

RELIGION 840 404  
MEDIEVAL STUDIES 667 481 03  
**SEMINAR: CHRISTIAN MONASTICISM**  
**SENIOR SEMINAR IN MEDIEVAL STUDIES**  
Monks and Nuns in Historical Perspective

Professor Tia Kolbaba

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Office hours: Monday 1-3; **appointments available at other times—just ask!**

**COURSE WEBSITE:** [www.rutgersonline.net](http://www.rutgersonline.net)

Goals of the Course:

1. Content: Students will learn the history of Christian monasticism from its origins in the Egyptian desert to the end of the western Middle Ages. We will focus on monasticism in western Europe, including the characteristics of different kinds of monasticism, the ideals and reality of monastic practice in various places and times, some of the intellectual and spiritual arguments in favor of monastic practice, and some of the criticisms of monastic practice. We will study the history and ideals of Christian monasticism from the Egyptian monks of early Christianity, who lived in the desert, to the semi-monastic movements of the later Middle Ages, based in cities. We will be especially concerned with the evolution of different kinds of monasticism, and different monastic ideals, in different periods. We will seek the roots of such change in the interaction between monks and nuns and the people outside the walls of their monasteries.
2. Approach: Students will become familiar with some of the ways that secular scholars of religion approach questions of theology and religious evolution; they will learn some of the terminology scholars use to describe religious movements and the religious convictions of individuals; they will learn what kinds of proof are acceptable in scholarly circles and why. Most importantly, they will learn to **APPLY** these ideas and methods in their analysis of the course readings. They will do so in seminar discussion, in online threaded discussion, and in writing.

An additional note. The second of these goals is crucial for Religion Majors, as detailed in recent draft statement of overall learning goals for majors:

**Practical Learning Goals. Students who study religion at Rutgers University can expect to develop the following practical skills:**

- 1.) The ability to read, understand, and discuss a variety of primary sources such as the scriptures of various religions, memoirs, rules for religious practice, theological and philosophical texts, and liturgical instructions;
- 2.) The ability to read and understand secondary sources written in academic prose;
- 3.) The ability to conceptualize, research, structure, articulate, and defend an original thesis in both written and oral presentation;
- 4.) The ability to work independently and to conduct independent research.

### Assessment of Student Achievement:

This is an upper-level Religion and Medieval Studies seminar. As such it has rather high goals for student analysis, that is **THINKING**. We will focus on the reading and writing of scholarly prose as it is practiced in fields such as religion, history, and medieval studies. We will read scholarly articles on various aspects of monasticism and discuss them in class and online. You will also write papers in response to what we have read. These practices—careful and deep reading of primary texts, analytical and critical reading of secondary scholarship, and writing scholarly prose—are central to the disciplines of Religious Studies and Medieval Studies.

Assessment (in everyday language we say “grading”) of students’ level of achievement in the goals of the course as outlined above will be based on the following. Percentages are approximate.

1. First writing assignment: 10%
2. Second writing assignment: 15%
3. Third writing assignment: 20%
4. Final writing assignment: 25%
5. Participation in class, including 3 short response papers in April: 20%
6. Participation in online threaded discussions: 10%

**Books** (NOT ordered from the R.U. Bookstore. You can get them cheaper online. Start with [www.addall.com](http://www.addall.com)):

**Required:** Athanasius, *The Life of Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus*, paperback, **ISBN-10:** 0809122952, **ISBN-13:** 978-0809122950.

**Required:** C.H. Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism: Forms of Religious Life in Western Europe in the Middle Ages*, 3rd edition, paperback. **ISBN-10:** 0582404274, **ISBN-13:** 978-0582404274.

**Required:** Geoffrey Moorhouse, *Sun Dancing. Life in a Medieval Irish Monastery and How Celtic Spirituality Influenced the World*, paperback. **ISBN-10:** 0156006022, **ISBN-13:** 978-0156006026.

**Required:** *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, paperback. **ISBN-10:** 0140448993, **ISBN-13:** 978-0140448993

**Required:** Lester K. Little, *Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy in Medieval Europe*, paperback. **ISBN-10:** 0801492475, **ISBN-13:** 978-0801492471.

