

## Medieval Christianities

The Franciscan Revolution  
REL 310 | Spring 2016

### Who is teaching our course?

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### What is our course about?

The Franciscans revolutionized Christianity. They neither wholly created nor wholly recreated it. They decreed it. They stripped it to its essential elements: as a way of *simply* living. In doing so, they changed it, profoundly and permanently. The Franciscans changed Christianity by doing Christianity differently. They incarnated, inhabited, lived a different Christianity. The Franciscan difference was simple. It was about *simply* living: about a way of living *simply*, in poverty and humility, with others. That was the way of their revolution. Leading this way was the first brother, Francis of Assisi. He stripped Christianity, to its heart. The Franciscan revolution happened because Francis found a new, revolutionary, total way of living Christianity—and others followed.

Our course traces the lives of Francis and the Franciscans, and their revolutionary effects, from 1205 to 1335. In these years, the Franciscans exploded. Their order, of Friars Minor, exploded, growing from 12 friars in 1209 to over 30,000 friars (plus sisters and seculars) a century later. And it *exploded*, shattering ossified Christian institutions. The Franciscans revolutionized medieval Christian traditions of piety, philosophy, morality, sanctity, society. Studying the Franciscan revolution in its contexts (philosophical, theological, spiritual, political, cultural, institutional, etc.) will give us a keen sense of the dynamics, and dynamisms, of vital medieval Christianities.

We will acquire this dynamic, of dynamics and dynamisms, by encountering and carefully considering for ourselves materials connected to particular medieval Christianities during a particular period. Our course will not be a survey of medieval Christianities. We will not attempt to “cover” every medieval Christianity between

Augustine of Hippo (397) and Martin Luther (1517). Such an attempt would preclude us from acquiring a rich sense of historical detail. It would prohibit us from posing probing questions about the materials we encounter. It would prevent us from appreciating medieval Christianities' complexities and complications—and from really *doing* religious studies. Instead of a survey that covers, our course will work to uncover medieval Christianities by studying in depth the Franciscan revolution.

Our study will track the Franciscan revolution as it plays out in 3 acts.

Act 1 will read Francis of Assisi's texts in contexts, in relation to texts that preceded them and texts that followed them. We will organize our reading by genre: rules, letters, and prayers. We will also read Francis's famous, final texts. Act 2 will follow Francis's lives and afterlives—in biographies, a chronicle, and a spiritual itinerary—in relation to the Franciscan order's evolution and effects.

Act 3 will explore Franciscan revolutionary struggles with Christian traditions, structures, and experiences via acts of theological and ethical resistance, philosophical and political revolt, and sensational and mystical encounter.

### **What do we hope to gain from our course?**

Our course materials, discussions, and activities work together in the service of our course's learning objectives:

- (1) to recognize better the textual, contextual, and practical significance of Francis of Assisi for medieval, and subsequent, Christianities;
- (2) to understand better how the Franciscan revolution related to Francis, how it developed, and how it affected Christian practices, traditions, and institutions;
- (3) to develop and demonstrate 5 key critical practices—of examination, interpretation, consideration, communication, and reflection—vis-à-vis medieval Christian materials;
- (4) to appreciate how to engage in a disciplined study of religion using multiple approaches and methods;
- (5) to improve your critical and self-critical skills of reading, thinking, and writing.

### **What skills will we develop?**

Because our course is writing intensive, we put a particular premium on critical skills of writing—and, so, of reading and thinking. We can't overestimate their value. Critical reading, thinking, and writing skills are probably the most important and most applicable skills you can learn in college. Because they (like our 5 key critical practices) are skills, they are learnable. But like any skill, they require practice. They can be learned, and ultimately mastered, if you are willing to devote time and effort to

practicing them. Think of these critical skills as investments that require large initial deposits but that provide substantial returns with interest on those deposits.

### **What will we read?**

Angela of Foligno, *Complete Works* (9780809133666)

Benedict of Nursia, *Rule* (9780814612729)

Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, *Defense of the Mendicants* (9781576591598)

Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, *Journey of the Mind to God* (9780872202009)

Francis of Assisi: *Early Documents: The Saint* (9781565481107)

Additional materials are available on Blackboard. Be sure to bring to class paper copies of whatever texts we are discussing that day.

### **How is our course organized?**

At heart, our course is a series of conversations: among our course materials and among ourselves. Our class meetings stage these conversations as live opportunities for interactive learning, with as many conversation partners as possible. Our course is *ours*, not only mine or yours. It is our responsibility to engage in these ongoing conversations with the materials and one another.

