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Summer Session 2016

COURSE INFORMATION

DM6063
Women mystics and leadership in a
complex world
June 13-17
All day

INSTRUCTOR

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores what we can learn from women mystics about leadership for a complex world. Students will choose one woman from within the histories/traditions of mysticism to study, and then share their findings with other students so as to learn from a range of mystics across multiple traditions. We will focus on these women and their leadership using a primary lens of dialogic organizational development oriented towards complex adaptive action. The course will be divided into three areas: historical research, collaborative analysis of leadership trajectories, and contemplative practice. The class will include some evening meeting times so as to facilitate dialogue with current mystics.

A word about this class:

This class will thrive -- or not -- based on your participation. Mysticism is a movement, a story, multiple traditions centered in the process of living deeply in relationship with transcendence. Direct communion with God is at the center of mystical experience, much more so than any other kind of religious practice. The authority of mystical experience has a mysterious, ineffable element to it that we cannot capture in text or pin down in philosophy. For this class to function well, you need to bring your whole self to it, and find the kind of humility that allows for openness.

At the same time, mysticism is heavily dependent upon and interwoven with, community. The challenge of seeking to discern how to make meaning with mystical experiences is met with the rich resources and support of community. Through the centuries women mystics have shared their experiences in a variety of ways – some of them becoming known through their writing, some through their community “rules”, some through other artistic endeavors.

In this class we will be exploring women mystics and leadership through the lens of complex adaptive action, with a particular focus on dialogic organization development. What does that

mean? We will unfold those terms at great length in our time together, but for now note that the key premises of a dialogic approach to organizational transformation resonate with mysticism:

- Reality and relationships are socially constructed
- Organizations are meaning-making systems
- Language, broadly defined, matters
- Creating change requires changing conversations
- Participative inquiry and engagement seeks differentiation before seeking coherence
- Groups and organizations are continuously self-organizing
- Transformational change is more emergent than planned

We know that women mystics have often transformed their contexts. Some have done so through the visions they articulate, or the frames they offer for “seeing anew,” or the integrity they embody. In this course we plan to explore, together, what we can learn from women mystics for this kind of leadership, and what looking at these women through this lens might teach us about mysticism.

In order to support this kind of learning, we are asking you to choose a woman mystic in advance of our gathering at SFTS, and spend time with that woman. Read what you can find of her biography and writing, spend significant time trying one of the practices she shares. We have included a list of women you could study after the required assignments in this syllabus. If there is a different mystic you would like to engage, please be in touch with me well in advance of our time together.

We are also asking that you complete the assigned reading before you come to campus. With only five days in which to gather – and not even whole days – we need to be able to navigate from the heart of the river, so to speak, rather than spending time getting into our canoes and pushing off from the riverbank.

ENDURING QUESTIONS

What are we speaking of, when we use the word “mysticism”? What does and can it mean – to me personally, to the group of us in this class, to the scholarly community, to people who claim it as a descriptive name?

In what ways are similarities and differences apparent in the lives of women I and/or we claim as mystics? When I and/or we identify such dynamics, what sense do I and/or we make of them?

What are we speaking of, when we use the word “leadership”? What does and can it mean – to me, personally, to the group of us in this class, to the scholarly community, to people who claim it as a descriptive term?

What might I and/or we be learning from a careful and reflective engagement with women mystics and particular ways of speaking about transformative leadership?

What practices emerge from this conversation that I, personally, or we, together, want to continue to learn with and from?

REQUIRED TEXTS

Silence: A User's Guide. Maggie Ross, Cascade Books, 2014.

Perseverance. Margaret Wheatley, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2010.

"Defining mysticism and the sacred-social worlds of African American women," in *African American Female Mysticism: Nineteenth-century Religious Activism*. Joy Bostic, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013 (pp. 27 – 48).

"Feminists, philosophers and mystics," in *Power, Gender and Christian Mysticism*. Grace Jantzen, Cambridge University Press, 1995 (pp. 1-25).

Part One (pp. 1-56) and Chapter 11 (pp. 245 – 267) in *Dialogic Organization Development: The Theory and Practice of Transformational Change*, Gervase Bushe and Robert Marshak, eds. Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2015.

