The category of somatic spirituality, in which the devotee’s body resonates with the bodily experiences of the suffering Christ, was critical in the formation of Christian mystical praxis in the Middle Ages. Modern scholars, however, do not always consider the medieval construction of body, much less the suffering body, within its historical parameters. The first unit of this course pairs modern critical theory concerning bodies with medieval scientific, theological, and artistic inquiries into cognition, gender, and pain. These dual lenses will aid our readings of influential medieval treatises about Passion-centered devotions (both textual and artistic) and of major texts recording embodied mystical experience.

Primary source readings may include Hildegard of Bingen, Pseudo-Bonaventure, Julian of Norwich, Angela of Foligno, Heinrich Suso, Meister Eckhart, and Teresa de Cartagena. Critical theory and secondary sources by medievalists may include Elaine Scarry, Georges Bataille, Caroline Walker Bynum, Karma Lochrie, Amy Hollywood, Joan Cadden, and Mary Carruthers.

**Required texts:**


**Recommended texts:**


**Course Requirements:**

*Undergraduate (14-16 pages of writing, final exam):*
- 3 two-page papers applying critical theory, medieval science, medieval suffering to a primary textual source or art object (10% each, 30% total)
- 1 eight-10 page essay analyzing either a Passion meditation text or a mystical treatise (40%)
- Final exam, analysis of a new primary source (20%)
- Class participation (10%)

*Graduate*
- 3 two-page papers applying critical theory, medieval science, medieval suffering to a primary textual source or art object (10% each, 30% total)
- 15-20 page research project, either researching further based on the class reading or applying the methods in the class to a devotional text in another era or religion (60%)
- Class participation (10%)
SYLLABUS

Jan 11: Intro: Theories of Christian Mysticism
   Rec: McGinn overview, *Foundations of Mysticism*

Jan 18: Critical Theory and Bodies
   Selections from Scarry’s *Body in Pain*
   Bataille, *Inner Experience*

Jan 25: Case study: Margery Kempe
   Short selections from Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*
   Lochrie, *Marjorie Kempe and Translations of the Flesh*

Feb 1: Medieval Science and Bodies  
   Brief Paper #1 Due
   Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine*, ch 2
   Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages*, pp. 11-39, 70-88
   Selections from Hildegard of Bingen, *Physica*, *Causae et Curae*, *Scivias*
   Recommended: Holsinger, “The Musical Somatics of Hildegard of Bingen”
   Selections from Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*
   Reed, “Dispersing Faith” (Mary, Margaret, pregnancy, trotula, pain)

Feb 8: Medieval Natural Theology and Cognitive Bodies
   Selections from Biernoff, *Sight and Embodiment in the Middle Ages*,
   Selections from Akbari, *Seeing Through the Veil*
   Selections from Hildegard of Bingen, *Physica*
   Recommended: Holsinger, “The Musical Somatics of Hildegard of Bingen”

Feb 15: Pain in Medieval Theology  
   Brief Paper #2 Due
   Selections from Mowbray, *Pain and Suffering in Medieval Theology*
   Selections from Cohen, *The Modulated Scream*
   Selections from Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*

Feb 22: Bodies in Pain in Medieval Culture and Devotion
   Bynum, “The Female Body and Religious Practice in the Later Middle Ages”
   Groebner, *Defaced*

Feb 29: Passion Meditation  
   Brief Paper #3 Due
   Selections from Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion*
   Parshall, “The Art of Memory and the Passion”
   Selections from Pseudo-Bonaventure, *Meditations on the Life of Christ*

*Spring break*

Mar 14 Gender in Passion Meditation
   Selections from Bestul, *Texts of the Passion*
   Pseudo-Bernard, *Quis dabit* (Mary’s Lament)
Neff, “The Pain of Compassio: Mary's Labor at the Foot of the Cross”
Angela of Foligno, Memiorale

Mar 21  Body and Medieval Mysticism
   Selections from Bynum, Holy Feast, Holy Fast
   Hadewijch, selected letters, poems, visions
   Newman, “La mystique courtoise”
   Hollywood, “Queering the Beguines”

Mar 28 Porete vs Eckhart
   Boesel and Keller, Introduction to Apophatic Bodies
   Selections from Eckhart, sermons, “On Detachment”
   Selections from Marguerite Porete, The Mirror of Simple Souls

Apr 4  Julian of Norwich
   Julian, Showings

Apr 11 Heinrich Suso
   Suso, Exemplar

Apr 18 Teresa de Cartagena; Modern Appropriations of Medieval Mystics
   Cartagena, The Grove of the Infirm
   Rivera-Cordova, “Spatializing Illness”
   Hollywood, Sensible Ecstasy part 1

Apr 25 Summing Up
   Hollywood, Sensible Ecstasy parts 2-3

April 27 Long Paper due

Final Exam for undergraduates