**Optional:** this chronicle is available online, but the translation there is in old-fashioned English; many people find it hard to read. If you want to read a better translation I recommend buying (or getting from a library) the following:

Jocelin of Brakelond, *Chronicle of the Abbey of Bury St. Edmunds*, trans., intro., notes Diana Greenway and Jane Sayers, paperback. **ISBN-10:** 0199554935, **ISBN-13:** 978-0199554935.

## WRITING (70%)

There are no examinations in this class. There is no final research project and paper. Instead, **the emphasis is on assessing, improving, and then assessing again writing skills**—specifically the ability to write a short analytical essay. There are several reasons for this emphasis:

First, writing analytically requires thinking analytically; therefore to learn to write better analytical papers is to learn to think more analytically and carefully.

Second, writing analytically is a life-skill **EVEN** in this age of e-mails and texts.

Third, students at Rutgers in general are not getting as much instruction in this area or as much chance to practice, which leaves them at a disadvantage in the “real world”. We cannot fix this in a single class, but we can begin to move in the right direction.

Finally, the students in this class are mostly Religion or Medieval Studies majors; in both of these fields the ability to write analytically about both primary and secondary sources is crucial.

**Writing assignments** will be explained in class, handed out in hard copies, and posted on the website at [rutgersonline.net](http://rutgersonline.net).

The **standards by which writing will be graded** are detailed in the rubric that follows this page of the syllabus. *The rubric is subject to refinement; if it changes you will all receive a new copy!!!!*

**The four major writing assignments must be submitted to the dropbox at [rutgersonline.net](http://rutgersonline.net).** Go to the course page, then to “dropbox” (a tab at the top), and choose the dropbox for the assignment you are submitting. Follow the prompts for submitting the assignment there. Assignments must be in .doc, .docx, .pdf, or .rtf format. If you have problems submitting it, please try the help desk at [rutgersonline](http://rutgersonline.net) first. If you still are not sure the paper was submitted properly, you may e-mail a copy to the professor, but **PLEASE** try first to submit it through [rutgersonline](http://rutgersonline.net). This makes it easier for me to pick up your papers, grade them, and return them to you promptly.

**The three response papers in April will be submitted as hard copies at the end of class** on the day they are due.

CRITERION	"A"=EXCELLENT	"B"= ABOVE AVERAGE	"C"= COMPETENT Or "D" = SOME ASPECTS COMPETENT	"F": WORK DOES NOT MEET MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS (or was not turned in)
<b>General Presentation</b>	Outstanding. Work is complete, thorough, and creative	Work is best characterized as solid, well-thought-out, and dependable (consistent).	Meets minimal requirements of written work.	Work does not meet minimum requirements (or was not turned in).
<b>Thesis<sup>1</sup></b>	Paper has a thesis that takes a stand on a specific issue. The issue is arguable and stated clearly.	Thesis is more a statement of fact or announcement of subject than an argument; or it is too broad to be argued effectively.	Paper lacks an arguable thesis.	Paper lacks an arguable thesis or even a focused subject.
<b>Use of Sources</b>	Paper uses sources required by the assignment. They are summarized where the reader will need clarification, mentioned where they advance the argument, and quoted when that is the best way to make a point.	Paper uses sources required by the assignment. They are usually summarized where the reader will need clarification, mentioned where they advance the argument, and quoted when that is the best way to make a point.	Paper uses sources required by the assignment but without clear connections to the argument of the paper or the immediate context within the paper. OR Paper uses only some of the required sources, giving no indication of having read others.	Doesn't use sources required by the assignment.
<b>Idea Generation and Flow of Argument</b>	Creative and original ideas that go beyond the sources. Argument is clear, logical, and internally consistent.	Some original thinking, though it may not be in the depth expected in "A" work. Argument is clear, logical, and internally consistent.	Little or no indication of original thinking or creative use of materials. Argument may lack internal consistency or logical flow.	Writing is vague or ambiguous; ideas do not follow a logical flow.
<b>Quality of Prose<sup>2</sup></b>	Prose is clear and concise. Paragraphs have a single topic, clearly stated; sentences within a paragraph relate to that topic. Sentences have a single idea. Writer avoids complex structures except when necessary. Sentence-length varies.	Most paragraphs are structured clearly with a topic sentence. Most sentences have a single idea. The prose is generally concise, perhaps with wordiness. For the most part the writer avoids complex structures. Sentence-length varies.	There are various problems with clarity, concision, paragraph structure, sentence structure, or the like. These problems affect the overall clarity of the paper.	Many problems with clarity, concision, paragraph structure, sentence structure, and the like.
<b>Grammar, spelling, vocabulary</b>	Spelling and grammar are accurate. Vocabulary is varied and used correctly.	Spelling and grammar are accurate, perhaps with minor proofreading errors. Vocabulary is varied and usually used correctly.	Spelling and grammar show problems that affect the meaning of the text. Vocabulary is narrow and/or words are used incorrectly.	Many errors.