REQUIRED ASSIGNMENTS

Our assignments are divided into three areas: historical research, collaborative analysis of leadership trajectories, and contemplative practice

- (1) Historical research: choose one woman from the following list (or someone else, in consultation with the instructor). Read as much as you can about this woman – her biography, her writings, secondary literature about the contexts in which she lived – and write a "pseudo" wikipedia entry about her prior to coming to campus (you do not have to publish it there, but use the online encyclopedia as a guide to the genre). You can use Hildegard of Bingen as a model: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hildegard_of_Bingen . Include at least the following: brief biography, list of any works, your sense of her significance, a bibliography for further reading, and any appropriate weblinks. The length of your piece will be to some extent dependent on what is available concerning the woman you have chosen, but you should have at least the five sections noted here, and the whole piece should be roughly 2500 words. This assignment is due the first day of class (June 13th).
- (2) Collaborative analysis of leadership trajectory: a] Using the tables/figures found in the Bushe/Marshak readings, draw up your analysis of your chosen woman's leadership practices. Make note of things she shares in common with those descriptions, as well as

ways in which she differs; b] compare/contrast this analysis with the description of silence by Ross – in what ways do the leadership practices of the woman you have studied align with Ross’ description of what is entailed by silence, and in what ways do they differ from it? Does this woman lead in ways that support silence, or diverge from that trajectory? c] how has this analysis begun to reshape your own leadership practices? This assignment is due June 24th and should be approximately 10 pages (or 5000 words).

- (3) Contemplative practice: Choose one form of contemplative practice from the “tree of contemplative practice” (<http://www.contemplativemind.org/practices/tree>), or one which you have discussed in advance with the instructor. Start working with this practice as soon as you can, and continue with it throughout our time together. There will be, for instance, specific times in each of our meeting days set aside for contemplative practice. Create/prepare some form of tangible reflection upon your experience with this practice. This might be a brief written reflection, it might be a poem, a drawing, a letter to a child about why to try this practice, the transcript of you explaining your experience with this practice to a friend, a sermon which touches on what you’re learning, a body sculpture which is photographed, a liturgy which incorporates elements of the practice, etc. If you have a question about whether your idea of a tangible reflection would be appropriate, please contact the instructor. If at all possible, this reflection should be able to be made available to your classmates, preferably during the week in which we gather.

A note for students who are auditing as a form of continuing education:

You can see from the required assignments for degree program students, that preparation and participation are key for this class. If you are auditing, I would urge you to do as much of the reading as you can before coming to campus, but at a minimum read the first chapter of both Ross and the Bushe/Marshak book. I would also invite you to spend at least a little time reading about some of the women below, and exploring a form of contemplative practice. I’m also happy to consult with you about course modifications, given your particular circumstances. Please email me in advance of our gathering, though, to discuss such possibilities.

Women to come to know (choose one to focus upon):

Audre Lorde
Catherine of Siena
Dorothee Sölle
Dorothy Day
Hildegarde of Bingen
Jarena Lee
Julian of Norwich
Kennett Roshi
Marguerite Porete

Mechtild of Magdeburg
Mother Theresa
Pema Chodron
Rebecca Cox Jackson
Simone Weil
Sojourner Truth
Sor Juana
Teresa of Avila
Wilma Mankiller

COURSE SCHEDULE

Basic schedule:

8:30 to 9:00 am	Morning prayer
9:00 am to 9:30 am	Silence
9:30 am to 10:30 am	Community exploration of question for the day
10:30 am to 11:00 am	Coffee break
11:00 am to 12:30 pm	Leadership input presentation
12:30 pm to 1:30 pm	Lunch
1:30 pm – 4:00 pm	Women mystics
4:00 pm to 5:00 pm	Contemplative practice
Evening	Time for integration

Monday 13: Women mystics as leaders, part 1

1:00 pm to 5:00 pm

Who are we who gather here? What is mysticism? Who are the mystics we've been studying? (the Union video (becoming conscious of the unconscious) to make some space for silence); the "RAIN" sheet as a template

What does Ross assert about the "work of silence" and how will we draw on it in this class? Perhaps the piece from Kathy of Redwoods Monastery?

