HSSP 4342 / 5474
MEDIEVAL MYSTICS SEMINAR

Instructor’s Office Hours: Tues. 11:00-12:00, DSPT 116
Phone: 510-883-2055 (office); 510-596-1870 (St. Albert's Priory)

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The students of this seminar will read and discuss representative Christian mystics from the period 1000–1600. Each meeting will focus on a particular group of mystics. Students will prepare individual oral reports on their particular readings and give them during each session. After the reports the rest of the time will be devoted to general discussion and comparison of the texts. Those taking the course at the 5000 level will be expected to use original language sources when writing their research papers.

Required Books

The Bible. Those who are unacquainted with this book should make time to read as much as they can. We assume knowledge of Song of Solomon, Daniel, John, Acts of the Apostles, Revelation, and the Psalms.


https://www.amazon.com/Medieval-Visionary-Literature-Elizabeth-Alvilda/dp/019503712X/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=Medieval+Women%E2%80%99s+Visionary+Literature&qid=1559066077&s=books&sr=1-1


https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0024181900/ref=dbs_a_def_rwt_bibl_vppi_i3

Packet with study guides, assignments, bibliography, and additional readings.

Other Requirements of Course:

1. Active participation in discussions (50% grade), which includes:
   A. Being able to summarize everything in the “General Assignment.”
   B. Giving an oral report on your particular assignment from a medieval author; two students per reading; one will report, the other respond to the report.
   C. Presenting an oral book report on a modern scholarly book (once during the semester—you will not give an oral report on a mystic that week).

2. A research paper (ca. 25 pages—6,250 words—50% of grade) on the writings of a mystic chosen before the second meeting of class. All mystics listed on the syllabus below are possible choices.
MEDIEVAL MYSTICS SEMINAR
SYLLABUS

WEEK ONE (9/3): **Introduction** by Instructor

WEEK TWO (9/10): **Twelfth-Century Speculative Mystics:** St. Bernard of Clairvaux; Richard of St. Victor.

WEEK THREE (9/17): **Cloistered Visionaries:** St. Hildegard of Bingen; St. Gertrude the Great.

WEEK FOUR (9/24): **Beguine Mystics:** St. Mechthild of Magdeburg; St. Hadewijch of Brabant; Bl. Jan van Ruusbroec.

WEEK FIVE (10/1): **Byzantine Hesychasm:** Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite; Gregory Palamas

WEEK SIX (10/8): Instructor away for a conference, no class. Work on your research papers.

WEEK SEVEN (10/15): **Franciscan Mystics:** St. Clare of Assisi; Bl. Angela of Foligno; St. Bonaventure.

10/22 = Reading Week (no class)

WEEK NINE (10/29): **The Rhineland Mystics I:** Marguerite Porette; Meister Eckhart.

WEEK TEN (11/5): **The Rhineland Mystics II:** Bl. Heinrich Suso; Bl. Johannes Tauler; *Theologica Germanica*.

WEEK ELEVEN (11/12): **Political Visonaries:** St. Bridget of Sweden; St. Catherine of Siena

WEEK TWELVE (11/19): **The English School I:** Bl. Richard Rolle; *The Cloud of Unknowing*

WEEK THIRTEEN (11/26): **The English School II:** Hilton; Julian of Norwich; Kempe.

WEEK THIRTEEN (12/3): RESEARCH PAPERS DUE TODAY (no class)

EXAM WEEK (12/10): **STUDENT PRESENTATIONS**
MEDIEVAL CHRISTIAN MYSTICS

Definition of Some Technical Terms

MYSTICISM: The idea that God, the Deity, or a transcendent reality may be actually experienced (usually during prayer) by human beings while still alive.

PRAYER (oratio): “The lifting of the mind, heart, and voice to God.” Often divided into two types:
Vocal prayer: prayer using words of petition, praise, repentance, etc. May be memorized (e.g., the Lord’s Prayer) or spontaneous. The words may be recited aloud or silently.
Mental prayer: prayer that does not use verbal formula. See Meditation and Contemplation.

MEDITATION (meditatio): A more or less structured mental discipline (“mental prayer”) in which an individual recalls past sins and favors from God, imagines Biblical events of the life of Christ, and considers moral reform and repentance. Many books have been written giving “methods” for the practice of meditation. This word does not mean: yoga-like exercises, mystical contact with God, or “contemplation.” It is sometimes divided into two types:
Discursive meditation: a form of prayer consisting of the activity of the mind in which mental images and events are formed and considered. “Praying with the mind.”
Affective meditation: responses of the emotions and will to the considerations of discursive meditation; or acts of love of God and repentance for sin that might replace it. “Praying with the emotions.”

CONTEMPLATION (contemplatio): A state of passivity and receptiveness to God in prayer. Formally it consists of a “simple regard” or direction of attention toward God, always excluding discursive meditation and usually excluding affective meditation. It is usually divided into two types:
Acquired Contemplation: contemplation that is brought on by the one praying, either through simplification and abandonment of meditation, or various exercises to quiet the mind and affections.
Infused Contemplation or “the Prayer of Quiet”: A properly “mystical” state, supposedly caused by God (not the mystic), in which the ability to meditate is blocked (“the ligature”) and a passive state of receptivity to God is “infused” into the soul. Supposedly following on it is “mystical union” of the soul with God, and personal experience of God by the individual.
MEDIEVAL CHRISTIAN MYSTICS
HINTS FOR PREPARING CLASS PRESENTATIONS

When you prepare, read your assignment once to get the overall “feel” of the author. Then read a second time, taking careful notes. You may want to photocopy the reading so that you can mark up the text. Marking the text, however, cannot substitute for written notes. Then assemble your presentation. Reread the text a third time. This last reading may give you new insights that you will want to incorporate into the presentation. You will probably find it easiest to give your presentation from written notes or a “dense” outline. This material is too difficult for you to “wing it."

