What marked out some people as “friends of God” in medieval and Renaissance Europe? And how could contemporaries and modern authors write about interior religious states? The notion of sainthood and the status of mystical visionaries could, in fact, be topics of major dispute, as the example of Joan of Arc demonstrates. Was she a saint, a witch, or a demoniac? A saint could be an asset as well as a source of trouble. This course examines the linked phenomena of mysticism, visions, and sanctity, as well as the tensions surrounding them, through an introduction to major scholarship on the field, as well as to important contemporary sources for the study of saints and mystics.

Part 1: Origins of the cult of the saints

M August 31. Introduction.

W September 2. Martyrs as spiritual heroes.


Readings: Brown, Cult of the Saints, ch. 3-4; Stouck, Medieval Saints, “Tertullian’s Address to the Martyrs,” “The Trials and Execution of Cyprian”

M September 14. Martyrdom as subversive.
Readings: Stouck, Medieval Saints, “The Passion of SS. Perpetua and Felicitas”;
*Aviad Kleinberg, Flesh Made Word: Saints’ Stories and the Western
Imagination (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), ch. 3 (BB)

For further reading:
Robert Bartlett, Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things? Saints and
Worshippers from the Martyrs to the Reformation (Princeton: Princeton University
Press, 2013). [N.B.: Bartlett’s book is encyclopedic in scope and length. It should be
considered essential reading on the topic of saints in general, but perhaps best savored
over the course of the semester.]
Aviad Kleinberg, Flesh Made Word (in its entirety; also a good general overview
of writing about saints in the medieval period up to around 1300).
Peter Brown, “The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity,”
Journal of Roman Studies 61 (1971): 80-101, a seminal article now to be read in
Late Antiquity,” in Brown, Authority and the Sacred: Aspects of the Christianisation of
the Roman World (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 55-
78. See also the essays in James Howard-Johnson and Paul Antony Hayward, eds., The
Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages: Essays on the Contribution of Peter

Part 2: Desert fathers and mothers

W September 16. The desert fathers.

Readings: Stouck, Medieval Saints, “Christianity in the Desert: St. Antony the
Great,” “Antony’s Disciples: Paul the Simple,” “The First Hermit: St. Paul of Thebes,”
“A Famous Pillar Saint: Symeon Stylites”


Readings: Stouck, Medieval Saints, “A Harlot in the Desert: Mary of Egypt,” “A
Transvestite Saint: Mary/Marina”;
*Valerie R. Hotchkiss, Clothes Make the Man: Female Cross Dressing in
Medieval Europe (London: Routledge, 1999), ch. 2 (BB).

W September 23. No class.

For further reading:
Lynda L. Coon, Sacred Fictions: Holy Women and Hagiography in Late Antiquity

Part 3: Monastic saints

For further reading:

Part 4: The cult of relics

**W October 5. Fall Break.**

**W October 7. Relic thefts.**

**M October 12. The use and abuse of relics: critiques and appropriations.**

For further reading:
Thomas Head, “The Genesis of the Ordeal of Relics by Fire in Ottonian Germany:

Martina Bagnoli, Holger A. Klein, C. Griffith Mann, and James Robinson, eds., *Treasures of Heaven: Saints, Relics, and Devotion in Medieval Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010). (A wonderful exhibit catalogue and essay collection that gets at not simply the artistry of medieval reliquaries, but also relics’ use in lived religion.)

Patrick Geary, *Furta Sacra* (in its entirety; a real classic at this point).


**Part 5: Miracles**

**W October 14.** Functions of miracle collections.


For further reading:


**Part 6: Saints and boundaries**

**M October 19.** Christians and Jews.


**Topics for final papers due in class on October 19.**

**W October 21.** Christians, Muslims, and other converts.

**Reading:** *Amy G. Remensnyder, “The Colonization of Sacred Architecture: The*
Virgin Mary, Mosques, and Temples in Medieval Spain and Early Sixteenth-Century Mexico,” in Monks and Nuns, Saints and Outcasts: Religious Expression and Social Meaning in the Middle Ages, ed. Sharon Farmer and Barbara Rosenwein (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 2000), 189-219 (BB);


For further reading:

Amy G. Remensnyder, La Conquistadora: The Virgin Mary at War and Peace in the Old and New Worlds (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).


Part 7: The question of female sanctity


W October 28. Women and possession.

Readings: Stouck, Medieval Saints, “Women’s Spirituality I: Christina the Astonishing,” “Women’s Spirituality II: Umiltà of Faenza”;

M November 2. Challenges to Bynum’s model of female piety.

Readings: “Catherine of Siena: Her Life and Letters,” in Mary-Ann Stouck, A Short Reader of Medieval Saints (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 156-88 (BB);

For further reading:
Caroline Walker Bynum, Holy Feast and Holy Fast. The Religious Significance of
Food to Medieval Women (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987). (Truly a classic.)

Catherine M. Mooney, ed., Gendered Voices: Medieval Saints and Their Interpreters (in its entirety).


Part 8: New models of sanctity

W November 4. Francis of Assisi.


For further reading:


Part 9: Visionaries and mystics as subversive

W November 11. Visions and dissent.


M November 16. The question of discernment.

Readings: *Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, “The Strange Case of Ermine de Reims
(c. 1347-1396): A Medieval Woman between Demons and Saints,” *Speculum* 85 (2010): 321-57 (BB);


For further reading:


**Part 10: Canonization and canonization processes**

W November 18. Canonization inquests as sources.


For further reading:


**Part 11: Contested sanctity: Margery Kempe**

M November 23. Margery Kempe, I.


Clementine Oliver, “Why Margery Kempe is Annoying and Why We Should Care,” in Glenn, *Middle Ages*, 323-32 (BB).

