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## MYSTICISM EAST AND WEST

(Gen Ed: Arts and Humanities, Diversity, Ethics)

Fall Semester 2013: TuTh 12:30PM - 1:45PM

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Fall Office Hours: TTH 2:15-3:15, 5:00-6:00pm and by appointment.

### Course Description

'Mysticism' stems from the Greek  $\mu\upsilon\omega$ , which signifies "to conceal." The word mysticism is associated in earlier Greek and Christian traditions with hidden, secret, and esoteric knowledge and in later modern Western thought with a particular kind of experience.

In this course we will examine the concept and experience of "mysticism" through a comparative exploration of major expressions of mysticism and philosophical interpretations of mysticism in East Asian (primarily Daoist and Buddhist) and Western (primarily Greek, Christian, and modern philosophical) thought. We will consider whether mysticism is a meaningful category and what mystical experience and insight might signify through an investigation of multiple ways of experiencing and understanding the sacredness of the divine, the self, and/or nature.

### Course Requirements

Students are required to: 1. Complete all assigned readings 2. Maintain regular attendance 3. Participate in class discussion and discussion groups 4. Complete all written assignments on-time

### Course Assignments

1. Three Exams = 75% of final course grade.  
2. Short in-class and take-home individual and group assignments, Class Attendance and Participation = 25% of final grade.

**Required Texts:** All texts are free and on-line accessible (see weblinks). All linked content is for educational purposes only.

## COURSE CALENDAR

### I. Mysticism and Love

#### I.1 Plato and Platonism

1. Sept. 5, TH: Introduction to Mysticism and to the course

Recommended reading 1: [The Allegory of the Cave](#) from Plato, Republic

Recommended reading 2: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/mysticism/>

2. Sept. 10, T: [Divine Madness and Immortality. Plato, Phaedrus \(6: 243e-246a\) and \(recommended additional reading\) Proclus Diadochus, On the Signs of Divine Possession](#)

3. Sept. 12, TH: Diotima and Socrates, [Love from the sensuous to the sacred: From Plato, Symposium](#)

4. Sept. 17, T: Plotinus, [On Material and Celestial Love. The Fifth tractate from the Third Ennead](#)

#### I.2 Christianity and Loving God

5. Sept. 19, TH: Bernard of Clairvaux, [On Loving God](#)

6. Sept. 24, T: Margaret Porete [The Mirror of Simple Souls \(selections\)](#)

7. Sept. 26, TH: [The condemnation, trial, and execution of Margaret Porete](#)

#### 8. Oct. 1, T In-Class Exam 1

### II. Mysticism: Apophatic, Negative, and Skeptical

9. Oct. 3, TH: "Not" - [The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad and Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, The Mystical Theology](#)

10-11. Oct. 8 and 10, Tu-Th: Zhuangzi- [Free and Easy Wandering](#) [also see: <http://ctext.org/zhuangzi>]

- 12-13. Oct. 15 and 17, Tu -Th: Zhuangzi - [Discussion on Making All Things Equal](#) [also see: <http://ctext.org/zhuangzi>]
14. Oct. 22, T: Daodejing: <http://www.acmuller.net/con-dao/daodejing.html> [and: <http://ctext.org/dao-de-jing>](first half)
15. Oct. 24, TH: Daodejing: <http://www.acmuller.net/con-dao/daodejing.html> [and: <http://ctext.org/dao-de-jing>](second half)
16. Oct. 29, T and 17. Oct. 31, TH: "Comparative Mysticism"? D. T Suzuki [on Mesiter Eckhart and Zen Buddhism](#) and Ueda Shizuteru on "Nothingness" in Meister Eckhart and Zen Buddhism [pdf available at -- <http://www.worldwisdom.com/public/library/default.aspx>]
18. Nov. 5, T: The Chan Buddhist Gongan / Zen Buddhist Koan 1: [Wumenguan / Mumonkan / The Gateless Gate](#) (first half)
19. Nov. 7, TH: The Chan Buddhist Gongan / Zen Buddhist Koan 2: [Wumenguan / Mumonkan / The Gateless Gate](#) (second half) and **Take-home Exam 2 due on turnitin.com by November 10.**
- III. Nature and Death**
20. Nov. 12, T: St. Francis, [Birds and The Canticle of Creatures](#) and Dōgen, [Mountains and Waters Sutra](#)
21. Nov. 14, TH: Martin Buber, [Two Passages from I and Thou](#) and Friedrich Nietzsche, [Birth of Tragedy \(1 and 2\)](#)
22. Nov. 19, T: [Bardo Thodol \("The Tibetan Book of the Dead"\) pdf](#) (first half)
23. Nov. 21, TH: [Bardo Thodol \("The Tibetan Book of the Dead"\) pdf](#) (second half)
- 24. Nov 26, T: Documentary and Assignment**
- 25. Nov. 28, TH: No classes**
- IV. Philosophical Assessments**
26. Dec. 3, T: William James [on Mysticism from The Varieties of Religious Experience](#)
27. Dec. 5, TH: Bertrand Russell [on Mysticism](#) (1917 and 1961, read second text from 1961)
- 28. Dec. 10, T: Martin Buber and ethical mysticism and (Take-Home) Final Exam 3.**
- 29. Final Exam 3 due at turnitin.com before or by Tuesday, December 17, 2013.**

### Additional Readings

#### Mysticism and the Brain

<http://www.slate.com/id/2165004>

#### Physics and Mysticism/Holism

<http://www.theamericanscholar.org/sp07/newtheory-lanza.html>

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/physics-holism/>

#### Mysticism and Intoxication

[http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/Press\\_releases/2006/07\\_11\\_06.html](http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/Press_releases/2006/07_11_06.html)