

REL 39 (10A)

Dist: TMV; WCult: W

2014 Spring

Professor Catharine Randall

Office hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 9-10am

Magic, Madwomen and Mystics: an alternative Christian spirituality

“The Christian of the future will be a mystic, or will not exist at all” – Karl Rahner, S.J.

“Magic wants to get; mysticism wants to give” –Evelyn Underhill

This course compares and contrasts magical practices and mysticism in (primarily) Western Europe from pre-Christian Judaism to the present-day. A contemplative practice component is included. An alternative voice to institutionalized piety emerges, one that is often—though not always—associated with those culturally marginalized, including women. The focus is interdisciplinary: we examine spiritual literature, poetry, artwork (including the engravings of William Blake) and early modern music and some hymns.

Required:

E. J. Holmyard, *Alchemy* Dover, 1990.

Emmanuel Ladurie, *Montaillou*

The Desert Fathers

Life of St. Francis

Bernard McGinn, *The Essential Writings of Christian Mysticism*. Random House, 2006. 0-8129-7421-2

Selections: John of the Cross, Julian Norwich, the Pietists, Therese de Lisieux, Hildegard of Bingen, Mother Theresa. St. Theresa of Avila, Thomas Merton, Pere de Caussade, Rumi, Rilke

Carolyn Myss, *Anatomy of the Spirit* or Thomas Moore, *Care of the Soul* (choose ONE)

Grading:

25% oral presentation (one)

20% class participation

20% written report (5 pp.)

35% final project

Reports will be 15 minutes, with audio-visual support (film clips, Powerpoint) and will provide information about selected specific aspects of the course material. There may be a hands-on component (for example, showing of Tarot cards)

Written report will be a summary of either another primary text not read in class, or of a secondary source concerning class focus.

Final project will be an interview with a practitioner (i.e. Quaker, Buddhist, Shambala meditation leader), analysis of what was learned, a write-up of that interview (Q & A format, 8-10 pp.) and presentation to the class.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

Week one, class one Introduction to the course. "Under every green tree": Readings and discussion of Hebrew Bible's prohibition on magic, pagan practices and divination (Saul and the witch of Endor)

Reading: selection from Jacobus Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Lives of the Saints*

Week one, class two "white magic" popular religion and the heart of early modern Christianity. "Material culture" religion: rosaries, icons, belief supports. Discussion of selection of *Lives of the Saints*

Reading: Holmyard, *Alchemy*

Week two, class one Magic: Mysticism's Antecedents? Alchemy and the arts of divination

Discussion of *Alchemy*

Report choices: Tarot cards, fortune-telling, tea-leaves, Delphic oracles and entrails, Masons, Rosicrucians

Reading: Ladurie, *Montaillou*

Week two, class two Case Study: The Cathars: Mysticism as counter-culture

Report choices: the *perfecti*, the *endura*, the Cathar Bible, the birth of Mariology, the rise of the Inquisition and the Dominican order

Reading: *The Desert Fathers*

Week three, class one Classic Christian Mysticism: “A Historical Sketch of European Mysticism from the beginning of the Christian Era” (Underhill, Appendix) Discussion of selections of *The Desert Fathers*

Report choices: Plotinus, the Pseudo-Dionysius, *via negativa*, John Cassian, St. Marcarius of Egypt, St. Simeon Stylites, anchorites, cenobites, St. Benedict

Reading: selections from Hildegarde of Bingen and St. Theresa of Avila; Hans Urs von Balthasar on the Pseudo-Dionysius

Week three, class two Many Women Mystics. Music of Hildegarde of Bingen (Anonymous Four)

Report choices: Women Mystics: St. Elizabeth of Schonau, Hildegarde of Bingen, Marguerite Porete and the Beguines, Mechtild of Magdeburg, Catherine of Siena

Reading: *Life of St. Francis*

Week four, class one Franciscan spirituality. Discussion of *Life of St. Francis*

Bonaventure on aesthetics and mysticism (selection from Hans Urs von Balthasar)

Report choices: Joachim of Flora, tertiary Franciscans, Angela of Foligno, St. Francois de Sales, Jeanne Francoise de Chantal

Readings: selections from the Pietists, especially Jacob Boehme

Week four, class two Flemish Mysticism and the birth of Pietism (and its influence on the Reformation and modern-day Protestantism. Discussion of Pietist readings

Report choices: Meister Eckhard, the Camisards, glossalia, Anabaptists, "Friends of God," *Theologia Germanica*

Week five, class one (optional) FIELD TRIP to monastery (tba)

Reading: selections from the Life of the Little Flower

Week five, class two FILM: "The Little Flower" (St. Therese de Lisieux)

Out-of-class viewing of Film: Jean-Luc Godard, "Je te salue, Marie"

Week six, class one "Active" Mysticism Discussion of St. Therese de Lisieux: life and film, and "Je te salue Marie"

Reading: selections from Julian of Norwich

Out—of-class viewing of film, Hildegard of Bingen

Week six, class two Continental Mysticism focusing especially on Julian of Norwich, an Anglican Anchorite.

