



University of Central Florida

REL 3432

Roots of Western Mysticism

Instructor: Bruce Janz

Time: Tuesday & Thursday 12-1:15 p.m.

Phone: 407-823-2273

Section: 0001 **Code:** 88516

Course Page & Resource Page:
<http://pegasus.cc.ucf.edu/~janzb/courses/>

Office Hours: See website

Term: Fall 2006

Room: COMM 116

Credits: 3

Final Exam: Dec. 7, 10 a.m. – 12:50 p.m.

Office: Colbourn Hall 411E

Email: janzb@mail.ucf.edu

The purpose of this course is to outline the history of western mysticism from ancient times to about 1700. We will focus mainly on the Christian tradition, although Jewish and Islamic mysticism will be considered as well. We will focus on the primary texts themselves, and beginning there we may take any number of different directions, into (for instance) the history of philosophy, women's history, psychology of religion, politics and spirituality, and the history of theology. While doing this, we will also raise questions about the nature of mysticism itself.

Required Texts:

- Julian of Norwich, *Showings*. Paulist Press, 1978. ISBN: 0-8091-2091-7
- Meister Eckhart, *Selected Writings*. Penguin Books, 1994. ISBN: 0-140-43343-0
- John of the Cross, *Dark Night of the Soul*. Doubleday/Image Books, 1990. ISBN: 0-385-02930-6
- Reserve Readings – in the library, available at the reserve desk and by e-reserve.
- Web-Based Readings – at course home page

Requirements

There will be one annotated bibliography (20%), one intellectual biography (20%), one major (10-12 page) paper (30%), and a final exam (30%).

Readings: All readings must be done for the beginning of the week they are assigned. They are considered part of the course requirements, and you will be tested on them at the end of the course. Please bring the readings to class, as we will regularly be referring to them (and in most cases, working through them in class).

Intellectual Biography: (20%, due Sept. 21): Each person should choose one important figure in the history of mysticism (a figure can only be chosen once in this class - if you write on a person here, that person is ruled out for your major paper), and write a brief (1500 word) intellectual biography on him or her. By an "intellectual biography", I mean that you should outline the important features of an individual's thought or writings and link it to the person's life, society, theological vocation, intellectual influences, race, ethnicity, gender, or some other biographical feature. I am not looking for reductionism here ("this person's thought is caused by the society, gender, or whatever"), but I am looking to see if you have a clear sense of what was important to the writer in question, and can put it in context. It will be particularly important to identify a central question to ask about this person. Answering the central question will allow you to interpret and understand the person's work or life. You will almost certainly have to deal with a figure that we have not yet discussed in class (given the due date for the assignment). Some students might be tempted to plagiarize this assignment, as there are some brief write-ups about mystics available. Please make sure you don't fall for that temptation - see me if you have any questions about how to do this assignment.

Annotated Bibliography\Literature Review: (20%, due Oct. 19. Length: 2500-3000 words). Each person will prepare an annotated bibliography of at least 20 items (more is fine, too). The bibliography must have a focus on a person, movement, concept, or issue within the history or philosophy of mysticism. By "annotated", I mean that you should provide a short (2-3 sentence) description of what the work is about, and how it is relevant to the theme of the bibliography. You will need to clear the focus of the bibliography with me. The intention is that this bibliography will support your major paper.

Major Paper: (prospectus + 30% paper. Prospectus due: Nov. 2; Paper due: Nov. 27) I would like to see a critical analysis of some issue in the philosophy of mysticism. You can focus on an issue in a particular thinker's work (e.g., the notion of non-being in Eckhart), or you can consider the issue in itself (e.g., to what extent is Katz's contextualism an adequate way of understanding mystical experience?). You may also consider a thinker not addressed in this course, as long as that thinker has something interesting to say about a relevant issue. I can suggest possible topics, for those that need some ideas. NOTE: I am looking for more than just an account of a theory. I would like to see that you've thought it through, and can interact with the thinker or the position. Topics will be suggested in class or here on the website, but you are encouraged to come up with a topic yourself. IMPORTANT: FOR ALL PAPERS, SEE "THE FINE PRINT" AT THE END OF THIS SYLLABUS

Final Exam: (30%) Dec. 7, 10 a.m. – 12:50 p.m. in the course room.

Grade Distribution: I will record the assignment grades based on the percentage of the course grade during the term (for example, an assignment will be recorded as a grade out of 20 if it is worth 20% of the course grade, although it may be marked out of another number). The letter grade will be calculated only at the end of the course, based on full course grade. The distribution will be as follows:

A: 93-100	B: 83-86	C: 73-76	D: 63-66
A-: 90-92	B-: 80-82	C-: 70-72	D-: 60-62
B+: 87-89	C+: 77-79	D+: 67-69	F: 0-59

Schedule: Roots of Western Mysticism

For reading schedule, see the course home page at <http://pegasus.cc.ucf.edu/~janzb/courses/rel3234/>

Week 1: Aug. 21-25

Introduction; Theories and History of Mystical Experience.

