THEO 522-01
Survey of Medieval Christian History:
The Text and the Formation of the Reader’s Identity
W 3:45-6:15
Fall 2006

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This syllabus is open to amendment.

I. Course Description
In response to SLU’s mission as a Catholic, Jesuit University, this Medieval Survey seeks to engage in a general study of the major religious figures, themes, movements, and historical developments of the theology and spirituality of the medieval Christian tradition. Emphasis is placed on Western Christianity more than on Eastern forms. More specifically, this course will analyze the medieval practice of reading, the transition from orality to literacy, the role of textual communities, and the formation of a reader’s identity. As we shall see, the text was central in the development of medieval theology, and how a text was written/read distinguishes different periods: monastic, scholastic, vernacular.

II. Course Structure
Part 1: Monastic Theology: The Early Middle Ages, 500-1000
“Monastic Theology” is a term describing the type of theological thinking and Biblical exegesis that developed in the monasteries during the 5th to 11th centuries. This type of theology is heavily neoplatonic, which characterizes it as “meditative” or “contemplative” according to the method of lectio (such generalization is not always helpful). Leading figures of this type of theology are John Scotus Eriugena, Bernard of Clairvaux, and William of Saint-Thierry. The Augustinian, Benedictine and Cistercian Orders emerged during this time are often associated with this type of theology. Specifically we will read John Cassian, “the Father of Western Monasticism,” as an early representative, and Anselm of Canterbury as a later representative who transitions toward scholasticism; he is sometimes called “the founder of scholasticism.”

Part 2: Scholastic Theology: The Central Middle Ages, 1000-1300
“Scholastic Theology” is a term describing the type of theological thinking and Biblical exegesis that developed in the schools and universities during the 12th to 14th centuries. While retaining a neo-platonic framework, the influence of Aristotelian dialectic characterizes scholastic theology as “scientific” according to the method of quaestio and disputatio (again, such generalization is not always helpful). Leading figures of this type of theology are Richard of St. Victor, Robert Grosseteste, Albert the Great, Alexander of Hales, Thomas Aquinas, John Duns Scotus. The School of St. Victor, and the Dominican and Franciscan Orders, which emerged at this time, are often associated with this type of theology. Specifically, we will be reading Hugh of St. Victor as an early representative, and Bonaventure as a later representative.

Part 3: Vernacular Theology: The Later Middle Ages, 1300-1500
“Vernacular Theology” is a term describing the type of theological thinking and Biblical exegesis that developed among the laity and clerics during the 14th and 15th centuries. It differed both in content and audience from its predecessors. Written not in Latin but in the spoken language of the rising nation states, vernacular theology is characterized by a sermo humilis that derived its authority ex beneficio from visions, spiritual diaries, sermons or guidebooks (once again, such generalization is not always helpful). Often mystical in tone, the leading figures of this type of theology are Julian of Norwich, Hadewijch,
Angela of Foligno, Mechthild, Catherine of Siena, John Ruusbroec, Meister Eckhart, Jean Gerson, Richard Rolle, and Henry Suso. The Begines, Begards, and Modern Devotion movement are often associated with this type of theology. Specifically, we will be reading Marguerite Porete and the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* as two 14th century examples.

While all three forms of medieval theology strove for *intellectus fidei* and *experiential caritatis* so as to arrive at *intelligentia amoris*, they all employed differing “interpretive grammars,” methods, genres and philosophies to reach various audiences in diverse contexts.

### III. Goals/Objectives of the Course (What to Learn)

The goals of the course are threefold:

**History**
- to promote a chronological understanding of medieval Christianity according to its changing contexts;
- to examine the various aspects that form those changing contexts (e.g., social, political, economic, etc.);
- so as to study why medieval Christian traditions developed.

**Theology**
- to identify the broader religious themes, movements and events that define those contexts;
- to interpret the thought of key religious figures, themes and texts;
- so as to study what medieval Christian traditions believed.

**Methodology**
- to emphasize that text and context are inseparable in the study of historical theology;
- to conduct several case studies that explore how medieval texts intended to form the reader’s identity;
- so as to study how a medieval faith tradition sought understanding.