Your presentation should touch on the following points:

1. If you are the first presenter on an author: Who is the author? What are the authors dates? Give a brief outline of the author’s life. You may need to do a little research to get this information. Do not repeat this material if it has been included in a previous presentation.

2. Describe the “form” of your text: is it a poem, a treatise, a composite? What is its textual history? What do we need to know to interpret it?

3. Outline the “narrative” of the text: what does it say? In some cases you may even want to prepare a written outline of it (max. 1 page) and distribute copies to the class. These first three items should give us a context for talking about the text and take no more than 5 minutes.

4. The bulk of your presentation should focus on developing and explaining the themes present in the text, its “message.” Ask yourself, what is the author trying to tell us? Why did the author write the text? How does its literary form relate to its content? What response does the author want from the reader? If the text has undergone heavy editing after the author’s death, what can we retrieve of its original form?

5. In preparing item 4 you may need to:
   a. describe the “theory,” “system,” or view of reality presented by the author.
   b. talk about some reoccurring “theme,” e.g. vicarious suffering, union with God, mystical marriage, etc.
   c. explain some idea that gives unity to the text.
   d. develop your own approach to the text (e.g. items a, b and c may not apply in all cases).

6. Finally, have marked and ready the passages or quotations that will illustrate the points you want to make.
You should be well enough prepared so that you can listen carefully to the other presentations, take notes on them, and reflect on how they relate to your own project, rather than being preoccupied with what you plan to say.

The length of the presentation should be 20 minutes maximum, that is, about 2000 words.

HOW TO PREPARE A BOOK REPORT

On the two weeks you have to present a book, you need to prepare a written 600 to 800 word review to read to the class. A good book review summarizes the book’s thesis and structure, places it within the pertinent historiography or controversy, and finally criticizes its positive and negative qualities. For a model take a look at the reviews in journals such as *Speculum, Church History, The Sixteenth Century Journal*, etc. You will read the essay to the class, but need not turn it in. **NOTE THAT IT MUST NOT EXCEED 1000 WORDS** (your computer doubtless has a word counter).

STYLISTIC GUIDE FOR PAPERS.


Until you get a copy, a quick summary for footnotes and bibliography here: https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/turabian/citation-guide.html

Also avoid these common stylistic errors:

1. In American usage, punctuation is inside quote marks and note umbers outside: He said, “Look there.”**22** Not: He said, “Look there”.**22** And not: He said, “Look there”**22**.

2. Ellipsis marks in English require spaces: He wrote, “This is the beginning of . . . great things.” Also they are not at the beginning of quotation and only used at the end if the quote fails to complete the sentence.

3. Place page numbers in the upper right, not the bottom and include your name: Smith 23

4. Term papers do not have title pages. Place your name, the course number, name of class, and date of submission on 4 lines in the top right corner of first page. Then skip a line and center your title; on the next line center the subtitle, then hit two returns and begin typing.

5. PAPERS ARE DOUBLE-SPACE AND SINGLE-SIDED.
Purposes, Outcomes, and Grading Rubrics for the Seminar

Course Goals

In their exposure to the most current scholarship and published sources for authors usually identified as Christian mystics in the period from 1100 to 1600 the students will seek to:

1. Achieve a general chronological comprehension of the forms of mystical writing in the period and the relationship of the various authors. They will also acquire a working knowledge of major modern scholarship on these authors. This intellectual integration should allow them to judge what is useful in past and future scholarship and to undertake their own research in the area.

2. Through exposure to the best in contemporary scholarship, including its controversies, the students should strive for an academic humility and openness to contrasting opinions and methods that will help them to assimilate for their own research and teaching. In seminar discussions they will strive to show respect for other’s opinions, while at the same time expressing their own differing methods and conclusions.

3. As they prepare their written and oral contributions, they will develop the self-direction, necessary to become an independent researcher who can contribute to the historical discipline generally, and use the fruits of their own research to claiming primary responsibility for one’s own education, demonstrates a keen intellectual interest in the topic of studies, with the ability to teach oneself through a habit of skilled and responsible research and resilient exploration.

4. By active participation in seminar discussions, students will strive to put their own learning at the service of others so as to foster a lively and respective learning environment. The result should foster a climate of collaboration and common ownership of discussion and research.

5. Through both reading and seminar interaction, students will keep in mind the ways in what they are mastering will prepare them common misconceptions and prejudices in the world and the academy, and so prophetically challenge those blocks to learning.

Course Outcomes

1. A broad knowledge of the current scholarship on medieval mystical authors and those authors writings..

2. Beyond the broad outlines, a more focused and critical understanding of one medieval mystic of the student’s choose through personal research.