Week 2: Aug. 28-Sept. 1

Early Mysticism; Greece and Jerusalem; Plotinus; Augustine.

Week 3: Sept. 4-8

Early Christian Theology: The Roots of Catholic and Orthodox Mysticism. Cappadocians, Pseudo-Dionysius, John Scotus Eriugena.

Week 4: Sept. 11-15

Mediaeval Mysticism: Monasticism, Hildegard of Bingen.

Week 5: Sept. 18-22

Love Mysticism: Bernard of Clairvaux, Mechthild of Magdeburg.

Week 6: Sept. 25-29

The Roots of Esoteric Traditions: Jewish Mysticism, Gnosticism.

Week 7: Oct. 2-6

Mediaeval English Mysticism: Julian of Norwich.

Week 8: Oct. 9-13

Mediaeval English Mysticism: Julian of Norwich.

Week 9: Oct. 16-20

Speculative Mysticism: Meister Eckhart

Week 10: Oct. 23-27

Speculative Mysticism: Meister Eckhart

Week 11: Oct. 30-Nov. 3

The Roots of Protestant Mysticism: Eckhart, Suso, Tauler, *Theologica Germanica*, Martin Luther.

Week 12: Nov. 6-10

The Beginnings of Protestant Mysticism: Jacob Boehme, Silesius.

Week 13: Nov. 13-17

Spanish Mysticism: Theresa of Avila, John of the Cross.

Week 14: Nov. 20-24

Mysticism after early modernism; Epilogue: Why Studying Mysticism is a Really Bad Idea.

Week 15: Nov. 27-Dec. 1

Review

The Fine (but Important) Print

For the full, updated "Fine Print", go to the website: <http://pegasus.cc.ucf.edu/~janzb/courses/fineprint.htm>

STANDARDS FOR PAPERS: I expect papers to be typewritten, in essay form (that is, not point form). They should be in 12 point Times New Roman font, with one inch margins, and double-spaced. Pages must be numbered, and the paper should be single-sided (that is, do not use both sides of the sheet of paper when printing). There should be a title page which includes the title of the paper, the name of the author, the date, the course, and the name of the professor. DO NOT put the paper in a folder, binder or plastic sleeve. I will be taking grammar, spelling, and structure into account - good ideas cannot be communicated with poor form. If the grammar or structure in a paper is severely flawed, I reserve the right to give a paper back to the student for revision without a grade (or with a reduction in grade), or fail the paper. As for citation style, I will be using the MLA format. I am open to other recognized formats (e.g., Chicago, Turabian), but whatever format you use must be used consistently. Note that the library has obtained a site license for a number of good citation programs, such as Endnote and Procite, which can aid in proper citation form. See the library's home page for these. For information on documentation styles, see http://www.uwc.ucf.edu/Writing%20Resources/writing_resources_home.htm#documentation

ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION OF PAPERS: It is possible (and in some cases preferable) to submit your paper electronically to me. It should be sent to janzb@mail.ucf.edu as an attachment. The paper needs to be in Word (preferred), Adobe Acrobat (pdf), Rich Text Format (rtf), or WordPerfect format (wpd). It must appear identical to how it would look if you were to hand it in as a physical document (in other words, with a title page at the beginning and reference list at the end). You will receive typed comments on the paper, and it will be returned electronically. Do not include .exe or .scr files or anything that might contain a virus, and please scan your document with a virus program before you send it. Please identify yourself and the course in the subject line of the message (e.g., "<Your Name>, <Paper title> for <course name and number>"). Please make sure as well that I can reach you at the email address that you use to send the paper, in case the file does not open. NOTE: You will receive a return email from me when you send your paper in. If you do not receive an email, please assume that the paper was not received, and try contacting me again. If you do not receive confirmation, the paper may not have arrived, and so you will not receive a grade for it. The only proof that I received a paper is an email response from me. Claiming later that you sent it is not good enough, because I don't know whether you really did or not.