<sup>1</sup> For help formulating a thesis, I recommend the following websites: <http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/acadwrite/thesistatement.html>  
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/545/01/>

<sup>2</sup> The most common problems are awkward sentences and wordiness. See the following websites: [http://www.prismnet.com/~hcexres/style/long\\_sentences.html](http://www.prismnet.com/~hcexres/style/long_sentences.html)  
<http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/GRAMMAR/concise.htm>  
<http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/style/wordiness.html>  
[http://grammar.about.com/od/words/tp/clutter\\_tips.htm](http://grammar.about.com/od/words/tp/clutter_tips.htm)

## **In-Class Participation**

An exciting, challenging, rewarding seminar is characterized by exciting, challenging, rewarding discussion of the reading material. Class participation will therefore be an important part of the grade. Participation begins with attendance (see below) and includes a willingness to ask questions, respond to questions, listen to others carefully, and pay attention to lectures and discussion.

Participation standards are posted at this seminar's site at [www.rutgersonlinenet](http://www.rutgersonlinenet) . **Please familiarize yourself with these standards.**

A note about the bare minimum for a seminar—attendance:

**Students are required to attend all seminars.** Aware, however, that illnesses, family crises, and such can make even the most diligent student miss class, the professor allows 3 absences without penalty. The 3 absences are not recommended, should be used only when you **NEED** to, and are **NOT** negotiable. **Do not use up three absences because you just have better things to do** and then expect a fourth absence to be excused when you are ill or have an emergency. For every absence beyond three, your grade will drop 1/3 of a grade-point (e.g., from A to B+, from B+ to B, from B to C+, and so on).

Tardiness: being late to class twice will be equivalent to one absence—see the rules for attendance above. **IF, BECAUSE OF OTHER COMMITMENTS, YOU CANNOT MAKE IT TO CLASS ON TIME, YOU SHOULD DROP THE COURSE.**

### **Online Participation in Threaded Discussions**

There will be four threaded discussions online in the course of the semester. You will be graded on all four. I will drop the lowest grade and average the other three to calculate 10% of your grade.

The procedure will be as follows:

I will post prompts for the threaded discussion by the Friday before the discussion begins **AT THE LATEST**.

You must participate by responding to one or more of my prompts by the following Monday at 5 p.m.

You must participate again by responding to at least two of your fellow students' posts by Wednesday at 2 p.m.

I will then have time to read and respond to posts; we may find them useful for jump-starting conversations in the seminar on Thursday.

You will get partial credit for responses posted after Wednesday at 2 but before class on Thursday; you will get no credit for posting after class on Thursday.

Dates for these threaded discussions are in the calendar below—**PUT THEM ON YOUR CALENDAR, TOO!**

The rubric for grading your participation is on the page following this one.

This rubric is a slightly revised version of one developed and published by Ann M. Solan and Nikolaos Linardopoulos, “Development, Implementation, and Evaluation of a Grading Rubric for Online Discussions,” *Journal of Online Teaching and Learning* 7 (2011), Appendix B, “Revised Rubric (Spring Quarter 2011)”, accessed January 12, 2012.

