



Monasticism from St Antony to the Reformation

Michaelmas (Fall) 2024

Term Dates:	September 9 – November 16, 2024
Department:	History
Difficulty:	Introductory
Instructor:	Matthew Hoskin (hoskin@davenantinstitute.org)
Meeting Time:	Wednesdays 7:00 - 9:00 PM (Eastern Time)
Zoom Link:	Populi > click My Courses tab > click course > click Conferences (left menu).

Course Description

The Reformation almost entirely did away with monasticism. Yet for over 1000 years, the monastic movement was itself a powerful force in the life of the church, at times for great spiritual good, at times to the detriment—and even Reformers like Martin Luther found some spiritual value in the writings of the monks who came before him even if he detested “monkery” as an institution. Who were the monks? What were their spiritual teachings? Do they have value today?

This course will follow the history and development of monasticism from the Desert Fathers of Egypt, through the Benedictine Middle Ages, to the world of the Cistercians, Carthusians, and Carmelites at the edge of Reformation while not neglecting the lives and literature of the eastern monks of Sinai, Judaea, Athos, and Russia. Every week students will engage with a different spiritual writer from the ancient and medieval monastic world, while the lectures will cover the history of the movement in all its vast glory.

Objectives

1. Students will learn how to define and examine what monasticism and “monks” are.
2. They will come away with a grasp of the growth and development of the monastic movement up to c. 1500.
3. Students will encounter the major emphases of monastic spirituality and consider what place they may have today.
4. Students will encounter many of the major primary sources of the monastic movement.

Course Texts

- Greg Peters, *The Story of Monasticism*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015.
- Adomnan of Iona. *Life of St Columba*. Trans. Richard Sharpe. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1995.
- Barsanuphius and John of Gaza. *Letters from the Desert*. Trans. John Chryssavgis. Crestwood, NY: SVS Press,

Course Format

Class sessions will involve a combination of lecture and seminar-style discussion on readings. Students are expected to read required texts before class and come ready for discussion. Readings will be 50–100 pages per week.

Course Delivery

Classroom Resources

- **Populi** online classrooms are used for all course content, including assignments, grades, announcements, course records, and more.
- **Zoom** links & recordings are provided on the Populi course page Conferences tab. Class sessions are two hours weekly (2.5 in summer) for ten weeks (8 weeks in summer) and recorded for absent students (not for dissemination outside of class).
- **Discord** may be used for additional student and instructor interaction as well as Davenant community discussions.

Attendance: Required for all students taking courses for credit. If the scheduled time does not work for a particular student, they may drop the course according to the Drop Policy in the Academic Catalog.

Auditors: No requirements, but may participate in all class activities.

Late work: Grade reduction of -5% per calendar day upon instructor discretion. No assignments will be accepted after the last due date without an approved extension.

Requirements

1. Attendance (10%)

Students are expected to read required texts beforehand and come with texts, notes, and questions in hand. Please include your first and last name when attending Zoom. **One unexcused absence is permitted.**

2. Weekly Reflections (20%)

Students will submit weekly 100-word summaries of responses with 3 thoughtful questions for class discussion based on the texts. Summaries are due on Monday night of each week. Students will choose 9 of 10 weeks to submit this assignment.

3. Mystical Review (30%) - Due Friday of Week 7 [October 25] - Length: 500 words

Students will be required to write a review of one historic text of mystical theology from the period covered by this class but not included in the set readings. The text will be considered as a whole as to what it shows us about the author's understanding of God (*theologia* proper), other theological topics, and the ascetic life. The attempt is to read these texts on their own terms, not as foils or counterpoints to our own Protestantism.

Texts to choose from include:

- St Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue*. Trans. Suzanne Noffke. New York: Paulist, 1980. [Free public domain translation here](#).
- Meister Eckhart. *Selected Writings*. Trans. Oliver Davies. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1994.
- *The Cloud of Unknowing*. Trans. Clifton Wolters. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961. [Free public domain translation here](#).
- Maximus the Confessor, *Four Centuries on Charity*. In *The Philokalia: The Complete Text, Vol. 2*, trans. GEH Palmer, Philip Sherrard, and Kallistos Ware. London: Faber and Faber, 1981, pp. 52-112.

4. Research Paper (40%) [Due December 2]

- **Length:** 3,000 – 4,000 words (12 – 15pp).
- **Sources:** 2 primary sources & 8 academic secondary sources.

- **Instructions:** Write an argumentative research paper on one of the topics, authors, or texts covered in class. Your paper must interact with sources, including counter-arguments.
- **Grading:** Papers should display academic style, clear and creative thesis, substantial source interaction, evidence in support of a cumulative argument (not overly descriptive), accurate understanding of important concepts and viewpoints, honest interaction with counter-arguments.
- **Formatting:** Times New Roman, double-spaced, 12-pt font, footnotes, Title page, Bibliography.

