



**BRISBANE COLLEGE OF THEOLOGY
UNIT OUTLINE**

**GRADUATE DIPLOMA IN THEOLOGY
MASTER OF THEOLOGY**

UNIT TITLE	CHRISTIAN SPIRITUAL CLASSICS
UNIT CODE	C74071 <i>(Also offered in Field D)</i>
UNIT STATUS	Elective
HOST FIELD	C <i>(also offered in Field D)</i>
PREREQUISITE/S	-
INCOMPATIBLES	-
CREDIT POINTS	10cp
REQUIREMENTS	3 hours per week contact and 7 hours per week study over a 13-week semester.
FREQUENCY OF OFFERING	Even years – Semester 1
PREPARED BY	Dr Anne Dawson
UNIT COORDINATOR	Dr Anne Dawson
TEACHING STAFF	Dr Anne Dawson
DATE PREPARED	31 January 2004

Rationale

The written texts of the Christian tradition bear testimony to the rich and varied range of literary forms by which Christians throughout the centuries have communicated their interpretation of the relationship between the human and the Divine. The particular corpus of Christian writings that express the spirituality inherent in the Christian tradition are couched in a variety of genres but all draw, either explicitly or implicitly on biblical and theological concepts and imagery, and also on the myths, symbols and imagery associated with the socio-cultural contexts from which they emerge. Throughout the history of Christianity, spiritual texts have continued to be a significant formative influence in developing and shaping Christian thought and Christian praxis.

For the contemporary Christian a study of spiritual writings from the Christian tradition leads to a knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the ways in which these texts have inspired and challenged individuals and societies and shaped the development of Christianity. It also challenges contemporary readers of these texts to critically read the texts in the light of the contextual settings of the texts, and to evaluate the significance of these spiritual texts for society in the 21st century.

Relation to the Course

The academic study of spirituality adopts a multidisciplinary approach to its object of inquiry. Theology, scripture and the historical development of Christianity are key disciplines for the study of Christian spiritual classical texts. This unit therefore requires postgraduate students to

develop their knowledge and understanding of the study of spirituality by drawing on their learning from the disciplines of other fields within the postgraduate course. They then will be directed to employ this learning in an integrated way in the development of a sound methodological paradigm proper to the study of spirituality by which to communicate their perspective of the spiritual dimension inherent in the texts under inquiry.

Aim

This unit aims to provide approaches to understanding and interpreting dimensions of spirituality in the Christian tradition as it is expressed through the genre of a variety of written texts that have influenced and shaped the Christian tradition.

Learning Outcomes

On the successful completion of this unit, students will be able to:

1. Recognise the specific nature and purpose of Christian spiritual writings.
2. Develop questions related to interpreting expressions of Christian spirituality as it is articulated through Christian spiritual texts.
3. Apply these questions critically in their analysis of the texts.
4. Demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the variety and scope of expressions of spirituality in the Christian tradition
5. Construct an appropriate methodological framework for interpreting spiritual writings from the Christian tradition.

Content

- Session 1 Introduction: Genres of spiritual writings; the development of the study of spirituality as an academic discipline; Questions of methodology; Approaches to reading spiritual texts. With reference to methodology, particular attention will be given to the work of Walter Principe, Sandra Schneiders, and Philip Sheldrake.
- Sessions 2 & 3 Topic: Documentary testimony to the faithfulness of Christians to the Christian message
Genre type: early Christian apologetic writings and Christian memory of holy men and women – Acts of the Martyrs; Hagiography; Vitae sanctorum.
- Sessions 4 & 5 Topic: Expressions of personal spiritual experience
Genre type: communication of expressions of interior experience of God, Christ and the Spirit – Journals and Autobiographies; Letters.
- Sessions 6 & 7 Topic: Sources for Christian spiritual praxis
Genre type: writings for liturgical contexts and biblical reflection – Sermons; Scripture Commentaries.
- Sessions 8 & 9 Topic: Sources for Christian spiritual praxis specifically in the context of monastic or apostolic religious communities
Genre type: theoretical spiritual teaching and practical regulation governing communal living of Religious life; didactic and practical application to prayer, contemplation and the moral life – Religious Rules; Treatises.
- Sessions 10 & 11 Topic: Mystical spiritual writings
Genre type: revelatory literature expressed in symbolic form – Apocalyptic and Visionary Literature; Poetry.
- Sessions 12 & 13 Topic: Personal and communal expressions of worship
Genre type: Affective expressions of communication with the Divine – Prayers, Hymns, Meditations.

Organisation and Teaching Strategies

The contact time consists of lectures, group discussions and seminar sessions. Session 1 will consist of an introduction to the unit and an introduction to the questions pertaining to methodology and approaches to reading and reception of spiritual texts. Each topic to be studied (sessions 2-13) will be divided into two segments and will extend over two sessions. The first segment will introduce the particular genre for the study and will be followed by tutorial discussion on two set readings as examples of the genre. The second segment will consist of student-led seminar presentations and will be followed by group discussion. The seminar sessions will focus on examples of the particular literary genre topic set for each session and will also serve as a basis for discussion of methodological principles. A book of readings containing specific examples of the various genres of spiritual writings will form the basis for the tutorial and seminar presentations and discussion.