Talk by Professor Walter Simons, History, Dartmouth College: Belgium and the beguines: women's alternative spirituality in the late middle ages (cf. bibliography at end)

Report choices: "The Cloud of Unknowing." Walter Hilton, Richard Rolle, George Fox

Reading: selections from John of the Cross and Mother Theresa

Out-of-class viewing of film, The Mill and the Cross

Week seven, class one Doubt, Despair and the "Dark Night of the Soul": Discussion of selections from John of the Cross and Mother Theresa. Discussion of "The Mill and the Cross"

Report choices: Ignatius Loyola, St. Rose of Lima, Henry Vaughan

Reading: "And was Jerusalem Builded Here?" hymn to the words of William Blake

Week seven, class two William Blake: the Poet Visionary and Prophet

Art exhibit visit. Blake's illustrations of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*

Reports: Swedenborg, the Swedenborgians, film: "What Dreams May Come"

Reading: selections from Pere de Caussade, *The Sacrament of the Present Moment*

Week eight, class one Discussion of *The Sacrament of the Present Moment*, Buddhist teachings of "being present in the moment"

Reports: Rumi, Nhic Thaht Than

Readings: selections from Rainer Maria Rilke

Week eight, class two

Discussion of Rilke's Mystical Poetry and close reading workshop

Reading: selections from Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*

Week nine, class one FILM: "Into Great Silence" (part one)

Reading: either Carolyn Myss, *Anatomy of the Spirit* or Thomas Moore, *Care of the Soul*

Out-of-class viewing of film, Lars von Trier, Breaking the Waves

Week nine, class two "Contemplative Practices" Workshop and discussion of "Into Great Silence". Discussion of Lars von Trier

Reading: finish reading either Carolyn Myss, *Anatomy of the Spirit* or Thomas Moore, *Care of the Soul*

Week ten, class one Modern-Day Mystics? Discussion of Myss/Moore method and perspective. What does modern-day mysticism offer us?

Report choice: Mathew Fox, Starhawk, Eckhard Tolle; alternative healing: , homeopathy, naturopathy, crystals, aroma therapy, Reiki, chiropracty, Richard Rohr's Center for Contemplative Spirituality, Carolyn Bourgeault's Contemplative Society ([www. contemplative.org](http://www.contemplative.org))

Reference works:

Matthew Bagger, *Religion, Self-Transformation and the Absurd*. Columbia University Press, 2007.

Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: the Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women*. University of California Press, 1987.

Michel de Certeau, *Mystic Fable: the 16th and 17th centuries*. University of Chicago Press, 1992. 0-226-10037-5

Carl Colman, *The Big Book of Christian Mysticism: the Essential Guide to Contemplative Spirituality* Hampton Roads, 2010. 978-1-57174-625-5

Amy Hollywood, *The Soul as Virgin Bride: Mechtild of Magdeburg, Marguerite Porete and Meister Porete*. University of Notre Dame Press, 1995.

Amy Hollywood, *Sensible Ecstasy: Mysticism, Sexual Difference and the Demands of History*. University of Chicago Press, 2002. 0-226-34951-9

Ursula King, *Christian Mystics: Their Lives and Legacies throughout the Ages*. Hidden Spring, 2001. 1-58768-012-2

Julia Lamm, ed. *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Christian Mysticism*. 2013. 978-1-4443-3286-5 (Will be on library Reserve)

Walter Simons, *The Beguine, the Angel and the Inquisitor: the trials of Marguerite Porete and Guillaume of Cressonessart*. University of Notre Dame Press, 2012. 0-268-02892-3

Mark Thibodeaux, S.J. *Armchair Mystic: Easing into Contemplative Prayer*. St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2001. 0-86716-430-1

Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism*. Doubleday, Image Books, ed. 1990

Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, 6 vols. (will be on library Reserve) Ignatius Press, 1982.

Rowan Williams, *Saint Theresa of Avila*. Continuum, 2004.

Some other primary sources for possible report:

Carolyn Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Jesus: Transforming Mind and Heart*. Shambala, 2008. 978-1-59030-580-5

Richard Rohr, *Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life*. Dreamscare, 2001.

Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*

Henri Nouwen

Films

“The Third Miracle”

“Chariots of Fire”

“Brides of Christ” BBC series

Fiction:

Ron Hansen, *Mariette in Ecstasy*

Anne Tyler, *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*

Rumor Godden, *In this House of Brede*

Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*

Religious Observances: Some students may wish to take part in religious observances during the term. Should you have a religious observance that conflicts with participation in the course, please come speak with the instructor as soon as possible in order to discuss appropriate accommodations.

Disabilities: Students with learning, physical, or psychiatric disabilities who may require disability-related classroom accommodations are encouraged to contact the instructor as soon as possible to discuss your particular needs. All discussions will remain confidential, although the instructor may consult the Student Accessibility Services office to discuss appropriate implementation of any accommodation requested.

You should be aware of and conform to the Dartmouth Honor Code as expressed in the ORC.