	A	B	C	D	F
Quantity	Student has submitted one substantive original post responding <i>fully</i> to the question or topic. Student has submitted at least two substantive replies to classmates’ posts. Total word count is at least 250 words.	Student has submitted one substantive original post responding <i>fully</i> to the question or topic. Student has submitted only one substantive reply to a classmate’s post. Total word count for the unit is at least 200 words.	Student has submitted ONLY a substantive reply to the question or topic OR ONLY a substantive reply to a classmate’s post. Total word count for the unit is at least 50 words.	Student has submitted less than 50 words.	No discussion posts are submitted.
Evidence of Critical Thinking	Student’s original post demonstrates substantial evidence of critical thinking about the topic through, for example, application or creativity. Student’s reply post(s) take the discussion in a new direction.	Student’s original post demonstrates moderate evidence of critical thinking about the topic through, for example, application or creativity. Student’s reply post(s) take the discussion in a new direction.	Student’s original post demonstrates little evidence of critical thinking about the topic through, for example, application or creativity. Student’s reply post(s) take the discussion in a new direction.	Student’s original post demonstrates little evidence of critical thinking about the topic through, for example, application or creativity. Student’s reply post(s) merely agree with the classmate or merely repeat what the classmate said.	Student’s original post demonstrates no evidence of critical thinking (for example, just stating opinion without justification). Student’s reply post(s) merely agree with the classmate or merely repeat what the classmate said.
Content Contribution	Posts factually correct, reflective and substantive contribution; advances discussion.	Posts information that is factually correct; lacks full development of concept or thought.	Repeats but does not add substantive information to the discussion.		Posts information that is off-topic, incorrect, or irrelevant to discussion.
Timeliness	Student has submitted one original post by Monday at 5 p.m. and has submitted two response posts by Wednesday at 2 p.m.	Student has submitted one original post by Monday at 5 p.m., has submitted one response post by Wednesday at 2 p.m., and has submitted a second response post by class time on Thursday.	Student has submitted one original post by Monday at 5 p.m. and two response posts by class time on Thursday.	Student has submitted one original post by class time.	Student submits posts after the class meets or doesn’t submit posts at all.
Spelling and Grammar	Student has submitted posts with no spelling, grammar, syntax, punctuation, citation, or other writing errors.	Student has submitted posts with one to five spelling, grammar, syntax, punctuation, citation, or other writing errors.	Student has submitted posts with six to nine spelling, grammar, syntax, punctuation, citation, or other writing errors.	Written posts : Student has submitted posts with 10 or more spelling, grammar, syntax, punctuation, citation, or other writing errors.	

## Reading

Discussion of the course material can only be wonderful if all students have read the material and thought about it. You will make mistakes in writing your papers if you have not understood the reading; you will reveal your ignorance in class; you will fail to answer online discussion questions adequately. Thus evaluation of your reading of the material is inseparable from evaluation of your class participation, online participation, and writing. As such, it is not a separate percentage of your grade. However, it will clearly reflect well on your class participation and your writing if you do all of the reading. Alas, it will also reflect badly if you do not.

All readings **MUST** be completed before the seminar meets.

When readings are from an online source, you **MUST** print them out and bring them to class. Since we will often discuss texts paragraph-by-paragraph in the seminar, you need to have a copy in front of you.

## Calendar of assignments

Jan. 19: presentation of syllabus, themes of the course, introduction to the topic, etc.

### Assignment:

- Find your way onto the website for this course at [www.rutgersonline.net](http://www.rutgersonline.net) . While you are there, check out the live-chat feature (new) on the homepage for the course. Tell us a little about yourself and why you're taking this seminar. That way I'll get to know you a little **AND** know you found your way to the site.