Course Calendar

Week	Dates	Topics, Readings, & Assignments
1	Sep 11	<p>Topic: Monks before Monasticism and St Antony the Great Required readings (those marked by an asterisk * Dr Hoskin will be working from a different [not free] translation)</p> <p>-<i>The Life of Antony by St Athanasius</i>* -Selected <i>Sayings</i> of St Antony (To be distributed) -The Letters of St Antony (To be distributed) -<i>Story of Monasticism</i> pp. 23-44</p>
2	Sep 18	<p>Topic: The Fertile Desert of the Fourth Century Required readings</p> <p>-Evagrius, <i>Chapters on Prayer</i> -John Cassian, <i>Conference 1</i>* and <i>Conference 10</i>* -<i>Story of Monasticism</i> pp. 45-52</p>
3	Sep 25	<p>Topic: The Rule of St Benedict Required readings</p> <p>-<i>The Rule of St Benedict</i> -<i>Story of Monasticism</i> 53-67, 71-86</p>
4	Oct 2	<p>Topic: Irish and British Monasticism in the Early Middle Ages Required readings</p> <p>-Adomnan of Iona, <i>Life of St Columba</i> -<i>Story of Monasticism</i> 87-102</p>
5	Oct 9	<p>Topic: Eastern Monasticism in the Age of Benedict Required readings</p> <p>-Selections from the letters of Barsanuphius and John of Gaza -<i>Story of Monasticism</i> 103-117</p>
6	Oct 16	<p>Topic: The Cistercians and the High Middle Ages Required Reading</p> <p>-Selections from St Bernard <i>On the Song of Songs</i>, <i>On Consideration</i>, and letters (to be distributed) -Selections from William of Thierry, <i>Three Meditations</i> (to be distributed) -Total approx. 65 pp. -<i>Story of Monasticism</i> 118-154</p>
7	Oct 23	<p>Topic: Fourteenth-Century Mystical Flourishing Required Reading</p> <p>-Julian of Norwich, <i>Revelations of Divine Love</i>,* chh. 1-40</p>

8	Oct 30	Topic: Eastern Monasticism from Justinian through the Crusades Required Reading -Selections from St Isaac the Syrian and St Gregory of Sinai (to be distributed)
9	Nov 6	Topic: Mount Athos and the Hesychast Controversy Required Reading -Selections from St Gregory Palamas, <i>The Triads</i> (to be distributed)
10	Nov 13	Topic: The Close of the Middle Ages Required Reading -Thomas a Kempis, <i>The Imitation of Christ</i> , Books 1 & 2* - <i>Story of Monasticism</i> 186-201
	Nov 25	Thanksgiving
	Dec 2	Final essays due.

Institutional Policies

Drop Policy

The policies below apply to changes made after the registration deadline two weeks prior to term. To change registration before the term starts, please log on to Populi. To change registration after the term starts, email the registrar at registrar@davenportinstitute.org. See the Academic Calendar section for exact dates.

Drop Date (100% Refund): Before the term starts, students may drop with a 100% tuition refund. Registration fee is non-refundable.

Drop Date (50% Refund): Within the first two weeks of a term, students may drop the course with a 50% tuition refund. Registration fee is non-refundable. To drop, please email the registrar.

Withdrawal: Within weeks three and four of a term, students who drop a course will receive no refund and will earn a “W” on their transcript. Students cannot drop after this time will receive a letter grade. To drop, please email the registrar.

Attendance & Class Meeting Time Scheduling

Attendance is required for all students taking courses for credit. Most classes are scheduled for evenings or weekends, especially core classes. If the scheduled time does not work for a particular student, they may drop the course according to the Drop policy.

Extension Policy

All coursework and exams must be submitted no later than two weeks after the term end date. Before that time, homework extensions are at the discretion of the instructor. If a student requires more time, the student may submit a formal extension request by emailing the registrar at registrar@davenportinstitute.org. If approved, an extension will be granted to the student for a specific period of time agreed upon by the student and instructor. Extension requests will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and will generally be granted for medical and family emergencies only.

Minimum Grade Requirement for Degree Students

Students enrolled in one of our degrees must maintain a minimum GPA of 3.0 (B average). If the students' GPA falls below 3.0, Davenport will initiate conversation with the student to judge whether the student is ready for their program. If the student earns a grade lower than a “C” (2.0) on a course required for their degree, they must retake the course in order to graduate. Their new grade will replace their former grade. If a degree student earns a grade lower than a “C” (2.0) on an elective, they are not required to retake the course, but they may request to retake the course or a close equivalent as a substitute for their former grade.

Grading Scale

Passing: ≥93:A • ≥90:A- • ≥87:B+ • ≥83:B • ≥80:B- • ≥77:C • ≥73:C

Retake if Core: 70–72:C- • ≥67:D+ • ≥63:D • ≥60:D- • <60:F.

For a complete list of policies, see the Academic Catalog at davenanthall.com