3. The ability to communicate the fruits of their study and research, especially through scholarly writing.

4. The ability to draw on the acquired knowledge of medieval mysticism for enriching their own contemporary theological and ecclesiastical concerns. (Not actually a topic in this class)

5. Production of a thoroughly researched and well written historiographic essay that will serve as a model for the similar kind of work that will be necessary to produce a dissertation prospectus and the dissertation itself.

6. Increased facility in doing oral presentation and historical argumentation that respects the opinions of others and engages them in a manner useful for both.
Grading Rubrics

“A” signifies a superior level of mastery of the material understudy, the ability to independently and effectively critique the scholarship, and lead oral interlocutors and readers to benefit from the presented research in their own study. For a written paper, this means that, with perhaps minor revisions, it might be submitted for publication in a juried journal.

“A-“ signifies that the work has some way to go in approaching “A” level work. For a paper, this means that because of gaps in knowledge of scholarship and sources, adequacy of argument, or lack of originality, render it more a learning exercise than a project that might eventually be published. Perhaps, however, with considerable further refinement and development, the essay might be developed into a conference paper.

“B+” signified that the work evaluated is has problematic lacunae in knowledge of material and method or defective argumentation. The result may be derivative and unoriginal, or, if original, fails to demonstrate its thesis. While adequate as a learning exercise, the such work falls short of true graduate work.

“B” signifies that the work is not only problematic for lack of knowledge, proper method, or originality, but also substandard as even master’s level work. But the result is probably still sufficient to allow it to be used for credit toward the degree.

Below a “B” means that, for all intents and purposes, the performance is so poor that should not be used to fulfill requirements of a doctoral program.

“Plagiarism is the presentation of another’s ideas, methods, research or words without proper acknowledgment. It runs the gamut from failing to cite a reference (sloppy scholarship) to passing off another’s work as one’s own. It includes close paraphrasing as well as lifting of entire lines nearly verbatim without acknowledgment. As the effects of the plagiarism will be the same regardless of intent, intent will not be construed as essential to the act, although it may be considered in determining whether the charge of plagiarism should be pursued or what the penalty may be.” (Prof. Dan Joslyn-Siemiatkoski of CDSP is the author for this excellent summary of plagiarism.)

NOTE: If you need special arrangements to meet the course requirements for reasons of some documented disability, please see the instructor after the first meeting of the seminar.
WEEK II:
Twelfth-Century Speculative Mystics

Major Authors: For full citations, see bibliography in this packet.

Bernard of Clairvaux SOCist. (1090–1153)
Operonnia
On Song of Songs
Letters
Richard of St. Victor CR (d. 1173)
Operonnia
*Richard of St. Victor: Twelve Patriarchs, Mystical Ark, Trinity III. BV5080.R5513

General Assignment

You should be acquainted with Genesis, 29–30, and all of the Song of Songs (its short). Both are in the O.T.

Modern Scholarship of the Week


Individual mystic assignments

I. Bernard of Clairvaux
   A. Turning To God: On Conversion, Selected Writings, pp. 66–97.

II. Richard of St. Victor (you should be acquainted with Gen. 29–50)

*Indicates a work from which assignments are taken.
WEEK III:
Cloistered Visionaries

Major Authors

Hildegard of Bingen OSB (1098–1179)
   *Opera Omnia* [Latin]
   *Scivias* BV5080.H5413 1990 (avoid the abridged “translation” by Bruce Hozecki)

Gertrude the Great OSB (1256–c.1302)
   *Oeuvres spirituelles* [Latin with French tr.]
   *Harold of Divine Love*
   *Revelations*

General Assignment

Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias*, pref.; II, ii (on the Trinity), and “Songs” (on the Virgin Mary), MWVL 151–8

Modern Scholarship of the Week


Individual mystic assignments


II. Hildegard of Bingen
   A. God and the Cosmos: *Scivias*, I, i, iii, pp. 65–9, 91–105.
WEEK IV:
Beguine Mystics and the Low Countries

Major Authors

Mechthild of Magdeburg TOP (c.1210–c.1280)
   *Fliessende Licht* [M. H. German]
   *Revelations (Flowing Light)*
Hadewijch of Brabant (fl. 1200–1250)
   *Complete Works*
Jan van Ruusbroec CR (1293–1381)
   *Opera* [M. Dutch and Latin]
      *Spiritual Espousals, Sparkling Stone, Eternal Blessedness, Book of Clarification*
      BV5095.J3 J35 1985

General Assignment


Modern Scholarship of the Week


Individual mystic assignments

I. Beguine Spirituality


III. A Male Imitator: Jan van Ruusbroec

WEEK V:
Byzantine Hesychasm

Major Authors

Pseudo-Dionysios (or Denis) (VI cent?)
   *Opera Omnia* [Greek]
   *Complete Works* BR65.D6 E5 1987
   *The Philokalia* BX382.P413 1983, vols. 1 and 3

Gregory Palamas (c.1296–1359)
   *Triads* BX384.5.G742513 1983
   *The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*

General Assignment

   Nicephorus the Hesychast, “On Guarding the Heart,” in this packet.

