



RELN 490

Senior Seminar in Religious Studies

Saints and Sages in Comparative Perspective

Course Description

Senior Seminar is designed to offer a culminating experience in your Religious Studies major. This year's topic will offer opportunities to examine the phenomenon of sainthood in a variety of religious traditions and sources. Challenging reading, regular writing assignments and student-led discussions will be the tools through which the topic is explored. Each week one student will prepare a short, critical essay on the reading under discussion. Two other students will prepare together to lead discussion for the first half of seminar. During this part of the evening I will simply observe and not participate.

Requirements

Writing Assignments All writing is due on the day the reading is discussed. Please review details described below. I do not consider e-mail requests for extensions. Please plan accordingly. Carefully read and follow my Guidelines, which will be distributed early in the semester, and review the College rules on Academic Honesty (see pp. 26-29 in the Course of Study). Please keep copies of all your writing until it is graded and returned to you. William Strunk and E.B. White's *The Elements of Style* is recommended reading for all who are interested in polishing their writing.

Response essays: Five 1-2 page, single-spaced essays. These essays should be brief and immediate responses to the reading; the writing should be polished. Please date and number your essays. When you submit your last one, please staple it together with previous, graded essays and turn them all in. These are due in the seminar on the night we discuss the reading. Late response essays will not be accepted. (5% each; 25%)

One essay 3-5, single-spaced, typed pages) for distribution in advance (25%):
These are due by 11 a.m. on Tuesday. I will make them available to the rest of the class. Failure to turn in essays on time will result in an F on that paper.

Discussion Leadership On two occasions you will be responsible for leading discussion. You will be the primary leader for one class. You will have a partner for consultation and support. Prepare 5 minutes of opening remarks. Do some research on your topic and supplement the readings with extra material that will amplify our discussion. Keep in mind that the focus of discussion will be on the assigned reading. You should prepare a one-page handout that is designed to guide discussion. You and your partner should meet with each other well in advance of the seminar. You both are encouraged to meet with me as well. (20% discussion leader; 5% discussion partner)

Full participation in class discussions; no unexcused absences. (25%)

Office Hours and Communication

For brief consultations, please see me in class. I am also available for longer meetings during my office hours. (Mon. 9-11; TTh 2:30-4:00). E-mail is the least preferred form of communication and should be used judiciously. If you have a physical, psychological, medical or learning disability that may affect your ability

to carry out assigned course work, I urge you to contact the Office of Disability Services at 5453. The Coordinator of Disability Services, Erin Salva (salvae@kenyon.edu) will review your concerns and determine, with you, what accommodations are appropriate. After your meeting with Erin Salva, please see me to discuss accommodations and learning needs.

Resources:

Books
John Stratton Hawley, ed., *Saints and Virtues*
Thomas De Cantimpre, *The Life of Christina the Astonishing*
Vickie McKenzie, *Cave in the Snow*
Norman Waddell, ed., *Wild Ivy: The Spiritual Biography of Zen Master Hakuin*
Elie Wiesel, *Souls on Fire*
Jelaluddin Rumi, *Signs of the Unseen: The Discourses*

E-Res: selections

Unamuno, "Saint Emmanuel the Good, Martyr"

Reference

The Encyclopedia of Religion

Course Schedule

9/2 Introduction to the Course

Unamuno, "Saint Emmanuel the Good, Martyr"
introduction to John Stratton Hawley, *Saints and Virtues*
Encyclopedia of Religion, "Sainthood"

September 9th: Longer Paper Proposals due

9/9 Christianity
Hawley, 15-35; Hester Gelber: "A Theater of Virtue: The Exemplary World of St. Francis"
Thomas de Cantimpre, *The Life of Christina the Astonishing*

9/16 Theravada and Tibetan Buddhism

Hawley, 111-126; Stanley Tambiah, "The Buddhist Arahant: Classical Paradigm and Modern Thai Manifestations"
Vickie Mackenzie, *Cave in the Snow*, chs. 1-8

9/23 Tibetan Buddhism

Vickie Mackenzie, *Cave in the Snow*, chs. 9-17

9/30 Judaism

Hawley, 87-108; Robert Cohn, "Sainthood on the Periphery: The Case of Judaism"
Elie Wiesel, *Souls on Fire* 3-81, 169-202, 255-259

10/7 Hinduism

Hawley, 52-72 and 168-204; John Stratton Hawley, "Morality Beyond Morality in the Lives of Three Hindu Saints" and Lawrence A. Babb, "Sathya Sai Baba's Sainthood" and Mark Juergensmeyer, "Saint Gandhi"

10/14 Confucianism and Zen Buddhism

Hawley, 73-86; Tu Wei-ming, "The Confucian Sage: Exemplar of Personal Knowledge"
Hakuin, *Wild Ivy: The Spiritual Biography of Zen Master Hakuin*, translator's introduction and 1-46

10/21 Zen Buddhism

October 24th: Last Day to Consult with a faculty mentor on senior essay subject area

10/28 Islam

Hawley, 36-51: William M. Brinner, "Prophet and Saint: Two Exemplars of Islam"

Rumi, Signs of the Unseen: The Discourses, Intro., Parts 1-4, 6, 9-11, 15, 20, 23-27, 31, 42, 55, 63

October 31st : Senior Exercise Essay Topics Assigned

11/4 No class: I will be available for consultation on senior exercise essays.

11/10 Senior Essays due at 4:00 at my office.

11/11 Border Regions of Sainthood, Pt. I

No assignment. Meet at my house for dessert and discussion and a viewing of "Devi"

11/18 Christianity and Islam under African Influence

Hawley 127-167: Lamin Sanneh, "Saints and Virtue in African Islam: An Historical Approach" and Karen McCarthy Brown, "Alourdes: A Case Study of Moral Leadership in Haitian Voudou"

Thanksgiving Break

12/2 Making Saints: The Political Side of Sanctification in Modern Catholicism

In this seminar we will explore the topic through accounts in the media and documents from the Vatican. Some possibilities for study will be Edith Stein, Juan Diego and Mother Theresa. We will plan the readings for this seminar meeting together.

12/9 Border Regions of Sainthood, Pt. 2

Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Of Love and Other Demons

Senior Exercise

In addition to this seminar, majors are required to complete components of the senior exercise (objective examination, essay and symposium) during the course of the year. I have posted important dates within the syllabus, but you should also consult the Religious Studies website for fuller details on each component. In the objective examination majors will be tested on terms from all traditions taught in the department. You will be given a terms list and you are encouraged to meet 2-3 times with the other senior majors (or in smaller groups) to help each other learn and review terms. This is an opportunity for each of you to draw on your expertise to help others. The objective examination will be offered once in each semester. The standard essay option is to write a short essay (12-15 pages) on a topic assigned after consultation with a faculty member. There is a longer paper option (20-25 pages). This is for students who wish to explore a topic in greater detail. This option is subject to approval by the faculty. Students who choose this option must submit their topic proposal, an abstract, bibliography and a list of courses that have prepared them to write on this subject. Your symposium, the final aspect of the senior exercise, is an opportunity for you to discuss your senior paper along with those of a few other seniors, in a small group. The symposia will take place in the second semester.

Important dates:

September 9th Long paper proposals due

October 24th Last day to consult with a faculty mentor about your short essay topic

November 10th Short paper due

Saturday, October 18th Objective Examination (first opportunity)

December 5th Long paper due

Saturday, January 31st Objective Examination (second opportunity)

Symposia will be scheduled sometime between the January 31st and February 14th.

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