

REL 4700/PHIL 4800
SPANISH MYSTICISM
Madrid, Spain Study Abroad Program
Summer 2009
MW 11:45-2:00 p.m.

INSTRUCTOR: Cristóbal Serrán-Pagán y Fuentes, Ph.D.

OFFICE HOURS: after class

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I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will explore not only the rich and diverse history of the Christian mystical tradition but also that of the Jewish and Muslim traditions in the context of the Iberian Peninsula. The purpose of this course is to introduce the life, the works, and the teachings of some of the major figures of the world's religious traditions in an effort to discern the variety of mystical experiences and their transformative power in regards to the person and the society. Our inquiry will focus on the contribution of the mystics to the human condition and to the state of the world so that we can gain a humanistic appreciation of those contemplative mystics who responded prophetically to the social and religious issues of their time. The course will highlight the mystical teachings of Ibn Arabi, Moses de León (author of the *Zohar*), St. Teresa of Ávila, and St. John of the Cross. In our academic inquiry we will consider the interdisciplinary character of the comparative study of mysticism by entering into such fields of knowledge as fine arts, psychology, business, law, ethics, literature, history, philosophy, theology, and religious studies. Living more or less in a postmodernist age we will examine important issues such as gender, ecology, power, and interfaith/interreligious dialogue.

II. COURSE OUTCOMES: Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

1. Demonstrate first-hand knowledge of great Western Spanish mystics, classic texts, rich history, shared and unshared beliefs, and their cultural impact in our societies. **VSU Gen. Ed. Outcomes (1, 2, 6, 8); Department Educational Outcomes (Religious Studies Track 1--See pp. 155-156 in the Catalog)**
2. Explain and discuss major themes and motifs of these mystical and religious traditions. **VSU Gen. Ed. Outcomes (2, 6); Department Educational Outcomes (Religious Studies Track 1, 2, 3)**
3. Collect data and cite good examples of similarities and differences between Jewish, Christian and Islamic mystical traditions in the context of Spain. **VSU Gen. Ed. Outcomes (2, 3, 6, 7, 8); Department Educational Outcomes (Religious Studies Track 1, 2, 3, 4)**
4. Critically address the achievements and failures of these mystical's religious faiths, especially by taking greater responsibility for own learning through the demonstration of curiosity, motivation, and risk-taking characteristics. **VSU Gen. Ed. Outcomes (1, 2, 6, 7, 8); Department Educational Outcomes (Religious Studies Track 1, 2, 3)**

5. Utilize information technology to do research, specifically the Internet, and express themselves clearly, logically, and precisely in writing and in speaking. **VSU Gen. Ed. Outcomes (3, 4, 7; Department Educational Outcomes (Religious Studies Track 2, 4))**

6. Analyze and synthesize a broad range of material (including ability to make meaningful connections between various academic disciplines). **VSU Gen. Ed. Outcomes (2, 7, 8); Department Educational Outcomes (Religious Studies Track 2, 3)**

7. Produce an original work based on their ability to formulate a problem, develop a plan of action, and prove or disprove a hypothesis. **VSU Gen. Ed. Outcomes (1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8); Department Educational Outcomes (Religious Studies Track 1, 2, 3, 4)**

III. REQUIRED TEXTS

Ibn Al'Arabi. The Bezels of Wisdom. Trans. R. W. J. Austin. Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1980. The ISBN is 0-8091-2331-2.

John of the Cross. Dark Night of the Soul. Trans. E. Allison Peers. New York: Doubleday, 1990. The ISBN is 0-385-02930-6.

Moses de Leon. Zohar: The Book of Enlightenment. Trans. Daniel C. Matt. Ramsey, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1983. The ISBN is 0-8091-2387-8.

Teresa of Avila. The Interior Castle. Trans. Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez. Ramsey, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1983. The ISBN is 0-8091-2254-5.

IV. RECOMMENDED READINGS (MLA samples)

Bellinger, Charles K. "Internet Guide." 2 Jan. 2008

[Http://www.wabashcenter.wabash.edu/Internet/front.htm](http://www.wabashcenter.wabash.edu/Internet/front.htm).

Bucke, Richard M. Cosmic Consciousness. New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1959.

Butler, Cuthbert. Western Mysticism. London: Constable Publishers, 1951.

Carmody, Denise L., and John T. Mysticism: Holiness East and West. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Dupré, Louis & James Wiseman, eds. Light from Light. New York: Paulist Press, 1988.