### IV. Skill-Set Acquisition (What to Do)

1. **Ability to Read Critically**: students interpret and analyze medieval texts via weekly class reports on selected topics and by offering constructive questions/comments during seminar.
2. **Ability to Write Clearly**: students write in creative, critical and careful prose via the final research paper (guidelines posted on WebCT).
3. **Ability to Present Carefully**: students present well via weekly class reports on selected topics (guidelines posted on WebCT), and via presentation of their ongoing research.
4. **Ability to Think Methodologically**: students apply a historical theology methodology via the combined use of contexts (historical) and contents (theology) in the class reports, timeline, and research paper.
5. **Ability to Synthesize Carefully**: students integrate the history of Medieval Christian theology via the creation of a detailed timeline (guidelines posted on WebCT).

### V. Course Format (How to Learn)

The class will follow a seminar format. As such, it requires the active and collaborative effort of all participants. The assigned readings are a major element to this class because each class directly derives from the readings. Thus, to be an active participant, you must come prepared to discuss the readings. The class will also entail presentations by the professor and regular student reports based on the selected readings. Guidelines for these reports are available on WebCT. On Monday, two days before class, students are to email a one-page, single-spaced summary of their reports to all the members of the seminar.

### VI. Course Readings

**A. Required Books:** An apology in advance for the cost of the books for this class. In an effort to alleviate the cost: 1) all the required/recommended books are available on reserve in Pius Library; 2) some of the shorter readings are available as downloads (pdf) from WebCT; and 3) consider purchasing used books online at: amazon.com, abebooks.com, alibris.com, or powells.com. For example, *The Medieval Theologians* costs $51.95 new, but a used copy in good condition can be purchased online for $20.98. Nevertheless, all the
texts are available in the university bookstore. The bold indicate the identifiers for the required readings, which are listed in the weekly calendar.


**Driver, Steven.** *John Cassian and the Reading of Egyptian Monastic Culture.* New York: Routledge, 2002. WebCT


**B. Recommended Books:**


**C. Online Resources:**

Medieval Sourcebook: http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/sbook.html

The Labyrinth: Resources for Medieval Studies: http://www.georgetown.edu/labyrinth

Netserf: http://www.netserf.org/
The On-line Resource Book (ORB): http://www.the-orb.net/

VII. Course Assignments and Grades

A. Assignments: for the dates they are due see the calendar.

15% = Presentation: analysis of weekly readings and class participation
15% = Class Reports: guidelines available on WebCT
20% = Timeline: guidelines and example available on WebCT
50% = Research Paper: guidelines available on WebCT; to earn an “A” grade on the final paper, the research must make use of at least one source other than English, i.e., Latin, German, French, Italian, etc.

B. Grade Scale and Standards:

A range: Superior, excellent, outstanding

A = 100-96
A- = 95-93

The assignment demonstrates critical, informed, and creative theological inquiry that reflects a synthetic understanding of essential theological/historical concepts. The assignment demonstrates insight beyond what is normally expected. This grade presupposes carefully nuanced reasoning and writing that is free from material, structural and grammatical errors. The differentiation between an A and A- largely depends on the assignment’s astute reasoning and engaging writing style in relation to peer work for the same assignment.

B range: Very Good, Good

B+ = 92-90
B = 89-85
B- = 84-82

The assignment demonstrates ready command of full range of concepts and shows some critical, informed, and creative inquiry that reflects above average understanding of essential theological/historical concepts. This means the student has produced an assignment that is free from material, structural and grammatical errors. The differentiation between a B+ and B largely depends on the assignment’s creativity in relation to peer work for the same assignment.

C range: Okay, Acceptable

C+ = 81-79
C = 78-73
C- = 72-70

The assignment demonstrates satisfactory ability to describe the overall picture and essential concepts in a summary manner. This means the student has completed the assignment in a manner involving no significant errors. Material may not be free from structural and grammatical errors. Nuanced reasoning is not demonstrated. The differentiation between a C+ and C largely depends on the assignment’s organization in relation to peer work for the same assignment.

D range: Below average

D = 69-65

The assignment demonstrates reasoning that is neither carefully reasoned nor coherently presented; writing is insufficient in depth of insight and/or use of texts; presentation is not free from material error in structure, spelling and grammar. This means that the student failed to respond adequately to the assignment and its intentions.

F range: Unsatisfactory

F = 64-0
In one or more of the following ways the student: 1) failed to turn in the assignment; 2) did not respond to the assignment as given; 3) submitted work so thoroughly flawed as to indicate that the student did not make a serious effort; 4) was involved in plagiarism or cheating.

