Instructor: Ellen Goldberg, Professor of South Asian Religions, Department of Religious Studies (affiliate of Gender Studies and Cultural Studies)
Office Hours: Monday 11:45-12:45 or by appointment (Monday or Tuesday)
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Course Description and Objectives

This course has five different but related course objectives:

1) to learn about the history of the academic study of mysticism
2) to help the student understand and assess a comparative approach to the study of mysticism through various methods and/or theories
3) to examine mystical accounts first hand (or in translation) and learn to analyze the content of mystical experience using theory and comparison
4) to help students to develop a ‘critical understanding’ of mysticism and the study of mysticism
5) to apply these skills in both oral and written form through seminar participation and written research
Evaluation and Grading Scheme

At-a-glance ASSIGNMENT OVERVIEW (see details below):

1.) Research Project worth 50% of your final grade, due on or before March 15. See details below.

2.) Midterm worth 30% of your final grade, scheduled for Feb. 9.

3.) Informed and intelligent ongoing in class participation and attendance worth 20% of your final grade.

DETAILS of research essay:

1.) Research Essay Project worth 50% of your final grade, due on or before March 15. It involves several components: (1) Abstract and proposal (no grade); (2) Annotated bibliography (10%); (3) sharing your topic in class (no grade); final research paper. Original proposal and bibliography must be attached to the final paper when submitted on March 15 in class. See schedule of dates and instructions below.

a.) Proposal (or prospectus, abstract) submitted in class to the professor on (or before) February 1, 2016. No more than one page (double spaced, 12 point font). Present a thesis. Outline how you will approach the topic. Explain briefly what method or theory you will use. State why this research is significant. The topic proposal has to be approved. No grade.

b.) Annotated Bibliography of a minimum of 5 of the most important sources for your paper. Each selection should have a couple of sentences, stating how these sources will contribute to your overall research and why these are good (reputable) resources. Proper bibliographic citation is required. Due on or before March 1. Attach topic with the bibliography. Worth 10%

c.) Share your topic in class. We will spend a bit of time near the final paper due date to hear topic you are working on for your essay. About 5 minutes per student. No grade.

c.) The final essay. Hard copy submitted in class on or before March 15. Typed, 10 pages in length, double-spaced. Font: Times Roman 12 or equivalent. Citation style is open to any standard format as long as you are consistent. Attach Biblio and proposal. Worth 40%.
2.) **Midterm**, Feb 9, worth 30% of your final grade. TBD

3.) **Participation and Attendance**

Participation (also based on attendance) will be graded. Be critical, informed, and prepared. Class will begin with a lecture, then open to discussion. Reading the assigned material and attending class are compulsory. Intellectual engagement with the material outlined on the syllabus and on Moodle is required. Worth 20% of your overall grade.

**Organization of the Course**

Rels 322 consists mainly of lectures and informed class discussion. The goal is to introduce the student to materials germane to the academic study of mysticism. This includes critical methods and theories, overview, and selected readings of so-called mystical literature and various first-person accounts (some in translation). The course is designed to create an environment of respect, dialogue, question, and cooperation. Please note that this course is intended as an introduction to the history study of Mysticism and presupposes no previous knowledge (or first-hand experience!) of the topic.

**Schedule of Readings** (See Moodle each week for any supplemental material. Our Moodle site is a work in progress so please check it regularly. More readings will appear weekly).

1. Jan 5  

(1) **Introduction to course: Creating the Syllabus**


Advanced encyclopedia article. Presents a critical overview and necessary background to the study of mysticism.
2. ***Richard King, “The power of definitions: A genealogy of the idea of ‘the mystical’ in Orientalism and Religion, pp. 7-35. (We will return to this reading later in the term).

   Available @ http://www.tandfebooks.com.proxy.queensu.ca/doi/view/10.4324/9780203006085

   Excellent article. Good background and analysis of the western influences in the academic study of mysticism.


