

Topics in Theology: Julian of Norwich

THEO 850 A

Fridays 9:15-12:15 – Room 211

Prof. Nancy Bedford



This seminar is an exercise in “slow reading,” which like “slow eating” requires one to proceed in a contemplative fashion, rather than “gulping down” what is in front of one. In other words, it is an exercise in *rumination*. There is still a good bit of reading, but we want to be able to focus deeply on a text, in this case the Long Text of Julian’s *Showings* or *Revelations*, rather than to race through it.¹ The method requires one to sit with a text with a certain amount of patience and let it “speak,” showing itself to the reader in all its contours. As the text “speaks” to us from its reservoir of meaning, we will pay particular attention to theological elements that could be illuminating for theological work that is attuned to the perspectives of subaltern subjects.

Objectives:

1. To understand Julian in her own time and place
2. To develop skills in “slow reading” (careful, attentive analysis of a text)
3. To construct a hermeneutic of retrieval capable of putting Julian in theological conversation with urgent contemporary questions.

¹ My plan is to teach a cycle of four such seminars: Augustine’s *Confessions*; Julian’s *Revelations*; Pascal’s *Pensées* alongside Sor Juana’s *Carta Atenagórica* and her poetry; and Schleiermacher’s *Reden*.

Methodology:

1. Close analysis of each revelation in the LT (with comparison as necessary to the ST), including diagramming or outlining its ideas, to be handed in at end of each session.
2. Weekly discussions of secondary readings to become acquainted with the reception of Julian's work.
3. Parallel reading and discussion of selections from works by Julian's contemporaries.
4. Each seminar participant will bring 3-5 questions weekly emerging from his/her reading of the primary texts (and be prepared to lead our discussion of those question).

Explanation of assignments:

1. **Five key questions** (due September 15): As a result of reading both the ST and the LT, the student will develop five questions he or she wants to pursue during the semester, to serve a heuristic devices.
2. **Ten short papers** (each class session devoted to the LT, the student will hand in an analysis of the reading for that day in the form of an outline or an outline of the main ideas addressed by Julian in that section).
3. **Engagement** (the student will be prepared in each session to lead discussion on the secondary readings and will have in mind questions to discuss that emerge from those readings; further resources to add to a shared bibliography will be welcomed).
4. **Final project** (due December 20): This will consist of a classic seminary essay paper of 4000-5000 words for the master's level; a publishable essay of 6000-8000 words for doctoral level; or an alternative (artistic, liturgical, ecclesial, pedagogical, etc.) project, whose contours can be negotiated with the instructor.

Grade:

1. Five key questions: 10%
2. Ten short papers (diagrams or outlines): 30%
3. Engagement with secondary readings as well as with the primary text as evidenced in class discussion, participation and insights: 30%
4. Final project: 30%

Itinerary of readings and topics:

1. September 8 – Introductory matters. Julian in her context.
Readings:
 - Short Text (entire; Windeatt, 1-36)
 - Grace M. Jantzen, "From the Life of an anchoress," *The Showings of Julian of Norwich*, ed. Denise Baker, 143-150.
 - Ena Jenkins, "Julian's Revelation of Love: A Web of Metaphor," in: *A Companion to Julian of Norwich*, ed. Liza Herbert McAvoy (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2008), 181-191 [Moodle]

2. September 15 – Reading day (no class session) – Five key questions due
Reading:
 - Long Text (entire; Windeatt, 37-165)

3. September 22 – LT Rev I: Bleeding head; Hazelnut; Our enclosure within Christ
Reading:
 - LT, *Rev I*, ch. 1-9 (Windeatt, pp. 37-52).
 - Baker, *The Showings*, 3-16
 - Windeatt, "Introduction," ix-l

4. September 29 – LT Rev II-III: Christ's discolored face; God in a point.
Reading:
 - LT, *Rev II-III*, ch. 10-11 (Windeatt, 52-57)
 - Baker, *The Showings*, 17-21.
 - A. C. Spearing, "Introduction," *Julian of Norwich. Revelations of Divine Love*. Trans. Elizabeth Spearing (London: Penguin Books, 1998), vii-xxxi [Moodle]

5. October 6 –LT – Rev IV-VI: Blood; Vanquishing of Devil; God thanks Julian
Reading:
 - LT, *Rev IV-VI*, ch. 12-14 (Windeatt, 57-60)
 - Baker, *The Showings*, 22-25
 - Edmund Colledge and James Walsh, "Introduction," *Julian of Norwich. Showings* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1978), 17-119 [Moodle]