- Egan, Harvey D. An Anthology of Christian Mysticism. Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1996.
- Haglof, Anthony. "Buddhism and the *Nada* of St. John of the Cross." Carmelite Studies 1 (1980):183-203.
- Harvey, Andrew. Teachings of the Christian Mystics. Boston: Shambala, 1998.
- Idel, Moshe & Bernard McGinn. Mystical Union in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. New York: Continuum, 1996.
- Inge, William R. Christian Mysticism. New York: Meridian Books, 1956.
- James, William. The Varieties of Religious Experience. New York: Penguin Books, 1982.
- Johnston, William. Mystical Theology. London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 1995.
- Katz, Steven T. Mysticism and Religious Traditions. New York: Oxford University Press, 1983.
- King, Ursula. Christian Mystics. New York: Simon & Schuster Editions, 1998.
- Knowles, David. What is Mysticism? London: Sheed and Ward, 1979.
- Louth, Andrew. The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983.
- McGinn, Bernard. The Foundations of Mysticism. New York: Crossroad, 1994.
- Otto, Rudolf. The Idea of the Holy. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1970.
- __ __ __. Mysticism: East and West. London: A Quest Book, 1987.
- Stace, Walter T. The Teachings of the Mystics. New York, NY: A Mentor Book, 1960.
- Underhill, Evelyn. Mysticism. New York, NY: A Meridian Book, 1974.
- Waller, Ralph & Ward, Benedicta, ed. An Introduction to Christian Spirituality. London: 1999.
- Whitson, Robley E. Mysticism and Ecumenism. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1966.
- Zaehner, R.C. Mysticism: Sacred and Profane. New York: Oxford University Press, 1975.

V. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Active class participation and attendance are mandatory (1)	20%
Paper Proposal (2)	20%
Final reflection paper (3)	20%
Journal(4)	20%
Final oral individual presentation (5)	20%

- (1) A. Students are expected to actively participate in class discussions. How so? Read the assigned material before coming to class, ask good questions, respond to some of my questions, and share your tangible pieces of information and wisdom with the rest of the class. QUESTIONS: What was the mystical teaching or theme that you found the most interesting in our readings? What was the most troubling or confusing mystical theme, motif or symbol? Explain them in your own words. Cite sources. For instance, "...” (John of the Cross 111).

B. Students who are not ill and miss a class or a field trip will lose one letter grade per absence. I will admit excused absences only when the student shows documentation that he or she has been ill (check with the Director of the Madrid program for any possible notes or documentation). You are responsible for all the material covered in class during your absence. **You will get an “F” grade (0) on any course material not submitted in time.** I highly recommend you complete and turn any academic task before the deadline if you are planning to miss a class. **I will not accept late papers or assignments under any circumstances.** Also my policy on tardiness is the following: **students will drop one letter grade if they come late to class three times.**

- (2) **Paper Proposal:** 20% of the overall grade (paper is due Monday, JUNE 1 before noon--late papers will not be accepted). Thus students will fail this assignment if they do not submit the paper in time. Make sure you send your copy electronically to my e-mail cserranpagan@valdosta.edu and get a signature confirmation that I open it.

Write in one or two pages a suggested **title**, a **thesis statement**, an **example** for each comparison [one example for your similarity and one example for your difference], and **four** selected **quotations** to back up your examples [**two** for the similarity and **two** for the difference] using the proper citation in parenthesis. For instance, “. . . “ (King 111). Or if you have more than one book by the same author then change the format to: “. . .” (King, Strength to Love 33). You should cite at least **four** sources (**three** from scholarly books—including some of our textbooks--and **one** from an internet source) in the Works Cited. Follow the format below!

- 1) **Title**-For example, The Mysticism of Love in the Interior Castle and the Bezels of Wisdom.
- 2) **Thesis Statement**-Write in one or more paragraphs the purpose of your reflection paper. What are you trying to prove in your paper? Which mystical traditions and religions did you choose? Which is the topic that you are planning to write on? Why? Narrow down the topic. Be specific! For instance, what kind of love are you focusing on?
- 3) **Examples**--Give an example for each similarity and for each difference on how your two mystical texts are alike and dislike using the same researched topic in question. For instance, if love is your selected topic, how similar and different are your two mystics in elaborating their religious symbols of love? What do they share in common? What is unique about their mystical

languages, methods, styles, historical contexts, etc.?

