REL 346: History of Western Monasticism  
Spring 2004  
TTh 9:40-11:10  
Eaton 412

Professor:   Douglas R. McGaughey  
Office:  Eaton 116

Office Hours:  MW 10:00 - 11:00 a.m.  
OTHER TIMES BY APPOINTMENT
Phone:  Office:  (375) 5415  
Home:  503.566.8944  
E-mail:  dougm@willamette.edu

Course Description:

The Western monastic movement is almost entirely overlooked (particularly by our predominantly Protestant culture) as a theological, institutional, and social movement. It provides a unique framework for investigating many of Christianity’s major influences on its cultures. The course is intended to increase the student’s understanding of theology, sociology, Western history, philosophy, and politics since monasticism preserved for the Western church a Christian theology shaped in the Greek church, came to play a dominant role in Medieval society, and helped to shape much of what has come out of the Medieval period of Western history. Pedagogically, the course offers an example of how the illuminating of what has been covered over can be very helpful in understanding the dynamics of cultural history.

Initially, we will investigate the pre-Christian and Christian (including biblical) theological and cultural reasons for the rise of Anchoritic and Cenobitic monasticism in the 4th century. Long before Anthony established the tradition of the Desert Fathers, there was a dominant theological perspective in Christianity (and the Hellenistic world generally) that stressed asceticism as the highest expression of the faith. As Christianity was legalized and became the official religion of the Roman Empire martyrdom was eliminated as the highest expression of Christian faith. Hence, “red” martyrdom came to be replaced by the “white” martyrdom of monasticism as the most rigorous expression of what it meant to be Christian “in” the world. Although the Alexandrians, Origen, and the Cappadocians articulated the theological framework for Eastern Christianity, their work entered the West and influenced Western Monasticism through Evagrius Ponticus. The crucial theological writings of Pseudo-Dionysius of the 5th century followed by a host of writings in Apophatic theology in contrast to Cataphatic Theology that came to shape Western Monasticism will be read in light of the earlier theological work of the Alexandrians and Evagrius Ponticus. These writings resulted in the wedding of a wide spectrum of Christian mysticism with the equally wide spectrum of male and female monastic orders, which played powerful roles in the university of the high Middle Ages. Equally significant, however, is the role that monasticism played in the re-Christianization of northern Europe, the broadening of the economic base and infrastructure of society, the shaping of the Carolingian empire by facilitating the establishment of a lingua franca and a unified educational system, and for providing women with educational and vocational opportunities.

Required Texts:

Recommended Texts:


________, Band II: Frauenmystik und Franziskanische Mystik der Frühzeit (München, Verlag C.H. Beck, 1993)


Zagano, Phyllis, Woman to Woman: An Anthology of Women’s Spiritualities (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1993) - BX2347.8.W6 W66 - on reserve

Course Requirements:

1. Attendance at all class sessions! Students are responsible for all information given at all class sessions.

2. Reading assignments according to the syllabus.

3. Two Tests (Open for Discussion whether these should be Take-Home Tests) (each at 25%)

4. Research Paper on Topic of Student’s Choice:

6. Final Exam (35%) - Saturday, May, 8; 7:00 - 10:00 p.m. (NOT!)

Research Paper Assignment

A topic should be selected and approved by the professor as early as possible but no later than the last class session (Thursday, March 18th) before Spring Break (March 22-26).

WRITING GUIDELINES):

Texts must be TYPED DOUBLE-SPACED (except for longer quoted material, see below).

ON PLAGIARISM: Plagiarism is the use of another’s text OR THOUGHTS without giving credit to that person. Knowing where an author discussed a certain issue in her/his text is the mark of a scholar. Hence, quoted and even paraphrased material must be footnoted in some fashion (e.g., footnotes, end notes, when only one text is being used page numbers in parenthesis are okay).

Quoting of more than five words in a sequence from a source must be set off by quotes and footnoted. More than three lines of quoted material should be indented, SINGLE-SPACED, and footnoted.

Be sure that you document wherever you have used a source. Use some standard form (e.g., MLA, Turabian, APA, etc.) for footnoting or end noting (i.e., if a book, give author, title, location of publisher,
publisher’s name, and date of publication; if an article, give author, title, of periodical, volume no., issue no., date) giving the page number(s) for material used, to document the location of material paraphrased or quoted. It is acceptable for this course (though it is well advised that you learn a standard publishing style as early in your studies as you can) for you to provide a bibliography with the extended citation at the end of your paper allowing you to use simply the author’s name, date of publication, and page number in the text for purposes of documentation.

COMPUTER PRODUCTIONS: UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES will an excuse of computer failure be accepted for the late submission of the paper - KEEP A BACKUP and MAKE A HARD COPY before you turn off your computer! For example, the following excuses are not acceptable: “the disk was not properly formatted, so I didn’t know it wasn’t storing my text;” “the printer wouldn’t work properly;” “I couldn’t get access to a terminal (or printer) to print out my text, because the computer room was too busy;” “the computer ate my paper;” “my hard disk crashed;” etc.

Assignment Deadlines:

Should a student fail to meet an assignment deadline for any other reason than serious illness (and a physician’s certification may be required to establish the seriousness of the illness), there will be a penalty on the grade. This is to ensure that the playing field is even for all players. There is a two-day grace period for the submission of the paper (a weekend counts as two days). After two days, you will be penalized a portion of a letter grade (e.g., the third day an “A” becomes automatically an “A-”; the fourth day an “A-” becomes a “B+”; etc.) down to a “C”.

In any event, it is always better to turn in a paper late with the chance of earning a “C” than not to turn in any paper and get an automatic “F”.

Incompletes:

An incomplete is possible in the course ONLY in the case of serious illness documented by a physician. In any event, arrangements must be made for an incomplete PRIOR to the official final exam, i.e., on Friday, May 6th by 5:00 p.m.

COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1 (January 20 and 22): Introduction: Biblical Memories and Cultural Transitions

Reading Assignment: McGinn, Chapter 1: “The Jewish Matrix,” pp. 9 - 22

Weeks 2 - 5 (January 25 - February 19): Mediterranean Rationality

Reading Assignments:


Week 4: McGinn, Chapter 4: “Mystical Elements in Early Greek Christianity,” pp. 84 - 130
Week 5: McGinn, Chapter 5: “The Monastic Turn and Mysticism” and “Conclusion,” pp. 131 - 185

Test I: Thursday, February 19th

Weeks 6 - 7 (February 24 - March 4): The Birth of Anchoritic and Cenobitic Monasticism

Reading Assignments:

Week 6: Knowles, Chapters 1 & 2: “The first Christian Monks” and “Early monasticism in the west,” pp. 9 - 36


Weeks 8 - 9 (March 9 - March 18): Pseudo-Dionysius and Apophatic (Negative) Theology

Reading Assignments:

Week 8: “The Divine Names,” pp. 49 - 131


Paper Topic: To be Approved by Thursday, March 18th

Week 10 (March 30 - April 1): Benedict and the Black Monks


Test II: Thursday, April 1st

Week 11 (April 6 - April 8): Re-Christianization of Northern Europe: Columbanus and Gall

Reading Assignment: xeroxed materials

Week 12 (April 13 - April 15): Carolingians and Reichenau

Reading Assignment: xeroxed materials

Week 13 (April 20 - April 22): Monastic Reform

Reading Assignment: Knowles, Chapter 5: “The new orders of the eleventh century” pp. 62 - 82

Week 14 - 15 (April 27 - 29; May 4): Women Monastics

Reading Assignment: xeroxed materials

Final Exam: Saturday, May 8, 7:00 - 10:00 p.m. NOT