

CAS RN413/713 * CAS HI 413/713 * STH TX 811

Gender in Medieval Christian Mysticism Fall 2010; Monday 3-6 PM

Instructor:
Prof. Deena Klepper
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[Texts](#)

[Requirements](#)

[Schedule](#)

[Office hours](#)

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)

Meister Eckhart, *The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense* (ISBN 0809103222)

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:

B. McGinn, *The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism*. Vols. I, II, and III



Hildegard of Bingen, detail from
*Kosmosmensch
Scivias domini*, 12th c.

[Reading Guide 9/13](#)

[Reading Guide 9/20](#)

[Reading Guide 9/27](#)

[Reading Guide 10/4](#)

[Reading Guide 10/12](#)

[Reading Guide 10/18](#)

[Reading Guide 10/25](#)

[Reading Guide 11/1](#)

[Reading Guide 11/8](#)

[Reading Guide 11/15](#)

[Reading Guide 11/22](#)

[Reading Guide 11/29](#)

[Reading Guide 12/6](#)

Assignments:

[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](#)

All students should familiarize themselves with the College of Arts and Sciences

[Undergraduate Academic Conduct Code](#) or [Graduate Academic Conduct Code](#) as appropriate and adhere to it. Please see also my [plagiarism policy](#)

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 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.

Please note that you must complete all written work in order to receive a passing grade for the class.

Schedule:

9/13 Introduction: Background to Medieval Christian Mysticism: Body, Spirit, and Religious Experience

Reading for first class meeting: Steven Fanning, 1-36; Jacqueline Murray, "One Flesh, Two Sexes, Three Genders?" *Gender and Christianity in Medieval Europe: New Perspectives*, 34-51. [Blackboard](#); Bernard McGinn, *The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism, Vol. I*, Introductions and Chapter 1 [[Blackboard](#)]

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

Readings: Fanning, 75-82; E. Ann Matter, "Mystical Marriage," *Women and Faith: Catholic Religious Life in Italy from Late Antiquity to the Present*, L. Scaraffia and G. Zarri, eds., 31-41 [[Blackboard](#)]; Richard of St. Victor, "On the Four Degrees of Passionate Charity," 213-233 [[Blackboard](#)], [Bernard of Clairvaux: On Loving God](#) and [Excerpts from Sermons on the Song of Songs](#)

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

Readings: Fanning, 85-92; "The Testament of St. Clare," Petroff, 231-235; 242-246; Lester Little, *Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy in Medieval Europe*, 19-41;

146-169 [[Blackboard](#)], St. Francis, [Canticle of Brother Sun](#); 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



Readings: Hadewijch of Brabant, "Letters and Visions," Petroff, 189-200; Hadewijch, Poems, from *Hadewijch. The Complete Works*, Columba Hart O.S.B., trans., 149-152; 168-171; 227-229; 240-243; 352-358 [[Blackboard](#)]; M. Suydam, "The Touch of Satisfaction: Visions and the Religious Experience According to Hadewijch of Antwerp," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 12 (Fall 1996), 5-27 [[Blackboard](#)].

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

Readings: Mechthild of Magdeburg, "The Flowing Light of the Godhead"; St. Gertrude the Great, "Revelations," Petroff, 207-221; 222-230; Jeffrey Hamburger, *The Visual and The Visionary: Art and Female Spirituality*, chapters 1 and 2 [[Blackboard](#)].

Additional Graduate Reading: Sara Poor, *Mechthild 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

Readings: St. Bonaventure, "The Soul's Journey into God," E. Cousins, ed., trans., 53-116 [[Blackboard](#)]; Blessed Angela of Foligno, "The Book of the Experience of the

Truly Faithful," Petroff, 254-263

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

Readings: Marguerite Porete, "The Mirror of Simple Souls," Ellen Babinsky, trans. Entire book, including the preface, introduction, and text, [Marguerite's trial documents](#)

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

Readings: Meister Eckhart, *The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense*, Introduction; 71-81; 177-203; 285-294 ; A. Hollywood, "Suffering Transformed: Marguerite Porete, Meister Eckhart, and the Problem of Women's Spirituality," *Meister Eckhart and the Beguine Mystics*, 87-113 [[Blackboard](#)] Schwester Katrei (Sister Catherine), "About the Confessor's Daughter," *Meister Eckhart, Teacher and Preacher*, 347-387 [[Blackboard](#)]

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

Readings: C. Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, 1-9; 277-302 [[Blackboard](#)]; A. Hollywood, "Inside Out: Beatrice of Nazareth and Her Hagiographer," *Gendered Voices: Medieval Saints and Their Interpreters*, Catherine M. Mooney, ed., 78-98 [[Blackboard](#)]; Beatrijs of Nazareth, "Seven Manners of Loving God," Petroff, 200-206.

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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