### **How will we approach our study of medieval Christianities?**

In our course, we will act as—and become—scholars, engaged in the study of religion. So we will adopt a scholarly approach to our work. Doing so calls for adopting the following orientations.

#### Reflexive awareness

Reflexive awareness means being mindful of our assumptions, convictions, and values, shaped by our historical and cultural locations. These assumptions, convictions, and values affect how we understand “religion.” Reflexive awareness also means recognizing that the study of religion can be unsettling, since other religions can unsettle our assumptions, convictions, and values. Other religions are other ways of imagining and inhabiting the world: other ways of being and doing, religiously. To study them responsibly, we must bracket judgment and engage their otherness.

#### Imaginative sympathy

Imaginative sympathy means taking seriously the world of a religious practitioner. It means assuming that a religious thought, activity, or object carries real meaning for a religious practitioner. Doing so involves imaginatively crawling inside this practitioner’s world and understanding how, for this practitioner, this world makes sense. It requires that we take seriously assumptions, convictions, values, stories, materials, rituals, and identities very different from ours.

### Critical distance

Critical distance means raising questions that a religious practitioner might not raise about her or his or zir religion. What are a religion's acknowledged and unacknowledged assumptions, convictions, and values? How does a religious practitioner adopt them? What effects does a religious idea, activity, or object have on a religious practitioner—and on a society? In what ways is a religion significant and meaningful for its practitioners? How do its materials and practices conceive of botanical, animal, human, and divine beings and their interactions? What does a religion hold as fundamental to human well-being? Questions like these, and the issues they raise, are ones we should keep in mind as we study religion.

### How will we orient ourselves?

In our course, we take the following statements as among our guiding principles.

- (1) None of us knows everything.
- (2) Each of us is here primarily to learn.
- (3) Each of us can contribute to our learning—our own and others'.
- (4) Learning requires differences. Differences are how we learn.
- (5) Questions are usually more illuminating, and more interesting, than answers.
- (6) Answers are primarily ways of asking better next questions.

### What kind of community will we foster?

A class is a community, in which any member's actions affect other members. As members of this community, we share, and commit to, the following communal responsibilities.

#### Punctual attendance

We will be on time for and attend every class meeting from beginning to end. Attendance is a crucial component of learning, since it gives us opportunities to engage course materials and one another. If you miss a class meeting, you miss opportunities for these engagements: opportunities to learn and to develop and demonstrate your critical practices.

#### Shared respect

We will be respectful and responsible. Being respectful and responsible includes preparing for and attending class, listening to others, appreciating differences, refraining from eating and using electronic devices, and generally abstaining from any activity not productively contributing to our course. Anyone who does not behave respectfully and responsibly may be excused from class for the day.

#### Academic integrity

We will uphold academic integrity. Because academic integrity forms the foundation of a learning community, it is absolutely imperative that we be

honest and honorable members of this community. Cheating, in any form and to any degree, is an affront to this community that will not be tolerated. Cheating includes giving or receiving aid when prohibited, plagiarism, fraud, falsification, collusion, or any related act of deception or dishonesty. Anyone who commits such an act will receive an XF grade for this course and will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity. For more information, see the Academic Integrity Policies and Procedures (<http://academicintegrity.syr.edu>).

Staying enrolled in this course will indicate your understanding of and agreement to its objectives, principles, policies, responsibilities, and requirements.

### **What will we do to help ourselves learn and to demonstrate our learning?**

In addition to careful reading and active participation, we will engage in the following activities that give you opportunities to deepen and to assess your learning.

#### Learning log

The learning log presents you with opportunities to learn, and to think and write critically about your learning, at different moments in our course. In doing so, the learning log links course contents, critical practices, and learning reflections. Each week by Friday at 12:45, you will record an entry in your learning log: you will submit in your Blackboard journal a response to a particular, proposed prompt. Each learning log entry should respond thoroughly to the prompt, support its claims and conclusions, refer to course readings, be written clearly and precisely, and show thoughtfulness, reflection, and insight.

#### Learning finale

Your learning in this course will culminate in our learning finale. It is the capstone of your learning in our course. It will give you a significant opportunity to demonstrate and use the knowledges, skills, and practices you have developed in our course.

Every week, you will receive feedback on your learning log. Every 3 weeks, you will also receive a status update (aka a progress report). These status updates will holistically view and review your learning. Anything you do in our course is relevant to your learning, and to our assessments of it. We invite you to share with us your ongoing self-assessments, to create a dialogue about your learning. By communicating with one another, we will work together to advance your learning.