Evening: review of *Silence* and time spent walking with Wheatley (or music or drawing or some other form of creative response)

Tuesday 14: Women mystics as leaders, part 2

8:30 to 9:00 am
Morning prayer

9:00 am to 9:30 am
Silence

9:30 am to 10:30 am
Community exploration of question for the day: what is "dialogic organizational development" and how might it function as a lens through which we can engage these women?

10:30 am to 11:00 am
Coffee break

11:00 am to 12:30 pm

Leadership input presentation: Basic elements of the argument from Bushe and Marshak, recognition of wider cultural shifts and historic patterns

12:30 pm to 1:30 pm

Lunch

1:30 pm – 4:00 pm

Women mystics: What can we learn from the women we are studying? (leading specific communities, eg. Abbess, and exercising influence, eg. music, poetry, visions); spiritual authority and/or temporal responsibility; in what ways do they affirm Ross' assertions, in what ways contest them?

4:00 pm to 5:00 pm

Contemplative practice

Evening:

journal about your experience so far, or do something else that allows you to do "the work of silence"

Wednesday 15: Theories of leadership and the work of silence, part 1

8:30 to 9:00 am

Morning prayer

9:00 am to 9:30 am

Silence

9:30 am to 10:30 am

Community exploration of question for the day: "capax dei" and sense of self, relativity of ego in mystical experience; "silence" and "self"

10:30 am to 11:00 am

Coffee break

11:00 am to 12:30 pm

Leadership input presentation: visions and vision, how might the "work of silence" be manifest in complex adaptive change?

12:30 pm to 1:30 pm

Lunch

1:30 pm – 4:00 pm

Women mystics: time with Rev. Jan Reynolds; “being your own chair,” personal and social languages for change and transformation

4:00 pm to 5:00 pm

Contemplative practice

Evening:

journal about your experience so far, or do something else that allows you to do “the work of silence”

Thursday 16: Theories of leadership and the work of silence, part 2

8:30 to 9:00 am

Morning prayer

9:00 am to 9:30 am

Silence

9:30 am to 10:30 am

Community exploration of question for the day: creating environments for transformative learning, leaning into paradox, holding “opposites” in creative tension; practices for opening up “the work of silence”

10:30 am to 11:00 am

Coffee break

11:00 am to 12:30 pm

Leadership input presentation: living in the “tragic gap” with disciplines for heart opening (engaging both epistemologies)

12:30 pm to 1:30 pm

Lunch

1:30 pm – 4:00 pm

Women mystics: specific frameworks for sharing what we are each learning from the woman we’ve chosen to learn about, teaching each other what we’re learning from practice

4:00 pm to 5:00 pm

Contemplative practice

Evening:

journal about your experience so far, or do something else that allows you to do “the work of silence”

Friday 17: Theories of leadership and the work of silence, part 3

8:30 to 9:00 am

Morning prayer

9:00 am to 9:30 am

Silence

9:30 am to 10:30 am

Community exploration of question for the day (TBD)

10:30 am to 11:00 am

Coffee break

11:00 am to 12:30 pm

Leadership input presentation (TBD)

12:30 pm to 1:30 pm

Lunch

1:30 pm – 4:00 pm

Sharing women mystics

4:00 pm to 5:00 pm

closing rituals

Bibliographic references

Please note: This bibliography is still under construction, but it should give you a good place to begin from as you make choices about the woman you will study.

Autobiographies:

Chodron, Pema. *assorted texts*

Day, Dorothy. *The Long Loneliness*. Harper&Brothers, 1952.

Dillard, Annie. *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*. Perennial Books, 2007.

Mankiller, Wilma. *Mankiller: A Chief and Her People*.

Ross, Maggie. *Seasons of Death and Life: A Wilderness Memoir*. Harper Collins, 1990.

Ross, Maggie. *The Fire of Your Life*. Seabury, 2007.

Soelle, Dorothee. *Against the Wind: Memoir of a Radical Christian*. Fortress, 1999.
von Bingen, Hildegard. *Scivias. Physica. Illuminations*.