Jan. 23: The Origins of Monasticism in the Egyptian Desert, part I

- Athanasius, *The Life of Antony*, pp. 29-69 ("Introduction" and chapters 1-50).
- Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*, chapter 1.
- **First paper topic handed out.**

Jan. 26: Origins in the Egyptian Desert, part II

- James E. Goehring, "The Origins of Monasticism" in Goehring, *Ascetics, Society, and the Desert*, pp. 13-35. **Online at rutgersonline.net under "Doc Sharing".**
- *Now is the time to get serious about the first paper if you haven't already done that!*
- **Threaded discussion questions will be posted by the end of the day F 1/27. Participate at least once by M 1/30 at 5 p.m.; participate again by W 2/1 at 2 p.m.**

Jan. 30: Origins in the Egyptian Desert, part III

- Athanasius, *The Life of Antony*, pp. 69-99 (chapters 51-94).
- Spend some more time at the course's page at [www.rutgersonline.net](http://www.rutgersonline.net) . A little practice now may save you time later.
- **Threaded discussion questions have been posted. Participate at least once by M 1/30 at 5 p.m.; participate again by W 2/1 at 2 p.m.**



Feb. 2: The Cenobitic Tradition and the Rule of Saint Benedict

- Lawrence, ch. 2.
- Rule of St. Benedict: online at <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/benedict/rule2/files/rule2.html>

Feb. 6: **first paper due!**

- The Rule of Saint Benedict, cont.: <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/benedict/rule2/files/rule2.html>

Feb. 9: Early medieval monasticism in the West

- Lawrence, ch. 3
- *Sun Dancing* 1-34, 119-125, 143-53, 156-8, 167-72, 185-91, 195-7, 202-11, 216-18,
- **Threaded discussion questions will be posted by the end of the day F 2/10. Participate at least once by M 2/13 at 5 p.m.; participate again by W 2/15 at 2 p.m.**

Feb. 13: Early medieval monasticism in the west, part 2

- Lawrence, ch. 4
- *Sun Dancing* 35-84, 222-31,
- **Threaded discussion questions have been posted. Participate at least once by M 2/13 at 5 p.m.; participate again by W 2/15 at 2 p.m.**

Feb. 16: Early medieval monasticism in the west, part 3

- *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages*, Chapter 4, "Radegund, Queen of the Franks". **Online at rutgersonline.net under "Doc Sharing".**
- "Anchorites and Monks" from Valerie Ramseyer, *The Transformation of a Religious Landscape*, pp. 96-105. **Online at rutgersonline.net under "Doc Sharing".**

Feb. 20: The Medieval Cloister and the World

- Lawrence ch. 5-7
- Charter of the Monastery of Cluny: [www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/chart-cluny.html](http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/chart-cluny.html)
- **Hand out second writing assignment!**

Feb. 23: The Medieval Cloister and the World, part 2

- R.W. Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages*, pp. 214-240. **Online at rutgersonline.net under "Doc Sharing".**
- **Threaded discussion questions will be posted by the end of the day F 2/24. Participate at least once by M 2/27 at 5 p.m.; participate again by W 2/29 at 2 p.m.**

Feb. 27: The Medieval Cloister and the World, part 3

- Joscelyn of Brakelond's Chronicle of the Abbey of Bury-St. Edmunds—online at [www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/jocelin.html](http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/jocelin.html). (This chronicle is also available in a more recent translation: Joscelyn of Brakelond, *Chronicle of the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds*, trans., intro., notes Diana Greenway and Jane Sayers [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989]. This book is available in various libraries and available to buy at other places (try the book source [www.addall.com](http://www.addall.com) ).
- **Threaded discussion questions have been posted. Participate at least once by M 2/27 at 5 p.m.; participate again by W 2/29 at 2 p.m.**

March 1: Reformed Monasticism, part 1

- Lawrence, ch. 8
- Southern, 240-250. **Online at rutgersonline.net under "Doc Sharing".**

March 5: Reformed Monasticism, part 2: Cistercians

- Lawrence, ch. 9-10.
- The Charta Caritatis, online at [www.osb.org/cist/charta.html](http://www.osb.org/cist/charta.html)
- *Sun Dancing*, 85-104, 254-6, 259-62, 266-7.