### **How will our learning be assessed and evaluated?**

We will assess, and finally evaluate, your learning and achievement according to our course's learning rubric and its 5 key critical practices: examination, interpretation, consideration, communication, and reflection. Status updates will measure how well, at a particular moment in our course, your work demonstrates these critical practices. At our course's end, in light of our learning finale, we will evaluate your learning and

translate it into your course grade. Demonstrating thriving practice of all 5 key critical practices will earn an A. Demonstrating thriving practice of 4 critical practices will earn a B, of 3 a C, of 2 a D, and of 1 (or none) an F.

**What if I have a question?**

Office hours provide you with weekly opportunities to extend class discussions, ask questions, or seek assistance. We strongly encourage you to take advantage of these opportunities, especially if you are having difficulties. You can drop by without an appointment. You can email us anytime.

**What if I need a learning adjustment?**

If you think you might need accommodations for a learning disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services (<http://disabilityservices.syr.edu>) to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. The Office of Disability Services is responsible for coordinating disability-related accommodations and will, as appropriate, issue accommodation authorization letters to students with documented disabilities. Since accommodations require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, contact the Office of Disability Services and discuss your situation with us as soon as possible.

**What if I have a religious holiday?**

Given the diversity of religious traditions practiced by members of our academic community, Syracuse University protects our rights to observe our respective traditions' holy days. You may make up any work missed due to a religious observance provided that you notify us through MySlice by 29 January 2016. For more information, see the Religious Observances Policy ([http://supolicies.syr.edu/emp\\_ben/religious\\_observance.htm](http://supolicies.syr.edu/emp_ben/religious_observance.htm)).

**Any tips for success in our course?**

- (1) Read our course texts thoroughly, closely, and carefully.
- (2) Read them again.
- (3) Attend and participate in our class meetings.
- (4) Ask questions.
- (5) Reread the texts.
- (6) Talk about our course texts and discussions with class members (including us).
- (7) Ask more questions.
- (8) Reread the texts again.

## Schedule of Meetings and Readings

Date	Acts	Topic	Primary texts	Additional texts
20 January	Prologue			
25 January	Revolution Act 1	Rules	Benedict of Nursia, <i>Rule</i> Francis of Assisi, <i>Earlier Rule</i>	Brian Patrick McGuire, "Monastic and Religious Orders"
27 January			Francis of Assisi, <i>Earlier Rule, Later Rule, Rule for Hermitages, Canticle of Exhortation for the Ladies of San Damiano</i>	William Short, "The <i>Rule</i> and Life of the Friars Minor"
1 February			Gregory IX, <i>Quo elongati</i> Clare of Assisi, <i>Form of Life</i> Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, <i>Constitutions of Narbonne</i> Jacopone of Todi, <i>Lauds</i> , §§31, 62 Angelo Clareno, <i>Exposition of the Rule of the Lesser Brothers</i>	Patrick Nold, "Pope John XXII, the Franciscan Order, and Its <i>Rule</i> "

Date	Acts	Topic	Primary texts	Additional texts
3 February	Revolution Act 1	Letters	Bernard of Clairvaux, <i>Letter concluding On Loving God</i> Guigo II, <i>Ladder of Monks</i> Francis of Assisi, <i>Earlier Exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance, Later Admonition and Exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance</i>	
8 February			Francis of Assisi, <i>Exhortations to the Clergy, First Letter to the Custodians, Second Letter to the Custodians, Letter to the Rulers of the Peoples, Letter to a Minister, Letter to Brother Anthony of Padua, Letter to Brother Leo</i>	Michael Robson, "The Writings of Francis"
10 February			Francis of Assisi, <i>Letter to the Entire Order</i> Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, <i>First Encyclical Letter, Second Encyclical Letter</i> Clare of Assisi, <i>First Letter to Agnes of Prague, Fourth Letter to Agnes of Prague</i>	



Date	Acts	Topic	Primary texts	Additional texts
15 February	Revolution Act 1	Prayers	Augustine of Hippo, <i>Confessions</i> , §§10.1.1–10.6.8 Anselm of Canterbury, <i>Prayer to the Holy Cross, Prayer to Mary</i> (3) Francis of Assisi, <i>Exhortation to the Praise of God, Praises of God and Blessing, Praises To Be Said at All Hours, Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Salutation of the Virtues</i>	
17 February			Francis of Assisi, <i>Prayer before the Crucifix, Prayer Inspired by the Our Father</i> Jacopone of Todi, <i>Lauds</i> , §§42, 44, 59– 61, 71, 75, 80–84, 93	Alessandro Vettori, “Theology of Ravishment”
22 February		Ends	Francis of Assisi, <i>Canticle of the Creatures</i>	Ilia Delio, “Canticle of Brother Sun”
24 February			Francis of Assisi, <i>Testament</i>	
29 February	Revolution Act 2	Lives	Thomas of Celano, <i>Life of Saint Francis</i> , §§1– 87	Michael Cusato, “Francis and the Franciscan Movement”