   Available @ http://go.galegroup.com.proxy.queensu.ca/ps/pdfViewer?sort=RELEVANCE&docType=Topic+overview&tabID=T003&prodId=GVRL&searchId=R2&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&searchType=BasicSearchForm&contentSegment=&currentPosition=1&userGroupName=queensulaw&inPS=true&docId=GALE%7CCX3424502159&contentSet=GALE%7CCX3424502159&c2c=true#docViewNav

   Classic article offering background information and excellent overview.

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Jan 12   Definitions and Overview

   The Big Debate/Interpretive Theories: Constructivism vs. Deconstructivism (or Perennialism)


   Available @ http://www2.trincoll.edu/~kiener/KatzS_Language_Epistemology_Mysticism_1978.pdf

   Seminal article on the constructivist debate developed by Katz.


Critique of Katz. Forman presents what is often referred to as the perennialist position. He argues in favour of PCE (pure consciousness event or experience).


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Jan 19     (1) **Methods and Theories: Psychology, Cognitive Science, and Neuroscience**

Readings:
(1) William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*. “The Four Characteristics of Mystical Experience,” pp. 380-382 found @
http://www.gutenberg.org/files/621/621-h/621-h.html#toc17

Classic outline of the four characteristics of a mystical experience. Written in a sympathetic voice by psychologist William James.

(2) David Lewis-Williams and David Pearce, *Inside the Neolithic Mind*, pp. 26-62 (will be posted on Moodle).

This argument will be central to our class discussions and forms the basic theoretical premise for our course.

Readings from Newberg and d’Aquili on Moodle.

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Jan 26: (1) Techniques and Practices
(2) Buddhism


(3) Keith Dowman, translator. Flight of the Garuda, Songs 6-9 2
http://keithdowman.net/books/fg.htm

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Feb. 2 Hinduism: The Path of Practice (Yoga) and the Path of Love (Bhakti)


Reading: Shristi Nayak, “Challenging Gender and Sexuality Norms Through Devotion”
Readi
ings:

Available @ http://www.tandfebooks.com.proxy.queensu.ca/isbn/9780203006085.

Feb 9     Midterm (Details to be discussed)    Feb 9

Feb 16     READING WEEK

FEB 23     Gender and Christianity
            Research Paper Proposal Due


Reading: Bernard McGinn St John of the Cross Apophatic and Via Negativa
Pseudo Dionysius; Divine Darkness and the Cloud of Unknowing
http://faculty.uml.edu/enelson/notthisnotthat.htm


Available at
http://muse.jhu.edu.proxy.queensu.ca/journals/spiritus/v001/1.2mcginn.html

Reading: Carol Christ, “Embodied Embedded Mysticism:

Available at
http://muse.jhu.edu.proxy.queensu.ca/journals/journal_of_feminist_studies_in_religion/v024/24.2.christ.html

Readings: To be added (see Moodle)
Mar 1  The Alchemical Path (Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, and Daoist examples)

Readings: To be added (see Moodle)

Bibliography Due

March 8  (1) Sufism


Readings: To be added (see Moodle)

Mar 15  Essays are Due in class

Film, Art, Poetry, Music, and Science Fiction


Readings: To be added: See Moodle

March 22:  (1) Nature Mysticism
            (2) Entheogenic Mysticism

Questions re: Entheogenic Mysticism:
How similar are entheogen related experiences to more classical mystical experiences? How might studies of these experiences help us to understand epistemological
questions about the ‘source’ of mystical experiences; how should ‘theistic’ traditions respond to this type of research?