Biographies and collected sayings:

Ahlgren, Gillian. *Teresa of Avila and the Politics of Sanctity*.
Atherton, Mark. *Selected Writings of Hildegard*. Penguin, 2001.
Burrows, Ruth. *Fire Upon the Earth: Interior Castle Explored: Theresa's Writings*. Dimension Books, 1981.
Caplow, Florence and Moon, Susan. *The Hidden Lamp: Stories from Twenty-Five Centuries of Awakened Women*. Wisdom Publications, 2013.
Deutsch, Nathan. *The Maiden of Ludmir: A Jewish Holy Woman and her World*. University of California Press, 2003.
Flinders, Carol. *Enduring Grace: Living Portraits of Seven Women Mystics*. HarperOne, 1993.
Helminski, Camille Adams. *Women of Sufism: A Hidden Treasure: Writings and Stories of Mystic Poets, Scholars and Saints*. Shambhala, 2003.
Hogan, Linda and Peterson, Brenda. Eds. *Face to Face: Women Writers on Faith, Mysticism and Awakening*. North Point Press, 2004.
Jantzen, Grace. *Julian of Norwich: Mystic and Theologian*. Paulist Press, 2000.
Laforest, Ann. *Thérèse of Lisieux: The Way to Love*. Sheed&Ward, 2000.
Madigan, Shawn. *Mystics, Visionaries and Prophets*. Fortress, 1998.
Mankiller, Wilma. *Every Day is a Good Day: Reflections by Contemporary Indigenous Women*. Fulcrum Publishing, 2011.
Pui-lon, Kwok. *Hope Abundant: Third World and Indigenous Women's Theology*. Orbis, 2010.
Schmidt, Joseph. *Everything is Grace: The Life and Way of Thérèse of Lisieux*. DeLaSalle Brothers, 2007.
Smith, Margaret. *Muslim Women Mystics: The Life and Work of Rābi'a and Other Women Mystics in Islam*. Oneworld Publications, 1994.
Swan, Laura. *The Forgotten Desert Mothers: Sayings, Lives and Stories of Early Christian Women*. Paulist Press, 2001.
Tamez, Elsa. *Through Her Eyes: Women's Theology from Latin America*. Wipf&Stock, 2009.

Novels:

Cadwallader, Robyn. *The anchoress*. Sarah Crichton Books, 2015.
Salzman, Mark. *Lying Awake*. Vintage Contemporaries, 2001.

Secondary texts:

Albanese, Catherine. *A Republic of Mind and Spirit: A Cultural History of American Metaphysical Religion*. Yale University Press, 2007.
Bostic, Joy. *African American Female Mysticism: Nineteenth Century Religious Activism*. Palgrave, 2013.

- Farley, Wendy. *Contemplating God's Love with Three Women Mystics*. Westminster John Knox, 2015.
- Gonzalez, Michelle. *Sor Juana: Beauty and Justice in the Americas*. Orbis, 2003.
- Grossman, Avraham. *Pious and Rebellious: Jewish Women in Medieval Europe*. University Press of New England, 2004.
- Humphreys, Carolyn. *Mystics in the Making: Lay Women in Today's Church*. Gracewing, 2012.
- Keller, Mary. *Women, Power and Spirit Possession*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002.
- Lassiter, Katharine. *Recognizing Other Subjects: Feminist Pastoral Theology and the Challenge of Identity*. Pickwick, 2015.
- Mulder-Bakker, Anneke. *Lives of the Anchoresses: The Rise of the Urban Recluse in Medieval Europe*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005.
- Parsons, William. Ed. *Teaching Mysticism*. Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Petroff, Elizabeth. *Body&Soul: Essays on Medieval Women and Mysticism*. Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Rakoczy, Susan. *Great Mystics and Social Justice*. Paulists, 2006.
- Ross, Maggie. *Silence: A User's Guide*. Cascade Books, 2014.
- Weber, Allison. *Teresa of Avila and the Rhetoric of Feminity*. Princeton University Press, 1990.
- Wind, Renate. *Dorothee Soelle: Mystic and Rebel*. Fortress Press, 2012.

APS Policy on Plagiarism

The various human cultures have differing customs about the use of the words and ideas of others in formal writing. In English-speaking countries, and especially in academic institutions, the use of materials from other authors in one's own work without proper credit is considered plagiarism, a form of stealing. One honors those whose ideas and language one uses by indicating the source. This means, briefly, that direct quotations are placed in quotation marks with a citation of the source by author, title, and page number. Paraphrases (meaning following the ideas of a passage without using the same words) must also be credited to the source. And finally, major ideas, if you know where they come from, ought to be credited, too.