March 8: Reformed Monasticism, part 3: more Cistercians

- **Second writing assignment due!**
- Southern, 250-272. **Online at rutgersonline.net under "Doc Sharing".**
- The *Apology* of Bernard of Clairvaux. Online:  
<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/bernard1.asp>

### March 12 and 15: Spring Break

March 19: Nuns (and some Contemporaries of Reformed Monasticism)

- Lawrence, ch. 12
- *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, Letter 4 (pp. 47-55), Letter 5 (56-62), Letter 6(72-89), Letter 8 (130-210).

March 22: Nuns, part 2. We will continue discussion of *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise*. You are not REQUIRED to, but you might enjoy skimming the *History of my Calamities.....*

- **Threaded discussion questions will be posted by the end of the day F 3/23. Participate at least once by M 3/26 at 5 p.m.; participate again by W 3/28 at 2 p.m.**

March 26: Friars – an introduction

- Lawrence ch. 13, "The Friars"
- **Threaded discussion questions have been posted. Participate at least once by M 3/26 at 5 p.m.; participate again by 3/28 at 2 p.m.**

March 29: Friars—the Franciscans

- Franciscan Rule, online at [www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/stfran-rule.html](http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/stfran-rule.html)
- Selections from early biographies (lives) of St. Francis, online at [www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/stfran-lives.html](http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/stfran-lives.html)
- A sampling from "The Little Flowers of St. Francis", including introduction to the text, online at [www.ccel.org/ccel/ugolino/flowers.i.html](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/ugolino/flowers.i.html). (This link gets you to the title page, whence you can simply page forward to other parts.): Introduction, chapters 1-4, 7-8, 10-13, 15-16, 24, 33-34. (I've chosen some chapters that I love; please read those, but also please feel free to sample other parts of this work if you have a chance. It's a charmer!)

April 2: Friars part II—the Dominicans

- "Primitive Constitutions" of the Dominican Order, online at [http://www.op.org/inter/en/index.php/library/cat\\_view/41-official-documents](http://www.op.org/inter/en/index.php/library/cat_view/41-official-documents)
- Earliest Life of St. Dominic, known as "The Libellus of Jordan of Saxony", online at [http://www.op.org/inter/en/index.php/library/cat\\_view/50-various-documents](http://www.op.org/inter/en/index.php/library/cat_view/50-various-documents)

April 5: Other monastic innovations and reforms of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, including the Spiritual Franciscans

- **Third paper due**
- Lawrence ch. 14.

**OVER THE NEXT THREE WEEKS YOU MUST WRITE three RESPONSE PAPERS. There are four opportunities to do so; you may choose which one to skip.**

April 9: Reading a secondary monograph about monasticism and social change: Lester Little, *Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy in Medieval Europe*, part 1.

- Little, Preface, Introduction, and Part 1, pp. vii-58.
- **Write a 1-page summary of Little's main arguments in part 1 and bring it to class. You may be asked to present some of your summary in class. You will hand the summary in at the end of class; it will be graded P/F and constitute part of your participation grade for the course.**

April 12: Reading a secondary monograph about monasticism and social change: Lester Little, *Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy in Medieval Europe*, part 2

- Little, part 2, pp. 59-96.
- **Write a 1-page summary of Little's main arguments in part 2 and bring it to class. You may be asked to present some of your summary in class. You will hand the summary in at the end of class; it will be graded P/F and constitute part of your participation grade for the course.**

April 16: Reading a secondary monograph—rather, discussing one today and **setting up final paper assignment.**

April 19 and 23: Film: *The Name of the Rose*

April 26: Reading a secondary monograph about monasticism and social change:

- Little, part 3, pp. 97-170
- **Write a 1-page summary of Little's main arguments in part 3 and bring it to class. You may be asked to present some of your summary in class. You will hand the summary in at the end of class; it will be graded P/F and constitute part of your participation grade for the course.**

April 30: Reading a secondary monograph about monasticism and social change:

- Little, part 4, pp. 171-217.
- **Write a 1-page summary of Little's main arguments in part 4 and bring it to class. You may be asked to present some of your summary in class. You will hand the summary in at the end of class; it will be graded P/F and constitute part of your participation grade for the course.**

**The final paper will be due at the time that the Registrar schedules for the final exam in this course. As soon as I know that date and time I will let you know.**