Assessment

1. A seminar presentation, approximately 30 minutes in duration, in which the student will analyse an example of a specific genre of spiritual writing, and explore methodological questions relating to a reader's interpretation of the spiritual focus expressed in the text. The presentation will be followed by group and class discussion. [Objectives 1-4]; (15% of the marks).
2. A written submission of this seminar presentation which incorporates insights from the group discussion following the presentation. [Objectives 1-4]
Word requirement: 2500 (35% of the marks)
3. A major essay in which the student will develop a methodological framework to discuss the spirituality evident in the spiritual writings of a particular author or from the perspective of a specific genre, which demonstrates the student's competence in appropriately interpreting spiritual texts. [Objectives 1-5]
Word requirement 4000 (50% of the marks)

Generic Attributes

1. Advanced skills in research, including analysis, critical evaluation and synthesis of material from primary and secondary sources.
2. Advanced skills in scholarly and creative academic writing and in the presentation of a project in terms of organisation, focus, coherence and originality.
3. Advanced skills in the use of electronic catalogues, data bases and search engines, as well as hard copy.

Textbooks

Required

Book of Readings: Set texts consisting of extracts from primary sources of spiritual writings from the Christian tradition.

Examples are:

Bede 1998 (rev.) "Lives of the Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow." In *The Age of Bede*. Trans. J.F. Webb. Edited and introduction by D.H. Farmer. Harmondsworth: Penguin, pp.185-210.

Hildegard of Bingen 1994 "Hildegard to the prelates at Mainz." In *The Letters of Hildegard of Bingen*, Translated by Joseph L. Baird and Radd K. Ehrman. Vol.1, Oxford University Press, pp. 76-83.

St Leo the Great, 1995 *St Leo the Great: Sermons*. Translated by Jane Patricia Freeland and Agnes Josephine Conway. The Fathers of the Church Series (A New Translation). Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, pp.394-400.

Recommended

Abou-El-Haj, Barbara 1997 *The Medieval Cult of Saints: Formations and Transformations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ashley, J. Matthew 1995 "The Turn to Spirituality. The Relationship Between Theology and Spirituality". *Christian Spirituality Bulletin*, vol. 3: 13-18.

- Brown, Peter 1981 *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Countryman, Louis William, 1999 *The Poetic Imagination: An Anglican Tradition*. London: Darton. Longman & Todd.
- Delooz, Pierre 1983. "Towards a Sociological Study of Canonized Sainthood in the Catholic Church." In Stephen Wilson, *Saints and their Cults: Studies in Religious Sociology, Folklore and History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Duoda, 1991 *A Handbook for William: a Carolingian Woman's Counsel for Her Son*. Translated by Carol Neel. Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press.
- Elliott, Alison Goddard, 1987. *Roads to Paradise: Reading the Lives of the Early Saints*. Hanover: University Press of New England.
- McGinn, Bernard 2000 *The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart: The Man from Whom God Hid Nothing*. New York: Crossroad.
- Miller Patricia Cox 2001 *The Poetry of Thought in Late Antiquity: Essays in Imagination*. Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing.
- Principe, Walter 1992 "Theological Trends: Pluralism in Christian Spirituality". *The Way: Contemporary Christian Spirituality*. 32/1:54-61.
- Principe, Walter H. 1983 "Towards Defining Spirituality," *Studies in Religion/Science Religieuses*, 12 :127-141.
- Rapp Claudia 1998 "Storytelling as Spiritual Communication in Early Greek Hagiography: The Use of *Diegesis*", *Journal of Early Christian Studies*. 6: 431– 48.
- Schneiders Sandra 2003. "Religion Vs Spirituality: a Contemporary Conundrum." *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality*. Vol. 3:163-185.
- Schneiders, Sandra 1999 *The Revelatory Text: Interpreting the New Testament as Sacred Scripture*. 2nd edn. Collegeville: Liturgical Press.
- Sheldrake, Philip and Megan McKenna 1999 *Spirituality and Theology: Christian Living and the Doctrine of God*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis
- Tracy, David 1989 *The Analogical Imagination: Theology and the Culture of Pluralism*. New York: Crossroad.
- White, Caroline (trans.) 1998 *Early Christian Lives*. Penguin Classics. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

Academic and General Resource Requirements

Journals

The following journals deal specifically with academic approaches to spirituality

Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality

The Way: A Quarterly Review of Christian Spirituality

The Way Supplement

Other academic religious, theological, philosophical and historical journals from time to time contain articles that discuss spirituality, methodology and associated spiritual themes.

Examples of such journals are:

Church History

Concilium

Journal of Early Christian Studies

Journal of Ecclesiastical History

Journal of Religious History

Journal of Theological Studies

Studia Patristica

Postgraduate students will be expected to develop their knowledge of the focus of the Journals held in the Brisbane College of Theology Library collection with reference to spirituality.

Likewise they will be directed to the *Ejournals* to which students can gain access.

Dictionaries

Downey, Michael, ed. 1993 *New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*. Collegeville, Min. Liturgical Press.

Postgraduate students will be directed to the dictionary resources held in the Brisbane College of Theology Library, and will be expected to develop their knowledge regarding the content with reference to spirituality.

The Brisbane College of Theology Library holds a number of dictionary resources that contain articles relevant to spiritual themes, for example:

Apostolos-Cappadona, Diane. 1998, *Dictionary of Women in religious Art*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Melford, J.C.J. 1983 *Dictionary of Christian Lore and Legend*. London: Thames and Hudson.

Abstracts

Religious and Theological Abstracts

Online and other IT Resources

There are a numerous web sites that provide information with regard to many areas of spirituality. These are of varying academic quality. Students will be encouraged to be discerning in their use of the material from these sites

Theology directory intended to assist searchers of theology and religious life. Arranged according to areas of concentration. <http://www.csbsju.edu/library/internet/theosubj.html>.

Open Directory—Society: religion and Spirituality: Christianity. Computer-assisted Theology Internet resources-Annotated directory—emphasis on biblical studies, historical theology, individual theologians.

http://dmoz.org/Society/Religion_and_Spirituality/Christian/Theology/Directories