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### RELS 370.01: Medieval Women Mystics

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## RELS 370 Medieval Women Mystics

Paul A. Dietrich  
Office: LA 101A  
Phone: 243-2805  
Hours: MWF 11-12 & by appointment

Fall, 2002  
TTh 2:10-3:30  
LA 203  
3 credits

A survey of significant women writers from late antiquity to the renaissance with a close reading of major works by four of the most important of the medieval women mystics.

Topics to be considered include:

- methodological issues in the study of mysticism;
- medieval Frauenmystik (mystical women) and attitudes toward asceticism, gender roles, power and authority, doctrine and ritual;
- the role of intentional communities in the formation, education and literacy of medieval women;
- the epistemological status of visionary and ecstatic experience;
- perceptions of the body, desire, eroticism, pain, suffering, and illness;
- genres of mystical literature, e.g., vision accounts, sermons, letters, treatises, autohagiography, poetry;
- the politics of dissent, persecution, and heresy;
- Passion mysticism, affectivity, apophaticism and the via negativa;
- material culture – architecture, music, liturgy, the structure of the cloister.

“This is the only place in the history of the West in which woman speaks and acts so publicly.” Luce Irigaray

### Required Reading

Petroff, Elizabeth A., ed., Medieval Women's Visionary Literature (Oxford)  
Hildegard of Bingen, Symphonia (Cornell)  
Mechthild of Magdeburg, The Flowing Light of the Godhead (Paulist)  
Marguerite Porete, The Mirror of Simple Souls (Paulist)  
Julian of Norwich, Revelations of Divine Love (Penguin)

### Course Syllabus

Sept. 3,5 Introduction. Medieval Women, the Visionary Tradition and the Discourse of Mysticism (Petroff, Introduction)  
Sept. 10,12 Desert Mothers – Women in the Early Church. Martyrdom, Philosophy and Authority in Late Antiquity (St. Perpetua, St. Macrina)  
Sept. 17,19 Mulieres Sanctae (Holy Women) and Dramatists in the Dark Ages (Hugeberc of Hildesheim, St. Leoba, Hrotsvit of Gandersheim)  
Sept. 24,26 Visionaries, Healers, and Recluses in the Twelfth Century (Christina of Markyate, Hildegard of Bingen, St. Elisabeth of Schönau)  
Oct. 1,3 Art and Spirituality in Hildegard's Symphony of the Harmony of Celestial Revelations

- Oct. 8,10 Eros, Transgression and Desire – the Beguines (Marie d'Oignies, Christina Mirabilis, Hadewijch, Beatrijs of Nazareth)
- Oct. 15,17 The Women of Helfta (Mechthild of Magdeburg, St. Gertrude the Great)
- Oct. 22,24 The Hunt for Love, Lady Pain, and Jubilus in Mechthild's The Flowing Light of the Godhead
- Oct. 24 Midterm exam
- Oct. 29,31 Troubadours and Reformers in Medieval Italy (St. Clare, St. Agnes of Assisi, St. Umiltà, Angela of Foligno, St. Catherine of Siena)
- Nov. 5 Election Day – Holiday
- Nov. 7 Heresy and Holiness in Early Fourteenth Century France (Na Prous Boneta, Marguerite d'Oignt, Marguerite Porete)
- Nov. 12,14 Living Without a Why in Marguerite's The Mirror of Simple Souls
- Nov. 19,21 Visionaries, Pilgrims, and Poets in the Later Middle Ages (Julian of Norwich, Margery Kempe, Doña Leonor López de Córdoba, Christine de Pisan)
- Nov. 26,28 Passion Mysticism and the Motherhood of God in Julian's Revelations of
- Dec. 3,5 Divine Love
- Dec. 10,12 Conclusion
- Dec. 18 Final exam (3:20-5:20)

### Course Requirements

1. Timely completion of assigned reading.
2. Attendance/Participation in class discussions.
3. Midterm exam and final exam.
4. Optional research paper (12-15 pages) on approved topic in lieu of final exam.

No extensions on written assignments. Evidence of plagiarism will result in failure of the course.

- Sept. 23 Last Day to Add/Drop by Cyberbear and to Pay Fees
- Dec. 6 Last Day to Withdraw from Course
- Dec. 13 Last Day for Drop/Grade Option Petitions