Modern Scholarship of the Week


Individual mystic assignments

I. Sources of Hesychasm


II. Gregory Palamas on Hesychasm

WEEK VII: Franciscan Mystics and Scholasticism

**Major Authors**

Clare of Assisi OSF (1194–1253)
   
   *Opera Omnia* [Latin]
   
   *Complete Works in* *Francis and Clare* BX890.F665 1982

Angela of Foligno TOF (1248–1309)
   
   *Complete Works* BX4705.A59 A2 1993

Bonaventure OFM (c. 1217–1274)
   
   *Bonaventure* BX890.B6731313 1987
   
   *The Works of Bonaventure*

**General Assignment**

   Francis of Assisi, “Canticle of the Sun” in this packet, p. 6.
   
   
   
   Weisheipl, J. “Mystic on Campus: Friar Thomas” in IMME, pp. 135–60.

**Modern Scholarship of the Week**

Lambert, M., *Franciscan Poverty* BX3606.L3

**Individual mystic assignments**

I. Clare of Assisi and other early Franciscan Women
   

II. Angela of Foligno
   
   

III. Bonaventure
   
   A. “The Tree of Life” in *Bonaventure*
   
   B. “The Soul’s Journey to God” in *Bonaventure*
WEEK VIII:
Origins of the Rhineland School

Major Authors

Marguerite Porete (d. 1310)
*Miroir des simples âmes
*Mirror of Simple Souls BV5091.C7 P6713 1993

Meister Eckhart OP (c. 1260–1327)
*Opera Omnia Latina [Latin]
*Werke [M. H. German]
*Preacher and Teacher
*Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises. BV5080.E3213 1981a
*Mystic and Philosopher.

General Assignment


Modern Scholarship of the Week


Individual mystic assignments

I. Marguerite Porete


II. Eckhart

A. Representative Sermons: 2, 6, 22, 52, *Meister Eckhart*, pp. 177ff, 185ff, 192ff, 199ff.
WEEK IX:
The Rhineland and the Free Spirit

Major Authors

Heinrich Suso OP (1295–1366)
 Werke [M. H. German]
  *The Exemplar, 2 Sermons  BV5080 S836213 1989

Johannes Tauler OP (c.1300–1361)
 Predigten [M. H. German]
  *Sermons BV5080.T25613 1985

Theologia Germanica (c. 1350; edited by Luther in 1518)
 Der Franckforter (ein Theologia deutsch) [M. H. German]
  *The Theologia Germanica of Martin Luther BV4831.F7

General Assignment


Modern Scholarship of the Week


Hoffman, B., Luther and the Mystics (Minneapolis, 1976). Order on Interlibrary Loan.

Individual mystic assignments


II. Fighting the “Free Spirit”


III. Theologia Germanica

   A. Mysticism and Morality: Theologia Germanica, cc. 1–21, pp. 60–89.
   B. The Divinized Person: TG, cc. 22–49, pp. 89–149
WEEK X:
Late Medieval Prophetesses

Major Authors

Bridget of Sweden OSsS (c. 1303–1373)
  *Life and Selected Revelations BX4700.B62 E5 1990

Catherine of Siena TOP (1347?–1380)
  Dialogo [Italian] (request from instructor)
  *Dialogue BV5080.C2613 1980
  Letters
  Prayers

General Assignment


Modern Scholarship of the Week

Cavallini, G., Catherine of Siena NC4700.V4 C34 1998


Individual mystic assignments

II. Bridget of Sweden


III. Catherine of Siena

Major Authors

Richard Rolle (c. 1300–1349)

Prose and Verse [Middle English]

*English Writings PR2135.A2 A65 1988
The Cloud of Unknowing (XIV cent.) BV5080.C5 1981

General Assignment


Modern Scholarship of the Week


Individual mystic assignments


II. The Critique of Feelings

Major Authors

Walter Hilton (d. 1396)
  Opera [Latin]
  *Scale of Perfection BX2349.H538 1991

Julian of Norwich (c.1342–c.1414)
  Showings [Middle English]
  *Showings BV4831.J8 1978

Margery Kempe (c.1373–after 1433)
  The Book

General Assignment

  Bradley, Ritamary, “Julian of Norwich” in IMME, pp. 195–216
  Fries, Maureen, “Margery Kempe” in IMME, pp. 217-35

Modern Scholarship of the Week


Individual mystic assignments

I. Hilton on the Senses and Contemplation


II. Julian of Norwich


NICEPHORUS THE HESYCHAST (D. 1340)

From “On Guarding the Heart” in Philokalia, V

Question: We have learned from the foregoing examples of the activity practiced by the fathers who were pleasing to God, and that there is a certain activity which speedily frees the soul from passions and by love unites it to God; this activity is necessary for everyone warring for Christ. All our doubts are now dispelled, and we are firmly convinced of this. But we beg you to teach us what attention of the mind is and how we become worthy to acquire it. For this practice is quite unknown to us.

Answer: In the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who said: “Without me you can do nothing.”1 Having called Him to help and assist me, I shall try as far as is in my power to show you what attention is and how, God willing, one may acquire it.

Some of the saints have called attention “the safe-keeping of the mind,” others “the guarding of the heart,” yet others “sobriety,” yet others “mental silence,” and others use other names. But all these names mean the same thing. Just as of bread one can say “a slice” or “a piece,” so also understand about this. As to what attention is and what its characteristic features are, you shall learn forthwith.

