The emergence of a vibrant tradition of vernacular Christian literature and theology in thirteenth-century Europe opened the doors of Christian mystical thought and practice to an increasingly wide audience. In this seminar, we will focus our attention on some of the most important mystical texts and visionary literature from the High and Later Middle Ages, both Latin and vernacular, orthodox and heterodox. Exploring the varieties of mystical expression and the social and cultural contexts underlying them, we will pay particular attention to the role of gender and authority in mystical writing, practice, and teaching.

Required Texts:

• Steven Fanning, Mystics of the Christian Tradition (ISBN 0415224683)

Elizabeth Petroff, Medieval Women’s Visionary Literature (ISBN 019503712X)

Marguerite Porete, The Mirror of Simple Souls (ISBN 0809134276)


Also: a set of readings available in pdf format on a blackboard site and a number of internet documents, linked to the syllabus

Suggested background reading, on reserve in Mugar:

Assessments:

First Short Paper
Second Short Paper
Undergrad Research Paper
Grad Bibliographic Essay

Due Dates:
- proposals 10/25
- Undergrad first drafts 11/22
- final papers 12/6

Links to reference material and research aids for medieval European religious history

Please bring reading materials to class on the day(s) they are assigned, including printouts of web documents or a laptop for viewing them.

Course Requirements for RN 413 & HI 413

Students are expected to attend and participate in every class. All reading is to be completed before the class for which it is assigned. Written work for the class will include brief responses to the week's readings (1-2 pages), 2 short analytical papers, and a 10-12 page research paper. Grading for the course will be as follows: class participation and response papers 30%; short papers 20% each; research paper 30%.

Course Requirements for RN 713, HI 713 & STH TX 811

Students are expected to attend and participate in every class. All reading is to be completed before the class for which it is assigned. In addition to mastering the material required of undergraduates, graduate students are also expected to familiarize themselves with current scholarship in the field and to develop a critical understanding of the relevant issues in scholarship. Additional secondary readings are thus indicated each week for graduate students. Written work will be the same as for undergraduates except that the final paper will take the form of a 15-20 page bibliographic essay. Graduate students will also make one oral presentation to the seminar. Grading for the course will be as follows: class participation/response papers/oral presentation 30%; short papers 20% each; bibliographic essay 30%.

For all students: Since we meet only once a week, attendance is extremely important. If you know that you will miss class because you are sick or are away from school for an emergency, please try to let me know ahead of time, if possible, via phone or e-mail. More than one unexcused absence during the semester may result in a lowered overall grade in addition to an unsatisfactory class participation grade.

J. Lynch, The Medieval Church: A Brief History
B. Rosenwein, A Short History of the Middle Ages
R. N. Swanson, Religion and Devotion in Europe, c. 1215-c.1515
Please note that you must complete all written work in order to receive a passing grade for the class.

**Schedule:**


**Additional Graduate Reading:** John Coakley, "Christian Holy Women and the Exercise of Religious Authority in the Medieval West," *Religion Compass* 3 (2009), 847-856. [access on line through Mugar e-journals] and Robert Lerner, "Ecstatic Dissent," *Speculum* 67 (1992), 33-57 [access on line through Mugar/JSTOR].

9/20 The Love Affair With God: The Monastic Tradition


**Additional Graduate Reading:** Denys Turner, *Eros and Allegory: Medieval Exegesis of the Song of Song*

9/27 Hildegard of Bingen: The Visionary Experience and Female Spiritual Authority

**Readings:** Fanning, 82-85; Elizabeth Petroff, 151-158; B. Newman, *Sister of Wisdom. St. Hildegard’s Theology of the Feminine*, Chapter 1 [Blackboard]

**Additional Graduate Reading:** B. Newman, *Sister of Wisdom. St. Hildegard’s Theology of the Feminine*, entire book

10/4 Religious Communities: Tradition and Innovation

**Readings:** Fanning, 94-101; Walter Simon, *Cities of Ladies*, Chapters 2-4 [Blackboard]; The Lives of Marie d’Oingies and Christina Mirabilis, Petroff, 171-189

**Additional Graduate Reading:** Herbert Grundmann, *Religiöse Bewegungen im Mittelalter* (in the original German or in the 1995 English translation). The English translation contains an excellent introduction by Robert Lerner.

Tuesday 10/12 Apostolic Poverty and Mystical Practice: St. Francis and St. Clare

146-169 [Blackboard], St. Francis, *Canticle of Brother Son*; Thomas of Celano, *The Life of St. Francis* (first and second versions)

**Additional Graduate Reading:** Lester Little, *Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy in Medieval Europe*, entire.

### 10/18 A Different Kind of Love: Hadewijch and Minnemystik


**Additional Graduate Reading:** Paul Mommaers, *Hadewijch: Writer, Beguine, Love Mystic*, Elisabeth M. Dutton, trans.

**SHORT PAPER 1 DUE BEFORE CLASS**

### 10/25 Mechthild of Magdeburg and the nuns of Helfta: Female Monasticism and Vernacular Theology


**Additional Graduate Reading:** Sara Poor, *Mechtild of Magdeburg and Her Book: Gender and the Making of Textual Authority*.

**Final Paper Proposals/Bibliographies Due**

### 11/1 Apostolic Poverty and Mystical Practice: The Followers of Francis

American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting: No Additional Graduate Reading Today

11/8 Annihilation of the Soul: Marguerite Porete and the Heresy of the Free Spirit


Additional Graduate Reading: Robert E. Lerner, Heresy of the Free Spirit

11/15 Ilaria Ramelli lecture, Details TBA

SHORT PAPER 2 DUE BEFORE CLASS

11/22 Meister Eckhart and the Beguines


Optional: Schwester Katrei entry from the Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastiques

Additional Graduate Reading: B. McGinn, ed., Meister Eckhart and the Beguine Mystics, entire.

Undergraduates: First Draft Final Paper Due

11/29 Gender and the Body in Mystical Practice


Additional Graduate Readings: C. Bynum, Holy Feast and Holy Fast, entire book;

12/6 Sensory Experience and Mystical Language

Readings: Fanning, 119-128; Margery Kempe, "The Book of Margery Kempe," Petroff, 314-328, Excerpts from the anonymous Cloud of Unknowing; Excerpts from Richard Rolle, The Fire of Love
Additional Graduate Reading: Karma Lochri, *Margery Kempe and Translations of the Flesh.*

FINAL PAPER DUE Monday, 12/6

Deeana Klepper Home

Religion Department Home

Office Hours: Wednesday 9:00-10:30, Thursday 1:00-3:00, or by appointment
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