W November 25. Margery Kempe, II.
Reading: The Book of Margery Kempe, 148-297.

Part 12: Renaissance saints and visionaries

M November 30. Saints in Renaissance art.


W December 2. Changing images and legends of St. Lucy.


For further reading:
Alison K. Frazier, ed., The Saint Between Manuscript and Print: Italy, 1400-1600 (in its entirety).
Tamar Herzig, Savonarola’s Women: Visions and Reform in Renaissance Italy (University of Chicago Press, 2008).

Part 13: Visions and sanctity contested: Joan of Arc

M December 7. Joan of Arc’s trial, I.


W December 9. Joan of Arc’s trial, II.

Reading: Trial of Joan of Arc, 119-155; 204-13.

For further reading:
Final paper due Thursday, December 17, by noon in the History Department.

Books to purchase:


*All other readings in the course are available through Blackboard in the section marked Readings and are labeled in the syllabus with the indication (BB).*

Course requirements:

- Attendance at and active participation in all classroom discussions (10%).
- Five written responses (2-3 pages; 500-750 words) to the readings for a given day (40%).
- For readings to which you do not submit a written response, you must bring to class (in writing) either a question raised by the readings or a salient quotation that you wish to discuss in class (5%).
- An article review (4-5 pages; 1000-1250 words) of one of the articles marked in the syllabus by an asterisk (*) (20%). The paper will be due two class periods after that reading is discussed in class.
- A final paper (10-12 pages; 2500-3000 words) on a topic chosen in consultation with the instructor (25%). Ideally, your paper will compare two (or more) different accounts (written, visual, musical, or dramatic) of a single visionary or saint’s life (or miracles). Alternatively, for example, you might look at two different saint’s lives in the case where one text serves as a clear model for another text. Your topic should lead you to the close reading of at least two sources, as well as an exploration of major scholarship on the subject.

*About the reading responses:*
You should choose to respond to those readings that most move, intrigue, or puzzle you. Your response should demonstrate that you have thought deeply about this set of readings by discussing a question that these reading have raised for you, exploring something in the readings that provoked some strong response in you, or even digging deeper into
some aspect of the readings that you found confusing. The best way to think is to write! You may select any readings throughout the semester to which to respond, but all responses are due on the day on which readings are to be discussed in class.

About the article review:
An article review offers a summary of the article’s thesis, as well as an evaluation of the thesis and how effectively the author has proved that thesis. Your essay should answer the following questions:

- Thesis. What is the author’s thesis? What question is he or she trying to answer, and how does that fit within a wider body of scholarship?
- Sources. What type(s) of primary sources does the author use to make his or her argument? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the sources?
- Method/approach. What sorts of techniques and methods does the author use to evaluate his or her sources? Does the author rely on any particular social theory or theories?
- General assessment. How successful is the author in establishing his or her point? Do the sources support the thesis being presented?

Some online resources for the study of saints, visionaries, and mystics:

Dumbarton Oaks Hagiography Database (lives in Greek): http://www.doaks.org/research/byzantine/resources/hagiography-database
Feminæ: Medieval Women and Gender Index: http://inpress.lib.uiowa.edu/feminae/Default.aspx
Geschichtsquellen des deutschen Mittelalters (includes a section on saints): http://www.geschichtsquellen.de/index.html
Hagiography Society (keeps an ongoing bibliography of works by members): http://www.hagiographysociety.org/?page_id=237
Internet Medieval Sourcebook: Saints’ Lives: http://legacy.fordham.edu/Halsall/sbook3.asp
Monastic Matrix (resources for the study of medieval women’s religious communities): http://monasticmatrix.osu.edu
Société des Bollandistes (the group responsible for the massive Acta sanctorum; site contains and online version of the BHL, as well as a nice list of online resources): http://www.bollandistes.org/index.php
Grading scale:

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In case of some mix-up, it is a good idea to save all returned work until you receive your grade at the end of the semester.

General policies:
Late work will be penalized 10% for each calendar day late. I do not accept emailed assignments without prior arrangement and only under the most exigent of circumstances.

Attendance:
Students are responsible for all material covered in and announcements made in class; attendance is, thus, crucial for doing well in the course. Participation in discussions is a critical component of the course. The instructor reserves the right to impose a failing grade for the course after a student’s absence from four or more discussions. (For the sake of accounting, three tardies will constitute one absence.)

Learning objectives:
At the end of this course, students will be able to
- Explain the contested nature of medieval and Renaissance sanctity
- Identify some of the cultural uses of saints and their relics in medieval and Renaissance Europe
- Read and understand primary sources as products of a specific historical context
- Identify and analyze the arguments of major secondary works on medieval and Renaissance saints, mystics, and visionaries
- Formulate an argument in clear, written prose and support it with evidence from primary sources
- Correctly cite sources in footnotes/endnotes and bibliographies

Students with disabilities: The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL, 1-154 Dewey Hall, 585-275-9049) offers a variety of disability services for undergraduates and graduate students in Arts, Sciences & Engineering. These services aim to provide an inclusive experience and equal access to academic content and program requirements. They can help you to request accommodations for your success in this
class. You can learn more at: www.rochester.edu/college/cetl/undergraduate/disability.
If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me as well.

**Classroom etiquette:** Please turn off cell phones or set them to a silent alert. In the rare event you must enter late or leave class early, please let me know in advance.

**Academic honesty:** All assignments and activities associated with this course must be performed in accordance with the University of Rochester's Academic Honesty Policy. Cheating and plagiarism are serious offenses and will be treated as such. Anyone who engages in such activities will be turned over to the College Board on Academic Honesty for disciplinary action, as outlined at http://www.rochester.edu/College/honesty/.

**Disclaimer:** The instructor reserves the right to change topics and assignments on the syllabus at any point in the semester.