VIII. Course Calendar
A. Due Dates of the Semester Assignments

B. Readings
Anselm = Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works (WebCT)
Cassian = The Institutes.
Walsh = The Cloud of Unknowing.
Driver = John Cassian and the Reading of Egyptian Monastic Culture (WebCT)
Evans (2001) = The Medieval Theologians
Evans (1991) = The Language and Logic of the Bible: The Earlier Middle Ages
Illich = In the Vineyard of the Text: A Commentary to Hugh’s Didascalicon
Hammond = “Contemplation and the Formation of the vir spiritualis in Bonaventure’s Collations in Hexaemeron” (WebCT)
Hollister = Medieval Europe: A Short History
Hugh of St. Victor = The Didascalicon of Hugh of Saint Victor
Leclercq = The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A Study of Monastic Culture
McCord Adams = “Praying the Proslogion: Anselm’s Theological Method.” (WebCT)
Porete = The Mirror of Simple Souls.
Stock (1990) = Listening for the Text: On the Uses of the Past
WebCT = Readings Posted on WebCT

C. Weekly Calendar (14 classes)

The readings and assignments are due on the day listed.

August
W 30: Introduction Syllabus Review Library Visit

I. Monastic Theology: The Early Middle Ages, 500-1000

September
W 6: Context – general History: Hollister/Bennett, Chapters 1-6 (pp. Logan, Chapters 1-6 (pp. 1-104)
Theology: Evans (2001), Chapters 1-7 (pp. 1-101)
Assignment: Synthesis Paper

Stock (2001), After Augustine (114 pp.)
Assignment: Select Topic Report

W: 20 Text – case study: Text: Cassian, The Institutes, c. 417/18 (274 pp.)
Study: Driver, John Cassian and the Reading of Egyptian Monastic
II. Scholastic Theology: The Central Middle Ages, 1000-1300

October

W 4: Context – general
History: Hollister/Bennett, Chapters 7-12 (pp. 105-253)
Theology: Evans (2001), Chapters 8-13 (pp. 102-220)
Assignment: Synthesis Paper

W 11: Contexts – specific
Themes: Evans (1991), The Language and Logic of the Bible: The Earlier Middle Ages (168 pp.)
Assignment: Select Topic Report

W 18: Text – case study:
Text: Hugh of St Victor, Didascalion, c. 1125-30 (151 pp.)
Study: Illich, In the Vineyard of the Text (124 pp.)
Assignment: Analysis of text/study paper

W 25: Text – case study:
Text: Bonaventure, Collations on the Six Days of Creation
Study: Hammond, “Contemplation and the Formation of the vir spiritualis in Bonaventure’s Collationes in Hexaemeron”
Assignment: Analysis of text/study paper

F 27: Scholastic Theology Timeline Due by 5:00 to Hammond’s mailbox

III. Vernacular Theology: The Later Middle Ages, 1300-1500

November

W 1: Context – general
History: Hollister/Bennett, Chapters 13-15 (pp. 254-355)
Theology: Evans (2001), Chapters 14-20 (pp. 221-354)
Assignment: Synthesis Paper

W 8: Contexts – specific
Themes: Stock (1990), Listening for the Text (171 pp.)
Assignment: Select Topic Report

W 15: Text – case study:
Text: Porete, The Mirror of Simple Souls, c. 1305 (175 pp.)
Study: Emery, “Forward” and “Introductory Interpretive Essay” (80 pp.)
Assignment: Analysis of text/study paper
W 22: No Class, Thanksgiving Break

W 29: Text – case study:

Text: Anonymous, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, c. 14\textsuperscript{th} century (151 pp.)
Study: Walsh, “Introduction” (pp. 1-103)
Assignment: Analysis of text/study paper

F 1: Vernacular Theology Timeline Due by 5:00 to Hammond’s mailbox

December

W 6: Conclusion Research Paper Due

*One* topic should be chosen from the five following sections for the Select Topic Reports:

1 *Medieval Theology and its Methods*
   - Reason and Revelation (Faith)
   - Biblical Exegesis
   - Theology and Science

2 *Classical Issues in Medieval Theology*
   - Doctrine of the Trinity
   - The Eucharistic Controversies
   - The Knowability of God
   - The Incarnation
   - Theories of Sin and Salvation
   - Virtues and Vices

3 *Dissemination of Christian Thought*
   - Preaching
   - Art and Architecture
   - Hagiography
   - Evangelization & Apologetic Theology

4 *Worship and Religious Expression*
   - Embodiment and Spirituality
   - Liturgy
   - The Sacramental System
   - The Monastic Life
   - Mysticism
   - The Christian Family in the Middle Ages
   - Dissent and Heresy

5 *Ecclesial Affairs*
   - The Papal Curia
   - Church Government
   - Canon Law
   - Church and State