Attention is a sign of sincere repentance. Attention is the appeal of the soul to itself, hatred of the world, and the ascent towards God. Attention is renunciation of sin and acquisition of virtue. Attention is an undoubting certainty of the remission of sins. Attention is the beginning of contemplation, or rather its necessary condition: for, through attention, God comes close and reveals Himself to the mind. Attention is serenity of the mind, or rather its standing firmly planted and not wandering, through the gift of God’s mercy. Attention means cutting off thoughts, it is the abode of remembrance of God and the treasure-house of the power to endure all that may come. Therefore, attention is the origin of Faith, Hope and Love; since one who has no faith cannot bear all the afflictions coming from without, and one who does not suffer them willingly cannot say: “He is my refuge and my fortress”;2 and one who does not have the Almighty as a refuge cannot be truly sincere in love for Him.

This greatest of all great activities can be achieved by many, or even by all, mostly by being taught. A few receive this gift from God without being taught, acting from inner compulsion and the warmth of their faith. But what is rare is not the rule. Therefore, it is necessary to seek a teacher who is not himself in error, to follow his instructions, and so learn to distinguish, in the matter of attention, defects and the deviations to the right and to the left that come through diabolical suggestion. From his own suffering from temptation he will explain to us what is needed and will show us correctly a mental path we can then follow with less hindrance. If there is no such teacher present, one must search for one, sparing no efforts. But if, even after a search, he is not to be found, then, with a contrite spirit, calling to God with tears and praying to him assiduously and with humility, do what I shall tell you.

---

1 John 15, 5.
2 Ps 91, 2.
You know that our breathing is the inhaling and exhaling of air. The organs which serve for this are the lungs, which lie round the heart so that the air passing through them thereby envelops the heart. Thus breathing is a natural way to the heart. And so, having collected your mind within you, lead it into the wind pipe through which air reaches the heart and, together with this inhaled air, force your mind to descend into the heart and remain there. Accustom it, my child, not to come out of the heart too soon, for at first it feels very lonely in that inner seclusion and imprisonment. But when it gets accustomed to this, it begins on the contrary to dislike aimless circling outside, for it is no longer unpleasant and wearisome for it to be within. Just as a man who has been away from home, when he returns, is beside himself with joy at seeing again his children and wife and embraces them and cannot talk to them enough, so the mind, when it unites with the heart, is filled with unspeakable joy and delight. Then one sees that the kingdom of heaven is truly within us; and seeing it now in one’s self, one strives with pure prayer to keep it and strengthen it there, and regards everything external as unworthy of attention and wholly unattractive.

When you thus enter into the place of the heart, as I have shown you, give thanks to God and, praising His mercy, keep always to this activity, and it will teach you things which you will never learn any other way. Moreover, you should know that when your mind becomes firmly established in the heart, it should not remain there silent and idle, but should constantly repeat the prayer: “Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, [a sinner]!” and never cease. For this practice, keeping the mind from dreams, renders it elusive and impenetrable to enemy suggestions and every day leads it more and more to love and long for God.

If, however, in spite of all your efforts, you do not succeed in entering into the realm of the heart as I have described, do what I shall now tell you and, with God's help, you will find what you seek. You know that in everyone inner speech is located in the breast. For, when our lips are silent, it is there in the breast that we talk and discourse with ourselves, pray and sing psalms, and think about other things. Thus, having banished every thought from this inner conversation (for you can do this if you will it), give it the following short prayer: “Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, [a sinner]!” And force it, instead of any other thoughts, to have only this one constant cry within. If you continue to do this constantly, with you whole attention, then in time this will open for you the way to the heart that I have described. There can be no doubt about this, for we have proved it ourselves from experience.

If you do this with strong desire and attention, full of sweetness, a whole host of virtues will come to you: love, joy, peace and others, through which, later, every petition of yours will be answered in the name of Jesus Christ, Our Lord, to Whom, with the Father ‘and the Holy Spirit, is glory, and power, honor and worship, non and always and for ever and ever. Amen.

1“Kyrie, Yesu Kriste, Yios Theou, eleison eme!”
FRANCIS OF ASSISI  
Canticle of the Sun

Most High, all-powerful, good Lord,  
yours are the praises, the glory, the honor, and all blessing.  
To you alone, Most High do they belong,  
and no one is worthy to mention Your name.  
Praises be You, my Lord, with all your creatures,  
especially Sir Brother Sun,  
Who is the day and through whom You give us light.  
And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendor;  
and bears a likeness to You, Most High One.  
Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars  
in heaven You formed them clear and precious and beautiful.  
Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Wind,  
and through the air, cloudy and serene, and every kind of weather  
through which You give sustenance to your creatures.  
Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Fire,  
through whom You light the night  
and he is beautiful and playful and robust and strong.  
Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Mother Earth,  
who sustains and governs us,  
and who produces varied fruits with colored flowers and herbs.  
Praised be You, my Lord, through those who give pardon for sake of your love  
and bear infirmity and tribulation

Blessed are those who endure in peace  
for by You, Most High, they shall be crowned.\(^1\)

Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Bodily Death  
from who none living may escape.  
Woe to those who die in mortal sin.  
Blessed are those whom death will find in Your most holy will,  
for the second death shall do them no harm.\(^2\)

Praise and bless my Lord and give Him thanks  
and serve Him with great humility.

