DUE IN CLASS.

PART IV: MYSTICISM AND THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION

Week 9: March 25, 27, 29: The Protestant Reformation

March 25 , 27, 29: Anabaptists and Pietists

Reading: Jantzen, chapter 8 and 146-159

Early Anabaptist Spirituality (E-Res): Hans Hut, *Essence of True Baptism*, 77-81; Leonard Schiemer, *Three Kinds of Grace*, 83-97; Peter Walpot, *True Yieldedness*, 167-171

The Pietists: Selected Writings (E-Res) August Francke, *Foretaste of Eternal Life*, 149-158; **The Pietists: Selected Writings (E-Res)** August Francke, *Foretaste of Eternal Life*, 149-158; Philip Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 31-37; Gottfried Arnold, *Mystery of the Divine Sophia*, 219-226; Count von Zinzendorf, *Thoughts for the Learned*, 291-295, and *Concerning Saving Faith*, 304-324

Week 10: April 1, 3, 5: Teresa of Avila; Greek Orthodox Mysticism

[The Interior Castle](#)

Chapters: [The First Mansion, chapter 1](#); [The Second Mansion](#); [The Seventh Mansion, chapters 1-3](#)

[The Life of St. Theresa Chapters 9, 18 and 20](#)

[The Way of Perfection: Explains the Meaning of Mental Prayer Through Continues the same subject. Explains the Prayer of Quiet.](#)

Week 11: April 8, 10, 12: Jacob Boehme

Readings: Jacob Boehme, *The Way to Christ (E-Res): A Little Prayer*, 56-62; *The Fifth Treatise*, 163-170; *The Seventh Treatise*, 194-226

Jacob Boehme, [The Way to Christ](#): Book 3, "Of Regeneration", chapters 2, 3 and 4 Book 4, "Of the Supersensual Life", Dialogues 1 and 2

Week 12: April 15, 17, 19: New kinds of spirituality, 18th and 19th centuries: Shakers, Quakers, and Pentecostals

PRELIMINARY PAPER DRAFT DUE APRIL 15 IN CLASS.

Readings: "Let Your Words Be Few" (E-Res)

George Fox, [Autobiography](#)

The Shakers (E-Res)

[About the Shakers](#)

[Belton Church Speaking in Tongues](#)

[Drunk in the Spirit](#)

[Ethiopian Praise Service](#)

[Healed in the Spirit](#)

[Slain in the Spirit](#)

Week 13: April 22, 24, 26: Pentecostalism continued and Christian Nature Mysticism

April 22: Film: *Raise the Dead*

PAPER DUE APRIL 26 in class.

April 22, 24: Christian Nature Mysticism

[About Richard Jefferies](#)

Richard Jefferies, [The Story of My Heart](#)

Thomas Traherne, [Centuries of Meditation](#)

BRING READINGS/VIDEO/WEBSITES FOR NEXT WEEK.

Week 14: April 29, May 1 and 3 : Re-Thinking Mystic Ways Today

Reading: Jantzen, chapter 9 *Mama Lola* (E-Res)

[the Taize Community](#)

FINAL EXAM QUESTIONS WILL BE HANDED OUT MAY 3.

FINAL EXAM IS DUE TUESDAY, MAY 7 BY 9 A.M. HAND IN AT MY OFFICE (ASCENSION 11).