4) **Sources-AVOID PLAGIARISM!!!** Make sure that you give proper credit to all your sources if you are quoting directly or paraphrasing from any text. Open parenthesis, name the author's last name (if there is no author's name cite the website, www.hinduism.com), and write the page number. Ex. “. . .” (Fisher 130). If you are quoting more than one page, use the following format: “. . .” (Fisher 130-131). Then include all your sources in the last page of your reflection paper as Works Cited. Use alphabetical order. Check the samples using the MLA Handbook Manual Style in **Section IV!**

(3) **Final Reflection Paper:** 20% of the overall grade (**paper is due Monday, June 15 before noon**--late papers will not be accepted).

Students will write a short comparative paper (**no more than 6 pages**) based on a specific topic (for instance, the Mysticism of Love in the Interior Castle and the Bezels of Wisdom; the Role of Wisdom in the Zohar and the Dark Night; the Divine Female as a Cosmic Energy or In the House of the Lord There Are Many Mansions in the Zohar and the Interior Castle; Mystical Garden as a Symbol of Paradise in the Spanish Carmelites; among many other possible topics). In other words, choose **two** out of our **four** books and select a specific topic. Choose a topic that you are passionate or curious about it!!!

Also start reading some of the chapters from our books. Choose the **two** books that you are most interested in comparing and contrasting. You will need to find out at least **one** major similarity and **one** major difference between two mystical texts and/or traditions. Start your paper with a good introduction; then state as clear as possible **one** example for the similarity and **one** example for the difference; cite at least **two** quotes for each example and **two** scholarly sources using in-text citation (sacred texts like the Bible are excluded from these sources unless you want to add it as one more source in parenthesis) for each comparison; use the pronoun “I” such as I agree or I disagree and explain why throughout the paper; have a good conclusion at the end; and finally, list **four** scholarly sources in your Works Cited (use MLA style, double spaced, alphabetical order, etc). I will give you more specific instructions at the day of our meeting. Bring any questions you may have about writing a good reflection paper.

A) Write a thesis statement **at the beginning** of your paper explaining why you chose this topic and what you found interesting about it. One good paragraph will do it. Have a good conclusion **at the end** explaining what you have learned after doing research on your topic.

B) Students will select **one** major mystical theme or motif. For instance, I will write my paper on “The Degrees of Mystical Love in the Sufi Ibn Al’ Arabi and in the Carmelite John of the Cross.” Find out **one** major similarity and **one** major difference in the writings of these two mystics based on your specific researched topic, which are the degrees of love. Cite good examples and rational arguments to back up your opinions with scholarly sources throughout your paper. Avoid plagiarism. Document all your sources. Plagiarized assignments will receive a failing grade and will be reported to the Dean of Students of your respective college or university.

All answers must be in print. Use MLA style. The maximum of pages allowed is **six**. Use

pagination numbers (ex. Serrán-Pagán 1). Use double spaced. You are required to use the pronoun ‘I’ (such as “I think,” “I agree,” “I disagree”) in all your papers. Combine facts, personal input and scholarly sources throughout your reflection paper. Select at least **four** quotes and cite the sources in parenthesis throughout your paper. For instance, “.....” (Fisher 112). Then cite at least **four** complete sources (one from our textbook, two from scholarly books, and one from the internet) in the Works Cited page (on the back of each reflection paper). You will lose **one** point for each mechanical error (grammar, spelling, and format).

FAQ’s

How can I get an A in my final reflection paper?

An “A” reflection paper must 1) demonstrate mastery of the topic in question, 2) balance good critical-thinking skills (“write your thoughts on paper”) with facts, 3) have few spelling and/or grammatical errors, and 4) cite all sources properly throughout paper using parentheses and having them at the end in your Works Cited.

What are the minimum and the maximum number of pages in my reflection paper?

4 pages minimum and **6 pages** maximum. The first page should include the introduction of your topic (thesis statement) and the history of the problem you are trying to tackle. The second page should address the similarity (give an example with a quote and a source, and your personal input). The third page should focus on the difference (give an example with a quote and a source, and your personal input). And the fourth or the sixth page should be the conclusion. Have a paragraph at the end explaining the most interesting thing you have learned about your researched topic.

Can I use ‘I’ throughout the paper?