\(^1\)This stanza was added later during a civil war at Assisi.  
\(^2\)This third stanza was added during Francis’ final illness.
When I was in the sour-sweet flower of youth, and the time had come of awakening to life, the grace of my Creator came to me . . . If I am to describe my progress I must tell of the life of solitude, for the Spirit breathing upon me directed my mind to pursue and to love this life, and hence forward I made it my care to lead it, so far as my weakness allowed. Nevertheless I remained among those who abounded with earthly riches, and I accepted food from them, and I heard the flatteries which have often drawn famous warriors from the heights to the depths. But I cast away such things in order to gain the one thing needful, and my soul was raised up to the Creator . . . From the beginning of the change of my life and mind until the opening of the door of heaven, so that the eye of my heart might gaze upon heavenly things directly, and might see in what way to seek the Beloved and always long after him, three years, save three or four months, elapsed . . . While the door was still open, scarce a year when by before my heart felt in all reality the fire of eternal love . . . I was sitting in a certain chapel, and while I was taking pleasure in the delight of some prayer or meditation, I suddenly felt within me an unwanted and pleasant fire. When I had for long doubted whence it came, I learned by experience that it come from the Creator and not from a creature, since I found it ever more pleasing and full of heat. Now from the beginning of that fiery warmth, inestimably sweet, till the infusion of the heavenly, spiritual harmony the song of eternal praise and the sweetness of unheard melody, which can be heard and experienced only by one who has received it, and who must be purified and separated from the earth, nine months and some weeks passed away.

For when I was sitting in the same chapel and was reciting psalms as well as I might before supper, I heard above me the noise of harpers, or rather singers. And when with all my heart I attended to heavenly things in prayer, I perceived within me, I known not how, a melody and a most delightful harmony from heaven, which abode in my mind. For my thought was straightway changed into a song, and even when praying and singing psalms I gave forth the selfsame sound. Thenceforth I broke out within my soul into the singing of what previously I had merely said, for abundance of sweetness, but in secret, for it must be in the presence of my Maker alone, I was not recognized by those who saw me, lest if they had known me they would have honored me beyond measure, and so I would have lost part of the fairest flower and would have fallen into desolation. Meanwhile wonder seized me that I was taken into such joy, and that God would have given me gifts that I knew not how to ask for, nor had thought that any, even the most holy, would receive in this life. Certainly I think that this is granted to none as a thing merited, but freely to whom Christ has willed it. Yet I think that no one will receive it, unless he love especially the name of Jesus, and honor it so that he never allow it to fall from his memory save in sleep. He to whom this is given will, I think, achieve that other. So, from the beginning of my conversion to the highest degree of the love of Christ that I could attain by God’s gift, the degree in which I sang the divine praises with joyful melody, was four years and about three months. This state, together with the former ones that prepared for it, remains to the end of my life. After death it will be more perfect, because here the joy of love and fire of charity begins, but in the heavenly kingdom they will receive most glorious consummation. And indeed he who is set upon these degrees or this life goes forward not a little, but does not rise to another state, nay rather, as it were confirmed in grace, he is at peace so far a mortals can be. Wherefore I long to return thanks and praises to God without ceasing.
A STARTING BIBLIOGRAPHY
FOR MAJOR MYSTICS
Including Scholarship in English

BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX

Edition of Works


Useful English Translation


Scholarship

Bynam, C. W., “Jesus as Mother and Abbot as Mother,” in *Jesus as Mother* (Berkeley, 1982), 110–69.
Williams, W., *Studies in St. Bernard of Clairvaux*.
Unfortunately much important scholarship is in French.

RICHARD OF ST. VICTOR

Editions of Works

for other works: PL 196.

Useful English Translations

Scholarship


Unfortunately much scholarship is in French.

* * * * *

HILDEGARD OF BINGEN

Editions of Works


*Epistolarum*, ed. L. Van Acker, CCCM (Rurnhout, forthcoming.).

*Liber Divinorum Operum*, ed. A. Berolez and P. Dronke, CCCM (Turnholt, forthcoming.).


Other works: PL 145, avoid this text of *Scivias*.

English Translations


*Book of Divine Works*, ed. M. Fox (Oakland CA, 1990)—an English translation of a German translation, it should be used with extreme caution.

BEWARE of what Barbara Newman calls “the so-called translations” from Hildegard by Hozeski, Fox, Uhlein, etc., under the titles, *Scivias, Meditations with Hildegard, Illuminations of Hildegard*, etc.

Scholarship


—————, Chapter 6 and Appendix, in *Women Writers of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1984).
Peter Dronke also deals with Hildegard in his other works: *Poetic Individuality in the Middle Ages, Intellectuals and Poets in Medieval Europe; The Medieval Poet and his World*, etc.


———, *Sister of Wisdom* (Berkeley, 1987).

*The Ordo Virtutum of Hildegard of Bingen: Critical Studies* (Kalamazoo MI: Medieval Institute, 1992)

Thompson, A., “Hildegard of Bingen on Gender and the Priesthood,” *Church History* 63 (Sept. 1994)

There is much scholarship in German.

**GERTRUDE THE GREAT**

**Editions of Works**

*Opera* (Poitier, 1875).


**Useful English Translations**


**Scholarship**


*Saint Gertrude the Great* (London, 1912).

Much scholarship in French.