Date	Acts	Topic	Primary texts	Additional texts
2 March	Revolution Act 2	Lives	Thomas of Celano, <i>Life of Saint Francis</i> , §§88–151	
7 March			Thomas of Celano, <i>Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul</i> , §§1–27, 55–61, 82–99, 135–40, 165–71, 221–24 Angelo Clareno, <i>Chronicle of the Seven Tribulations of the Order of Brothers Minor</i> , prologue	Michael Blastic, "Francis and His Hagiographical Tradition"
9 March			Thomas of Celano, <i>Life of Saint Francis</i> , §§13–15 Julian of Speyer, <i>Life of Saint Francis</i> , §9 Henri of Avranches, <i>Versified Life of Saint Francis</i> , §3.140–80 <i>Legend of the Three Companions</i> , §20 Thomas of Celano, <i>Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul</i> , §§5, 12 Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, <i>Major Legend of Saint Francis</i> , §4	
Spring break				

Date	Acts	Topic	Primary texts	Additional texts
21 March	Revolution Act 2	Stigmata	Thomas of Celano, <i>Life of Saint Francis</i> , §94 Julian of Speyer, <i>Life of Saint Francis</i> , §11 Henri of Avranches, <i>Versified Life of Saint Francis</i> , §12	Arnold Davidson, "Miracles of Bodily Transformation, or How Saint Francis Received the Stigmata"
23 March			Thomas of Celano, <i>Treatise on the Miracles of Saint Francis</i> , §§1–2 Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, <i>Major Legend of Saint Francis</i> , §13	Dyan Elliott, "Raptus / Rapture"
28 March		Itinerary	Pseudo-Dionysius, <i>Mystic Theology</i> Anselm of Canterbury, <i>Proslogion</i> , §§1–5 Thomas Aquinas, <i>Summa Theologiae</i> , §1.2.3 Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, <i>Journey of the Mind to God</i> , prologue, §§1–4	Andrew Louth, "Apophatic and Cataphatic Theology" Amy Hollywood, "Mysticism and Transcendence"
30 March		Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, <i>Journey of the Mind to God</i> , §§5–7	Bernard McGinn, "Early Franciscan Mysticism and Bonaventure's Synthesis"	

Date	Acts	Topic	Primary texts	Additional texts
4 April	Revolution Act 3	Resistance	Gerard of Abbeville, <i>Sermon of 1 January 1269</i> Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, <i>Defense of the Mendicants</i> , prologue, §§1, 3	Aidan Carr, "Poverty in Perfection according to Bonaventure"
6 April			Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, <i>Defense of the Mendicants</i> , §§7, 12	
11 April			<i>The Sacred Exchange between Saint Francis and Lady Poverty</i>	
13 April		Revolt	Peter John Olivi, <i>Letter to the Sons of Charles II</i> Angelo Clareno, <i>Letter of Defense to the Pope Concerning False Accusations and Calumnies Made by the Franciscans</i> , <i>Chronicle of the Seven Tribulations of the Order of Brothers Minor</i> , §7 William of Ockham, <i>Letter to the Friars Minor</i> , <i>Summa logicae</i> , §§1.14–15, <i>Ordinatio</i> , §1d2q8	David Burr, "John XXII and the Spirituals"

<b>Date</b>	<b>Acts</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Primary texts</b>	<b>Additional texts</b>
18 April	Revolution Act 3	Encounter	Angela of Foligno, <i>Memorial</i> , §§1–2	Bernard McGinn, “Men and Women in the Franciscan Mystical Tradition”
20 April			Angela of Foligno, <i>Memorial</i> , §§3–6	Caroline Walker Bynum, “The Female Body and Religious Practice in the Later Middle Ages”
25 April			Angela of Foligno, <i>Memorial</i> , §§7–8	<i>Meditations on the Life of Christ</i> , §§74–83
27 April			Angela of Foligno, <i>Memorial</i> , §9	Bernard McGinn, “ <i>Unio Mystica / Mystical Union</i> ” Karma Lochrie, “Mystical Acts, Queer Tendencies”
2 May	Epilogue			
10 May	Learning finale			