Yes, it is required to use the personal pronoun “I” because this is a reflection paper. I highly recommend to use expressions such as “I agree,” “I disagree,” “I think,” “I believe,” “It is my understanding,” etc. In doing so, I can recognize quickly your own ideas. Do not wait until the end of your paper to state your own ideas.

Any other expectations?

An “A” paper must include 1) a good introduction and conclusion, 2) at least one good comparison for each similarity and for each difference between the two mystics, based on your selected topic in question), and 3) page numbering. Also **DO NOT USE bold** letters or underlining in your title and in the Works Cited. Type your proposal and reflection paper. I will not accept handwriting papers!!! Use double spaced. Do not forget to check spelling!!! Please feel free to contact me if you have further questions.

(4) **Journal** (20%): Students will submit **one** page (can use both sides) in handwriting for each field trip. The question that needs to be addressed is: After your visit to a specific location, what is the most valuable learning experience that you can take with you in

connection with our field of study? Ex., “My trip to Avila has helped me understand the spiritual geography of St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross. I have gained new insights on the Carmelite mystical symbol of the ‘interior castle’ because”

(5) **Individual oral presentations** (20%) will be graded according to the following:

creativity (use visuals like posters and/or play different character roles via theatrical performances—use your creative imagination!!!);

accuracy (“be clear and concise”--state the facts and comment on them);

oral skills (keep eye contact with the whole class, avoid reading off notes, do not use verbal pauses like “um”);

well-cited sources (give credit to your sources in handwriting and/or orally);

and **time limit** (max. **10 minutes** per presenter--loss of 1 point for each extra minute).

Once you are done with your presentations, invite the audience to ask you questions and to share their thoughts or comments with the whole class. Each student will evaluate the performance of his or her classmates. You will give presenters an overall grade and will provide a short list of comments explaining why you like or dislike their individual and team presentations and will assign a final grade (from F to A) based on the criteria listed above.

A FEW SUGGESTIONS: It is mandatory that each student meets with the professor so that we can discuss your selected topic before it gets my approval. The meeting should take place at least one week before the final oral presentations. Do your research before talking to me. Make sure you rehearse before your oral presentations. Gather ideas together and put them into practice before the date of your presentation. Manage time wisely. Be well prepared and dress appropriately (you can use costumes). Avoid chewing gum. Bring objects or anything that aids you to create the right atmosphere for your overall presentation. **Remember the purpose of this oral presentation is not to give a chapter summary from the book but rather to focus on one specific topic that you are interested in doing research and go deeper into it. Be creative, informative, and entertaining. Share your passion with us. Be enthusiastic! Check with me if you need further help in finding out an interesting topic.**

GRADING SCALE: A (100 to 90); B (89 to 80); C (79 to 70); D (69 to 60); and F (59 to 0)

VI. COURSE CALENDAR

May 16--Read syllabus and watch slides of Spain

Paper Proposal is due Monday, JUNE 1 before noon

Final Reflection Paper is due Monday, JUNE 15 before noon

July 6--Introduction--What is mysticism? What is unique about Spanish mysticism? Discussion on Islamic, Jewish and Christian mysticism

July 8--Assigned readings (pp. xi-41, 45-59, and 82-118) from Ibn Al'Arabi's The Bezels of Wisdom

July 9--Visit to El Prado Museum in Madrid--**Journal is due at the beginning of next class**

July 13--Assigned readings (pp. 119-155, 163-217, 228-235, 249-266, 269-284) from Ibn Al'Arabi's The Bezels of Wisdom

July 15--Assigned readings (pp. xiii-39, 43-45, 49-95) from Moses de León's The Zohar

July 16--Trip to Alcalá de Henares--**Journal is due at the beginning of next class**

July 20--Assigned readings (pp. 99-120, 132-141, 145-147, 153-162, 182-189) from Moses de León's The Zohar

July 22--Assigned readings (pp. xi-29, 33-84) from Teresa of Avila's The Interior Castle

July 23--Visit to el Monasterio de La Encarnación and el Monasterio de las Descalzas Reales (both located in Madrid)--**Journal is due at the beginning of next class**

July 27--Assigned readings (pp. 85-196) from Teresa of Avila's The Interior Castle

July 29--Assigned readings (pp. 11-32, 195-196, 33-98) from John of the Cross's Dark Night of the Soul

July 30--Trip to Ávila--**Journal is due at the beginning of next class**

August 3--Assigned readings (pp. 98-193) from John of the Cross's Dark Night of the Soul

August 5--**Final Oral Presentations**