* * * * *

**MECHTHILD OF MAGDEBURG**

**Editions of Works**


**English Translations**


**Scholarship**


Much scholarship in German.

**HADEWIJCH OF BRABANT**

**Editions of Works**


**Useful English Translation**


**Scholarship**


Much scholarship in Dutch.

**JAN VAN RUUSBROEC**

**Editions of Works**

*Werken*, ed. by Ruusbroecgenootsschap, 4 vols (Tiel, 1944–48).
Opera Omnia, ed. by Ruusbroecgenootsschap, 10 vols are projected (Leiden, 1981–).

Useful English Translations

For Latin works use, if possible tr. in: Opera Omnia, tr. by Ruusbroecgenootsschap (Leiden, 1981–).


Spiritual Espousals and other works, tr. J. Wiseman (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), a very free and not always trustworthy translation.

Scholarship

———, Jan van Ruusbroec ((Louvain, 1984).
Much scholarship in Dutch.

* * * * *

PSEUDO-DIONYSIUS

Editions of Works

Opera Omnia, ed. A. Ritter, G. Heil, B. Suchla (Gottingen, forthcoming.).
For now use: PL 3.

Useful English Translation


Scholarship

Gersh, S., From Iamblicus to Eriugena (Leiden, 1978).
The literature on Pseudo-Dionysius is enormous.
GREGORY PALAMAS

Editions of Works

The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters [includes English trans.], ed. R. Sinkewicz (Toronto, 1988).
For remaining works: PG 150–1.
Much of his writing has never been edited.

Useful English Translations

The Triads [incomplete], tr. N. Gendle (New York: Paulist Press, 1983).
The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters, tr. R. Sinkewicz (Toronto, 1988).

Scholarship

Meyendorff, J., Byzantine Hesychasm (London, 1974).
———, Gregory Palamas (London, 1962), French original is much more complete.
———, “Messalianism or Anti–Messalianism?” in Kyriakon (Munster, 1970).
There is much scholarship in French and Greek.

A sympathetic study that is not theologically invested is sorely needed.

* * * * *

MEISTER ECKHART

Edition of Works

Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke, ed. J. Quint [for German] and J. Koch [for Latin], (Stuttgart and Berlin, 1936–).
Predigten und Traktate, ed. F. Pfeiffer (Leipzig, 1895), for material not yet edited in above.
The Reliable English Translations

Meister Eckhart: Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense, tr. E. Colledge and B. McGinn (New York: Paulist Press, 1981). Contains: Commentary of Exodus; Commentary on Wisdom [selections]; Commentary on Ecclesiasticus [24:29 only]; Commentary on John [14:8 only]; Latin Sermons IV, VI, XXV, XXIX, XLV, XLIX; German Sermons, 1, 3, 4, 7, 9, 10, 12, 14, 16b, 21, 24, 29, 30, 39, 40, 46, 59, 69, 70, 71, 76, 80, 84, 86; [Pseudo–Eckhart], Sister Catherine.


Supplementary translations (Use if above are not available.)

Meister Eckhart: Mystic and Philosopher, tr. R. Schürmann (Bloomington IN, 1978). Contains: 8 German Sermons.

Treatises and Sermons of Meister Eckhart, tr. J. Clark and J. Skinner (New York, 1958). Contains: German Treatises, 8 Latin Sermons (the only translation for some of these), 2 German Sermons, selections from two commentaries.


Beware of and avoid these translations


Breakthrough, tr. M. Fox (not reliable, contains nothing not in standard trans. above).

Popularizers are constantly producing new anthologies and “translations,” these should be viewed with skepticism.

Scholarship


197–225: this is the study to begin with.

The Thomist 42:2 (Apr. 1987), which is dedicated completely to Eckhart.

The scholarship on Eckhart is vast and full of pitfalls, begin with the above trustworthy studies.

HEINRICH SUSO

Editions of Works

Deutsche Schriften, ed. K. Bihlmeyer (Stuttgart, 1907).
Horologium Sapientiae, ed. P. Künzle (Freiburg, 1977).

Useful English Translation


Scholarship

Kieckhefer, R., Unquiet Souls (Chicago, 1984).
Unfortunately most of the good scholarship is in German.
JOHANNES TAULER

Edition of Works


Useful English Translations


Scholarship

Davies, O. "Johannes Taulter," The Study of Spirituality (London, 1986), 319-20
Much scholarship in German.

THEOLOGIA GERMANICA

Edition

Eyn deutsch Theologia, ed. Martin Luther (Wittenberg, 1518).

Translation

The Theologia Germanica of Martin Luther, tr. B. Hoffman (New York: Paulist, 1980).

Scholarship

Hägglund, B., The Background of Luther’s Doctrine of Justification in Late Medieval Theology (Philadelphia, 1971).
———, Luther and the Mystics (Minneapolis, 1976).
There is more in German, but a study on the Theologia Germanica in its own right is sorely needed.

* * * * *
MARGUERITE PORETE

Edition of Work

Le Mirouer des simples âmes anienties et qui seulement demeurent en vouloir et désir d’amour. ed. R. Guarnieri and P. Verdoyen. CCCM 69 (Turnhout, 1986). During the middle ages this work, which exists in 3 Old French MSS, was translated directly into Middle English by a certain M.N. (3 MSS), and into Latin (5 MSS). It was also translated into Latin from Middle English (1 MS), and twice into Italian from Latin (3 MSS).