6. October 13 – LT Rev VII-VIII: Exaltation and Desolation; Bleeding Heart
Reading:
 - LT, *Rev. VII-VIII*, ch. 15-21 (Windeatt, 60-68)
 - Baker, *The Showings*, 25-33
 - Kim Phillips, "Femininities and the Gentry in Late Medieval East Anglia: Ways of being" and Cate Gunn, "'A recluse atte Norwyche': Images of Medieval Norwich and Julian's Revelations," *A Companion to Julian of Norwich*, ed. Liz Herbert McAvoy (Woodbridge, Suffolk: D. S. Brewer, 2008) 19-41 [Moodle]
 - Denise N. Baker, "Julian of Norwich and the Varieties of Middle English Mystical Discourse," in: *A Companion to Julian of Norwich*, ed. Liza Herbert McAvoy (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2008), 53-63 [Moodle]

7. October 20 – LT Rev IX-X: If Christ could suffer more, he would; The wound in Christ's side
Reading:
 - LT, *Rev. IX-X*, ch. 22-24 (Windeatt, pp. 68-72)
 - Baker, *The Showings*, 34-37.

- *The Cloud of Unknowing and Other Works*, 11-101 [Moodle]
8. October 27 – Reading day (no class session)
Reading:
 - *The Book of Margery Kempe*, Introduction and text, pp. 9-150.
 9. November 3 – LT Rev XI-XII: Mary; Christ glorified
Reading:
 - LT, *Rev. XI-XII*, ch. 25-26 (Windeatt, pp. 73-74)
 - Baker, *The Showings*, 37-39.
 - *The Book of Margery Kempe* pp. 151-297.
 10. November 10 – LT Rev XIII: Sin (part one)
Reading:
 - LT, *Rev. XIII*, ch. 27-34 (Windeatt, pp. 79-88)
 - Baker, *The Showings*, 39-47
 - Denys Turner, *Julian of Norwich, Theologian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011) 3-99 [Moodle]
 11. November 17 – LT Rev XIII (cont'd – part two)
Reading:
 - LT, *Rev. XIII*, ch. 35-40 (Windeatt, pp. 89-98)
 - Baker, *The Showings*, 48-56
 - Barbara Newman, *God and the Goddesses: Vision, Poetry and Belief in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005) 222-234 [Moodle]
 12. November 24 – Thanksgiving Break (no class session)
 - Recommended (re-)reading: Revelations XIV-XVI
 13. December 1 – LT Rev XIV: Prayer; Parable of the Lord and Servant
Reading:
 - LT, *Rev. XIV*, ch. 41-63 (Windeatt, pp. 99-147)
 - Baker, *The Showings*, 56-99
 - De Pizan, Christine. *The Book of the City of Ladies*, trans. Rosalind Brown-Grant. London: Penguin Books, 1999, 1-30 and 200-240 [Moodle]
 14. December 8 – LT Rev XV-XVI: Julian taken into heaven; Christ enclosed within us.
Reading:
 - LT, *Rev. XV-XVI*, ch. 64-86 (Windeatt, pp. 148-180)
 - Baker, *The Showings*, 99-125
 - Janet Martin Soskice, "The Kindness of God: Trinity and the Image of God in Julian of Norwich and Augustine," in: *The Kindness of God. Metaphor, Gender, and Religious Language*, 125-156 [Moodle]

15. December 13 – Make- up day (no class session). Individual meetings with instructor if desired.

Required books:

Norwich, Julian of. *Revelations of Divine Love*, trans. Barry Windeatt. Oxford World's Classics. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. ISBN-10: 0199641188; ISBN-13: 978-0199641185. Price: \$13.86 at amazon.com

The Showings of Julian of Norwich, ed. Denise N. Baker. A Norton Critical Edition. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2005. ISBN-10: 0393979156; ISBN-13: 978-0393979152. Price: \$18.42 at amazon.com.

The Book of Margery Kempe, trans. Barry Windeatt. New York: Penguin, 2000. ISBN-10: 0140432515; ISBN-13: 978-0140432510. Price: \$9.02 at amazon.com.

The rest of the readings will be posted on Moodle. Please make sure you obtain these specific editions of the Julian text.

Further readings (to be posted on Moodle):

A Companion to Julian of Norwich, ed. Liza Herbert McAvoy. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2008 (selections).

The Cloud of Unknowing and Other Works, trans. A. C. Spearing. London: Penguin, 2001, 11-101.

De Pizan, Christine. *The Book of the City of Ladies*, trans. Rosalind Brown-Grant. London: Penguin Books, 1999, 1-30 and 200-240.

Newman, Barbara. *God and the Goddesses: Vision, Poetry and Belief in the Middle Ages*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005, 222-234.

Soskice, Janet Martin. *The Kindness of God. Metaphor, Gender, and Religious Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, 125-156.

Turner, Denys. *Julian of Norwich, Theologian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011) 3-99.