

RELS 301- MYSTICISM AND RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE  
Dr. June McDaniel  
Spring, 2015

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Welcome to the Mysticism and Religious Experience class. This class will explore the esoteric core of the world's religions, their mystical doctrines, rituals, and states of love and unity with the Divine. There will be films and guest speakers.

Texts: Harvey, *The Essential Mystics*  
Ibn Arabi, *Journey to the Lord of Power*  
Paper, *The Mystic Experience*  
Rumi, *Selected Poems of Rumi*  
St. John of the Cross, *The Dark Night of the Soul*  
*The Way of a Pilgrim*  
OAKS readings



This course satisfies the **General Education Student Learning Outcomes:**

- 1) Students analyze how ideas are represented, interpreted, and valued in various expressions of human culture
- 2) Students examine relevant primary source materials as understood by the discipline and interpret the material in writing assignments

The signature assignment for the Student Learning Outcome will be the term paper.

**Grading:** Grades will be based on 3 tests, 1 paper, and a journal, as well as class participation. Each Test (including final) will be 20% of the total grade, Paper- 20%, Journal- 15% and class participation- 5%

Grades will be determined by these numbers:

A	94 and above
A-	90-93
B+	87-89
B	84-86
B-	80-83
C+	77-79
C	74-76
C-	70-73
D+	67-69
D	64-66
D-	60-63
F	below 60

**Tests** will include both short answer and essay questions, and there will be study guides. The **journal** will describe your own experiences and responses to the readings. You should contemplate one set of readings or meditations for each tradition. It will be due on April 7. The journal should be a “log book,” in which you note the type of practice you are doing and record the time. The final entry for the journal will be an analysis of your practice as recorded in the journal in relation to your own life experience. Your **class participation** grade will be based on your contribution to class discussions. The **take home final** will be given out two weeks in advance of its due date.

**Paper:** The paper should be at least 10 pages, on the works of a mystical writer (I will give out a writing guide for details). It should have a title page, and a bibliography of at least three books. Other topics are possible, with the permission of the instructor. The paper will discuss the concept of mysticism in a particular religion, and focus on the works of a particular writer or religious text. The paper will be due on March 19.

**Attendance:** There will be **three** allowed absences. On the **third** absence, I will note a warning on the class roster, saying that another absence will result in the student’s being dropped from the class. If there are excused absences (illness, emergency), let me know and I will cross that date off the roster. An extra point will be given on the total grade for perfect attendance.

**Academic Integrity and the Honor Code:** There is a zero-tolerance policy toward plagiarism or any other form of academic dishonesty in this course. This means that anyone caught taking credit for work that is not his or her own, or cheating in any other way, will receive a failing grade for the course, which will show up on the transcript as an XF grade. Students are expected to abide by the Honor Code of the College.

**ALL CELL PHONES MUST BE TURNED OFF DURING CLASS!**

## SYLLABUS

DATE	TOPIC	ASSIGNMENT
1/13	Introduction	OAKS- The Mystical Core of Organized Religion
1/15	What is mysticism?	Harvey, introduction Paper, Chap. 1, Introduction OAKS- Underhill, Mysticism
1/20	Folk mysticism: spontaneous events, spiritualism, lucid dreams	Paper, Chap. 2 OAKS- Lucid dreaming
1/22	Shamanism	Harvey, Chap. 1 Voices of the First World
1/27	Possession Trance: Film Sacred Trances in Bali and Java	
1/29	Hindu Mysticism: Veda, Upanishads, Vedanta	OAKS- Ramana Maharshi Harvey, Chap. 3
2/3	Hindu Mysticism: Kundalini Yoga, bhakti	OAKS- Ramakrishna, Gopi Krishna
2/5	Buddhism, Theravada, Mahayana, Zen	Harvey, Chap. 4
2/10	Vajrayana Buddhism, yogas, Tantra	OAKS- Yogas of Naropa, Visualization before Tantra
2/12	Taoist mysticism	Harvey, Chap. 2
2/17	Test #1	
2/19	Library instruction	
2/24	Ancient Greece and the Mystery Cults	Harvey, Chap. 6
2/26	Plato and Plotinus, readings	Harvey, Chap. 6
3/3	Spring break	

3/5	Spring break	
3/10	Kabbalah	Harvey, Chap 5 OAKS- Torah and Kabbalah
3/12	Readings, Judaism	Harvey, Chap. 5
3/17	Eastern Orthodoxy, speaker	The Way of a Pilgrim Harvey, pp. 189-191
3/19	St John of the Cross, discussion	'The Dark Night of the Soul' PAPER Due!
3/24	Catholic mysticism, speaker	Harvey, pp. 192-216
3/26	<b>TEST #2</b>	
3/31	No class	
4/2	Islam and Sufism	Harvey, Chap. 7 Selected Poems of Rumi
4/7	Islamic meditation	Journey to the Lord of Power JOURNAL DUE!
4/14	The Study of Mysticism	Paper, Chap. 4 OAKS- Mysticism as Illusion, Eliade, The Two and the One
4/16	Analyses: Non-Western and Western mysticism	Paper, chaps. 5 and 6
4/21	Psychedelic mysticism	OAKS- Drugs and Mysticism, Psychedelics and Religious Experience TAKE HOME FINAL DUE!
4/23	Dance and Mysticism: Sufi dancing (guest leader)	

If you have a disability that qualifies you for academic accommodation, please present a letter from the Center for Disability Services at the beginning of the semester. For more information, please contact [www.cofc.edu/~cgs/index.htm](http://www.cofc.edu/~cgs/index.htm)