English Translations

The Mirror of Simple Souls, tr. Ellen Babinsky (N.Y. Paulist Press, 1993). This now replaces all earlier translations and is the ONLY one done from the original French.

Selections are also translated well in:

Petroff, Medieval Women’s Visionary Literature, pp. 294–8.
Brunn and Epiney-Burgard, Women Mystics in Medieval Europe, part 5.
Dronke, Women writers of the Middle Ages, pp. 217–28, 275–78.

Scholarship


Scholarly work on Marguerite is needed; related studies are listed in Babinsky tr., pp. 239–242.

BRIDGET OF SWEDEN

Editions


Translation


Scholarship
Jorgensen, J., *St Bridget of Sweden* (London, 1954), the only attempt at a biography in English.
The scholarship on Bridget in Swedish is vast; much has been written on her influence on the iconography of the Birth of Christ in art (see Kezel tr., pp. 329–41).

**CATHERINE OF SIENA**

**Editions of Works**


**Useful English Translations**


**Scholarship**

Scott, K., *Singular Gifts: Perceptions of Catherine of Siena* [the appearance of which is much anticipated]
A new biography by Cavalini is now out.
There is much scholarship, of uneven merit, in Italian.

* * * * *

**FRANCIS OF ASSISI**

This bibliography is for information only—NO PAPERS WILL BE WRITTEN ON FRANCIS.

**Edition of Works**

Useful English Translations


Scholarship

Francis has been subjected to much distortion and popularization, start with:
Brook, *Early Franciscan Government*.
Lambert, M., *Franciscan Poverty*.
See also the early biographies, esp. Celano I.

**CLARE OF ASSISI**

**Edition of Works**

*Escriptos* [with Spanish translation], ed. I. Omaechavarria (Madrid, 1970).

**Useful English Translation**


**Scholarship**

Brady, I., *The Legend and Writings of Saint Clare of Assisi* (St. Bonaventure NY, 1953).
Little work has been done directly on Clare’s spirituality.

**BONAVENTURE**

**Edition of Works**

*Opera Omnia* (Quaracchi, 1882–1902)

**Useful English Translation**

Fragments of his scholastic theological works appear in most collections of medieval philosophy.

**Scholarship**

The scholarship on Bonaventure is vast beyond belief; start with the following:

Then consult the bibliography in *Bonaventure*, tr. E. Cousin (N.Y.: Paulist, 1978).

**ANGELA OF FOLIGNO**

**Edition**


**English Translation**

*Complete Works*, tr. P. Lachance (N.Y.: Paulist, 1993)

**Scholarship**

Lachance, P., *The Spiritual Journey of the Blessed Angelo of Foligno* (Rome, 1984), a doctoral dissertation but about all there is in English yet. See also the massive bibliography of studies in Italian in


**RICHARD ROLLE**

**Editions of Works**


**Useful English Translations**

Scholarship

Knowles, D., “Richard Rolle,” in *English Mystical Tradition*.

THE CLOUD AUTHOR

Edition of Works

*Deonise Hid Divinite* [includes all other known works by the Cloud author], ed. P. Hodgson (London, 1944).

Useful Modern English Translations

*The Cloud of Unknowing*, tr. J. Walsh (New York: Paulist Press, 1981); this is a reliable translation, others, often with eccentric commentary and adaption, are legion.
*The Pursuit of Wisdom and other works by the author of the Cloud of Unknowing*, tr. J. Walsh (New York: Paulist Press, 1988)

Scholarship

There is much scholarship devoted to authorship.

For *Deonise Hid Divinite*, see also bibliography for Pseudo-Dionysius.

WALTER HILTON

Editions of Works

*Scale of Perfection*, ed. E. Underhill (London, 1923): this is really a light modernization, but it is the best we have until the appearance of the critical edition from Early English Text Society.
*Eight Chapters of Perfection* and *Angel’s Song*, ed. F. Kuriyagawa, in *Studies in English Literature*, English Number, 1971 (Tokyo, 1971).
You will encounter other works ascribed to Hilton that are probably not by him.

**Useful English Translations**

We are still waiting for translations of other Latin works.

**Scholarship**

Kennedy, D., *The Incarnational Element in Hilton’s Spirituality* (Salzburg, 1982).

There has been much study of authorship and linguistic questions concerning Hilton, see Bibliography in J. Clark translation.

**JULIAN OF NORWICH**

**Edition of Work**


**Useful Modern English Translation**

*Showings*, tr. E. Colledge and J. Walsh (New York: Paulist Press, 1978)

**Scholarship**


Start with this; here is much popular writing about her attribution of femininity to God.
MARGERY KEMPE

Edition of Work


Good English Translation


Do not use the old unreadable oddly arranged Butler-Bowden translation.

Scholarship

Atkinson, C., Mystic and Pilgrim (Ithaca, 1983).
Gibdon, G. M. The Theater of Devotion (Chicago, 1989)
Knowles, D., “Margery Kempe” in English Mystical Tradition.
Neuburger, V. E. Martyr Kempe: A Study in Early English Feminism (New York, 1994) -- tries to make her a feminist . . .
Staley, L. Margery Kempe’s Dissenting Fictions (University Park PA, 1994) -- tries to make her a religious rebel . . .