- **Why should I submit my paper electronically?** You will likely receive more extensive comments, as I can type faster than I can write. You may receive the paper back faster, as I often return electronic papers before class. Drawback: I cannot record a grade on a paper sent by email (see below). You will still have to find out your grade in class, or on the MyUCF grade sheet.
- **How do I know that my paper arrived?** I will respond to your email containing your paper once I have determined that the file opens. If you don't receive an email from me within a day or so, check that the paper arrived. Email is notoriously unreliable, and it is possible that something went wrong.
- **Why can't I read the returned paper?** It may be that you use Microsoft Works, instead of Microsoft Word. These programs may not be compatible. The paper should be sent in Microsoft Word, not Works. You may be able to install a document converter - see your program documentation.
- **The file opens but I can't read the comments.** What do I do? If you sent the paper in Microsoft Word, I will use the "Comments" function and the "Track Changes" option. If the program opens, but you don't see any comments, bring up the "Reviewing" toolbar (right-click on your toolbar at the top, and when you see a list of options for toolbars, make sure the "reviewing" toolbar is checked). Look for a tab marked "show", and click it. Underneath you will see several options. Make sure "Comments" and "Insertions and Deletions" at least are marked (the others wouldn't hurt, either). If you are using WordPerfect, either make sure you are in "draft" mode, or else while in "page" mode, go to the far left margin (you may have to scroll the screen to the side), and note the small tabs. When you click on one, you will be able to see comments. Please use the program that you used originally - comments may not be readable if made in one word processor and read in another.
- **Where's my grade?** See below on the communication of grades.
- **Can I use another word processor?** No. It needs to be in Word, Adobe Acrobat, Rich Text Format, or WordPerfect. It will be read on a Windows system, which may cause problems for papers written on Macs. Please make sure that your paper actually opens on a Windows system. I will not download another word processor and install it in order to read your paper.
- **Can I fax my paper to the department instead?** Sorry, the department has a policy of not accepting

faxes of assignments from students.

WRITING HELP: The University Writing Center (UWC) is a free resource for UCF students. At the UWC, a trained writing consultant will work individually with you on anything you're writing (in or out of class), at any point in the writing process from brainstorming to editing. Appointments are recommended, but not required. For more information or to make an appointment, visit the UWC website at <http://www.uwc.ucf.edu>, stop by MOD 608, or call (407) 823-2197.

ATTENDANCE: I expect regular and prompt attendance from members of the class. If you cannot be at a class, let me know before-hand. I reserve the right to not accept assignments from students either if attendance has been a problem, or if a paper is seriously late without a legitimate (in my opinion) reason. This includes any paper or graded activity in the course, including the final paper and the final exam. I will only inflict this measure after having given a warning; however, if you simply never come to class, do not expect to get much sympathy at the end of the term when you want to hand in assignments.

LATE PAPERS: On late papers in general: The due dates are firm. There will be penalties for late papers. If there is a legitimate reason for a paper being late, I am willing to consider it and waive the late penalty. Illegitimate reasons include "I had too much work" (you could have started earlier); "My computer deleted my file" (make back-ups); "I'm on a team and we were away" (work that out with your coach, not me); "I couldn't think of a topic" (come & see me early). This, of course, does not exhaust the list of reasons that will not succeed. Plan ahead, and save yourself problems. Having said that, I recognize that there will sometimes be factors beyond a person's control. I will deal with these cases on an individual basis. Giving an extension in one case in no way obligates me to do it in others. The most successful appeal will a) have an argument for why an extension is justified, and b) suggest a way that the assignment will be made better by the extension.

EXAM RULES: I discourage make-up exams, as they tend not to be fair to the whole class, but I recognize that there are circumstances that are unavoidable. It is important to talk to me beforehand. I will not change final exam dates simply to accommodate travel schedules. I am especially unsympathetic if someone buys a plane ticket first, and comes to me later saying that I have to change an exam date to accommodate it. If there are other reasons that you think might be legitimate, please see me. Remember, I have to ensure fairness for the entire class, and I also have to ensure that questions do not leak out to the rest of the class prior to the scheduled final exam.

COMMUNICATION OF GRADES: I will be using the new system at UCF that allows me to report your grades to you when you log into your "MyUCF" page. The university does not allow the communication of grades to a student by email (including embedding them in documents, which means they cannot be placed on a paper emailed to me), or by posting them outside a professor's door. This is a confidentiality issue. Please do not ask me for your grade by email.

INCOMPLETES: I will only give an incomplete in very rare and unique circumstances. Simply not having time to finish work during the term is not sufficient reason. Even medical reasons may not be enough - medical withdrawal from the course is a more likely option in most cases. So, please do not take on too much in a term, thinking that it will be easy to get an incomplete and then finish the work later.

ACADEMIC HONESTY: We will discuss the nature of academic honesty in class, but a note here is warranted. Basically, your work should be your own and original to this class, and when you are drawing on the words, images, or ideas of others, this should be properly noted. What should be avoided?

- Handing in an identical (or substantially similar) paper to another person in the class.
- Using a paper from another student (e.g., a former student, or a paper from an internet paper mill).
- Using any information from a book or an internet site without proper referencing.
- Handing in work that you did for another class without discussing it with the professor first. This includes excerpts of your own writing that you cut and paste into a new paper.

The university writing center has many useful handouts on writing, including handouts on properly handling citations. If you have any question about how to properly complete an assignment, please see me. On occasion I may submit student papers to Turnitin.com, a website that checks for plagiarism. Papers submitted to that site become part of their database. Submitting a paper in this course gives consent for your paper to be added to their database.

WITHDRAWAL: It is the student's responsibility to drop or withdraw from the course if there is an unavoidable conflict or if the need should arise for another reason. Students who fail to drop before the deadline established in the curriculum catalogue will receive an F for the course. The withdrawal date for Fall 2006 is October 13.