Readings: To be added (see Moodle)

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Mar 29  Does Mystical Experience need to be Religious?
Non Duality: SBNR; the NONES
The Future of Mysticism

Readings: To be added (see Moodle)

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Academic Integrity

Academic Integrity: Academic integrity is constituted by the five core fundamental values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility (see http://www.academicintegrity.org/icai/home.php). These values are central to the building, nurturing and sustaining of an academic community in which all members of the community will thrive. Adherence to the values expressed through academic integrity forms a foundation for the “freedom of inquiry and exchange of ideas” essential to the intellectual life of the University (see the Senate Report on Principles and Priorities at http://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/policies/senateandtrustees/academicintegrity.html). Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the regulations concerning academic integrity and for ensuring that their assignments conform to the principles of academic integrity. Information on academic integrity is available in the Arts & Science Calendar on the Arts & Science website under “Academic Integrity” (http://www.queensu.ca/artscl/students-at-queens/academic-integrity) or from the instructor of this course. Departures from academic integrity include plagiarism, use of unauthorized materials, facilitation, forgery and falsification, and are antithetical to the development of an academic community at Queen's. Given the seriousness of these matters, actions that contravene the regulation on academic integrity carry sanctions that can range from a warning or the loss of grades on an assignment to the failure of a course to a requirement to
withdraw from the university. For forms and procedures see http://www.queensu.ca/artsci/staff-and-faculty/teaching/teaching-forms.

Disability Accommodation Statement

Queen's University is committed to achieving full accessibility for persons with disabilities.
Part of this commitment includes arranging academic accommodations for students with disabilities to ensure they have an equitable opportunity to participate in all of their academic activities.
If you are a student with a disability and think you may need accommodations, you are strongly encouraged to contact the Disability Services Office (DSO) and register as early as possible. For more information, including important deadlines, please visit the DSO website at: http://www.queensu.ca/hcds/ds/

All components of this course will receive numerical percentage marks. The final grade you receive for the course will be derived by converting your numerical course average to a letter grade according to Queen’s Official Grade Conversion Scale:

Grading: Numerical Course Average (Range)

A+ 90-100
A 85-89
A- 80-84
B+ 77-79
B 73-76
B- 70-72
C+ 67-69
C 63-66
C- 60-62
D+ 57-59
D 53-56
The long descriptors provide a more detailed guide to what each letter grade signifies (see Queen’s website http://www.queensu.ca/artsci/sites/default/files/queens_artsci_academic_regulations_2014.pdf#page=34&zoom=auto,34,689

A+
Indicates exceptional performance that exceeds the highest standards. The course content has been mastered, the ability to apply the material in new ways has been demonstrated, and an understanding of the wider context is evident, all to an exceptional degree. Consistent performance at this level leads to placement on the Dean's Honour List with Distinction (see Academic Regulation 12).

A
Indicates outstanding performance that meets the highest standards. The course content has been mastered, the ability to apply the material in new ways has been demonstrated, and an understanding of the wider context is evident.

A-
Indicates excellent performance that meets very high standards. Mastery of the course material and ability to apply the material in new ways have been demonstrated.

B+
Indicates very good performance that meets high standards. The course content has been mastered, with a comprehensive understanding of concepts and techniques.

B
Indicates good comprehension of the course material. The expectations set for the course have been met.

B-
Indicates reasonably good comprehension of the course material. Most expectations set for the course have been met.

C+
Indicates an acceptable comprehension of the course material, meeting and in some cases exceeding basic standards.

C
Indicates a generally acceptable comprehension of the course material, meeting basic standards. Consistent performance at this level is acceptable for an Honours Degree (see Academic Regulation 16).

C-
Indicates a minimally acceptable comprehension of the course material while falling short of basic standards in some areas. Consistent performance at this level is acceptable for a General Degree, but not for an Honours degree (see Academic Regulation 16).

D+
Comprehension of the course material was unsatisfactory, but sufficient for credit to be granted. Consistent performance at this level will lead to placement on Academic Probation and, potentially, further sanctions (see Academic Regulation 13).

D
Comprehension of the course material was unsatisfactory, but sufficient for credit to be granted. Consistent performance at this level will lead to placement on Academic Probation and, potentially, further sanctions (see Academic Regulation 13).

D-
Comprehension of the course material was unsatisfactory; barely sufficient for credit to be granted. Consistent performance at this level will lead to an automatic requirement to withdraw (see Academic Regulation 13).

F
Indicates that the minimum standards have not been met. Credit has not been granted. Consistent performance at this level will lead to an automatic requirement to withdraw (see Academic Regulation 13).

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