Course Description
This course will explore a number of significant figures and themes that contributed to the development of Christian spirituality from its beginnings until the eve of the Protestant Reformation. Primary readings from classical sources, as well as relevant secondary literature, will give students the opportunity to become familiar with a variety of voices in the history of Christian spirituality. Proceeding in a roughly chronological manner, the course will cover apophatic spirituality, the Desert Fathers and Mothers, the rise of monasticism, mendicant spirituality, and male and female medieval mystics.

Learning Goals
In this course, students can hope to achieve the following learning outcomes. Upon completion of this class, students will be able to:
1.) Demonstrate a well rounded knowledge and critical appropriation of the Jesuit and Catholic theological tradition.
2.) Demonstrate the relationship between the Christian faith tradition and one’s practice or spiritual development.
3.) Demonstrate facility with methods of research in the interdisciplinary field of Christian Spirituality for postgraduate and doctoral studies.

Required Texts


Course Requirements
1.) Weekly Posts on the discussion board. See the “Discussion Board Postings” handout for detailed information. Two additional rules to follow: First, do not use quotations. They take up words in your post. I want to see that you can explain what the author is saying in your own words. Second, I am looking for depth of insight. This is easier to accomplish (with a 250 word limit on your posts) when you write directly and concisely. (40%) {Strategic Learning Goals 1 & 2}

2.) Film Review (2-3 double spaced pages) of Into Great Silence (2005) is due at the end of the first week of Module Two. In this review, I am looking for a reflection on how the
film provides a better understanding of monastic life. If you have access to the University library, it has multiple copies. The film is also available on DVD through Netflix or rental from Amazon Instant Video. (10%) {SLG 1 & 2}

3.) The Monastic Project Written Report is due at the end of Module Two. See the Monastic Project handout for details. (15%) {SLG 2}

4.) Final Paper. Each student will write a focused 8-10 page paper on one theme in the writings of a major figure in the history of Christian spirituality before 1500 CE. (DMin students using this class as part of their 36 credits of doctoral work must write a 20-page paper.) The topic must be approved by the professor in advance; a proposal of about 300 words must be submitted to the professor via email by the end of the first week of Module Two. The Final Paper is due on the final day of the final week of the course. (35%) {SLG 1, 2, 3}

To understand how to analyze a text in this discipline, I recommend reading the following article by Sandra Schneiders in The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality, “Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality.” This volume can be accessed via the “E-Journals & Books Portal” on the Library’s homepage. For examples of what an academic paper in the field of Christian Spirituality looks like, consult Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality via the E-Journals link on the library’s homepage. Authors to explore for the paper include those in Christian Spirituality: The Classics by Arthur Holder that we will not read in the course as well as Symeon the New Theologian, Hadewijch of Antwerp, Johannes Tauler, John Ruusbroec, and Nicholas of Cusa. You cannot choose an author that we will read during the course. Your grade will be determined in part by how well you follow the following Writing Guidelines below.

Guidelines for Written Assignments
All written assignments should:
1. Double-spaced
2. 1.25 inch margins
3. 12 point font size
4. Include page numbers
5. Give your paper a title.
6. Use footnotes according to Chicago Style/Turabian to cite sources used. For examples, consult: http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html. (For more detailed help, see Turabian, Kate L. A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, current edition.)
7. Include a focused thesis statement at the end of the introductory paragraph of your paper.
8. Use section titles to separate your paper into different parts and put the section title in a bold font on the left margin. (Do not underline the section title or include a colon after the section title.) This helps to organize your thoughts in the paper and helps the reader follow what you are trying to say.
9. Do not in any circumstances use quotations. Paraphrase the author’s text in your own words.
10. *Italicize* the titles of books, journals, magazines, newspapers, and films. Put quotation marks around the title of an article, essay, or song.
11. Use active verb tenses not passive ones. (E.g. The professor teaches the students. The students are taught by the professor.)
12. Do not justify the text of your paper. Align it with the left margin.
13. If you are not confident in your use of English grammar or sentence structure, please have a native English speaker proofread your work before turning it in.
14. Use inclusive language. In keeping with 21st-century scholarship and ethical practice, inclusive language regarding humanity is required in all assignments. (For example, avoid using “man” or “men” when you mean “human being(s),” “humankind,” or “people.”) You are also strongly urged to use inclusive language when referring to God or the sacred (this may be gender-neutral terms like God or Ultimate Reality, or alternating gender-specific pronouns). If the latter practice is new to you, please try making an experiment of it for this course.

Please note that all written assignments must be submitted on time. Extensions will not be allowed except under extraordinary circumstances, and must be approved in advance.

**Grading System**
A, exceptional; A-, excellent; B+, very good; B, good; C, passing; F, failure.

**Questions to Guide Your Reading of Spiritual Classics**

- What is the author’s image of God?
- What is her understanding of the human person?
- What is the path the mystic follows to experience God?
- How does she describe mystical experience?
- What is his central spiritual practice?
- How would you describe her method of prayer/meditation?
- What do you find appealing about this text? What will you take from it?
- Does anything disturb you about this text?
Course Schedule of Readings

Module One Apophatic Spirituality

Week One Gregory of Nyssa


Holder, Arthur. Christian Spirituality: The Classics, Ch. 3.

Gregory of Nyssa, Light from Light: An Anthology of Christian Mysticism, 37-54.


Week Two The Cloud of Unknowing


Holder, Classics, Ch. 14.

The Cloud of Unknowing, Light from Light, 247-264.

Module Two Monastic Spirituality

Week One The Desert Fathers and Mothers


**Week Two** Bernard of Clairvaux

Holder, Chs. 8, 6 (Benedict of Nursia).

Song of Songs 1:1-3:4

Bernard of Clairvaux, *Light from Light,* 95-114.

**Module Three** Mendicant Spirituality

**Week One** Francis of Assisi

Muscat, Noel. “St. Francis of Assisi.” See especially #s: 1-26, 30-31, 35, 37-42. [http://www.ofm.org/1/info/Francis1.html](http://www.ofm.org/1/info/Francis1.html)

Dupre and Wiseman, *Light from Light,* 115-118.


Francis of Assisi. *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works.*


**Module Four** The New Mysticism

**Week One** Mechthild of Magdeburg


McGinn, Bernard. “The Changing Shape of Late Medieval Mysticism.” *Church History* 65.2 (Je 1996): 197-219. (This can be found via the “E-Journals & Books Portal” link on the library homepage.)

Holder, Ch. 9.

**Week Two** Meister Eckhart


Meister Eckhart, Light from Light, 153-171.


**Week Three** Julian of Norwich

Holder, Ch. 13.

Julian of Norwich, Light from Light, 229-246.