

AS.100.464

Saints and Relics: Medieval Belief and the Material World



Stavelot triptych, Morgan Library, New Year, ca. 12th C

A Readings Seminar Spring 2026

Wednesdays 1:30-4pm | Gilman 305

Professor Lester | alester5@jhu.edu | Office Hours: TR 3-4p, and over zoom by appointment

Course Description

This course traces the rise and development of the cult of saints from the third to the sixteenth centuries. Topics covered include: sanctity and the body; saint-making and religious authority; miracles and belief; relics and portable Christianity; travel and migration; techniques of veneration; translation and adaptation, and so forth. Structured around key historiographical works addressing these topics, the course exposes students to the major research tools for working with saints' cults, hagiography, liturgical texts, and writing about belief in the historical context, to build both a critical set of research skills and to gain a comprehensive understanding of the key debates and developments in the field. Short weekly research assignments or response papers are required.

Course Goals

The course has three goals: First it offers an overview of the major themes and developments with respect to saints, sanctity, and the cult of the saints and the many sources that historians use to research and analyze saints and relics. Second, it will expose students to the major historiographical and methodological trends in writing about sanctity and belief as well as religion and materiality in the past. Each week we will read a combination of primary materials or books that grow out of close readings of primary texts and objects as well as articles and chapters that offer a more theoretical orientation or analysis of a given set of themes. Finally,

the course challenges students to consider other ways of understanding and narrating experiences in the past beyond the purview of texts. Lived religion, experiential devotion, and the material encounter with the divine were often ineffable experiences that believers and doubters alike found hard to put into words or text; or that could not by definition find expression outside of bodily experience or sensation. How do we as historians grapple with such experiences and the ideas and interpretations they generate? How did these experiences and ideas change over time?

Assignments & Requirements

Students are expected to read and consider carefully all of the assigned materials for each week and to take notes on these readings. You should come to Seminar well-prepared for an engaging discussion of the major themes and readings assigned for each week. To facilitate this, graduate students are required to write brief (900-1200 word) response essays that synthesize and respond to the weekly readings. On several occasions – in Weeks 6, 10, 12, 14, and 15 – students are asked to write a formal review of one book of their choice. Graduate students must write a minimum of two book reviews; the rest may be response essays.

In addition, indeed, included with your weekly responses or reviews (at the top of the page), please also generate **3 questions** related to the readings that you would be willing to share or offer to get the conversation going or to take it in a new direction. Please also (at the top of your response) generate **5-8 keywords** that distill and encapsulate the key concepts and themes in the readings. These are useful for you in summarizing the key “takeaways” but they are also useful in tracking some of the focal ideas, images, and concepts operative in each week’s cluster of reading. [NB: I will post a template for these response in the OneDrive folder]

Because this course is taught during the spring semester, and because most graduate students doing course work will need to either complete a First Year Paper in the History Department, or will take their Comprehensive Exams. There is not final research paper in this course. Your overall grade will be determined by in class participation and discussion – with occasional focused or featured presentations – and your weekly response papers.

Students do have the option to write a long-form research paper (of 20-25 pages, ca. 10-12,000 words) or prepare and edition of a text of a saint’s life or miracle collection. Should you choose to do so, you may choose to write fewer weekly response papers. Please speak with the professor if you want to pursue this option.

As the course progresses, I will hand out a “Tool Kit” related to sources, databases, and instruments of reference that are invaluable to researching topics related to sanctity, relics, and hagiography. Periodically, there may be a short research assignment connected to the tool kit with the goal of giving you some practice in accessing and using these research tools. We will begin that process in March. These assignments will not take more than an hour or so each week and are low-stakes, but will equip you with a sense of some of the more technical aspects of this subfield.

NB: There are many excellent books and overviews of this and related topics. If you are feeling at sea or want a general sense of the framing of events and concepts, see:

Robert Bartlett, *Why Can The Dead do Such Great Things?: Saints and Worshippers from the Martyrs to the Reformation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013). **[Online/Catalyst]**

Treasures of Heaven: Saints, Relics, and Devotion in Medieval Europe, ed. Martina Bagnoli, Holger A. Klein, C. Griffith Mann, and James Robinson (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015).

[Reserve]

Weekly Meetings & Schedule of Readings

Week 1 | Wednesday Jan. 21: *Introductions & Course Goals and Syllabus*

Introductions, the syllabus, and weekly readings and presentation schedules.

Part I: Writing the Remains: Saints Lives, Holy Matter, and Communities of Believers



Week 2 | Jan. 28: *Making Saints and Narrating Histories*

We begin by reading a cluster of the earliest martyr lives, which form the basis for the earliest hagiographical narratives. The experiences of Christian martyrs would inform interpretations of Christian sanctity and sacrifice and would the ground work for future interpretations of martyrdom as Christianity developed, but also within Jewish and Muslim traditions. Consider what the key aspects of martyrdom entailed. How were martyrs written about and who was writing? How were there stories reappropriated and reinterpreted and to what end? Who were the first to venerate the saints? What did they mean to early believers? How were saints venerated?

Primary Texts:

Acts of the Apostles, [Martyrdom of Saint Stephen](#), Acts, 6-9. [Linked here]

[The Martyrdom of Polycarp](#), translated by J. B. Lightfoot, adapted and modernized, ca. 1990. [Linked here]

A Martyr's Dossier:

The Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas in Late Antiquity, ed. L. Stephanie Cobb, with Andrew S. Jacobs (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2021). [Use the link through Catalyst]

Read:

Ch. 1. Latin *Passio*: Text & English Translation, pp. 19-41;
Ch. 5, Augustine, pp. 103-176 (skim);
Ch. 11: Martyr's Burials of the Codex-Calendar of 354, pp. 263-7;
Ch. 14: Martyrology of Jerome, pp. 281-5;
Ch. 18: The Gelasian Sacramentary, 305-9;
Ch. 26: Basilica Sant'Apollinare Nouvo (Ravenna, Italy), pp. 349-52.

Also read the later medieval reception of these earliest lives in Jacobus de Voragine's collection, the *Legenda Aurea*, or *The Golden Legend*. These are very brief. Consider how the longer stories were epitomized and to what end.

The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints, trans. William Granger Ryan; introduction by Eamon Duffy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012); **[Catalyst/Online]** read:

no. 8: Saint Stephen;
no. 112: The Finding of Saint Stephen, The First Martyr;
no. 173: Saints Saturninus, Perpetua, Felicity, and Their Companions;

(**NB:** I have linked these texts in a Shared **OneDrive**, which I find easier than Canvas. If the links don't work for you, you may also find them there.)

Secondary Texts & Contexts:

Brent Shaw, "The Passion of Perpetua," *Past & Present* (1993): 3-45. **[Catalyst/Online]**

Éric Rebillard, "Persecution and the Limits of Religious Allegiance," in *idem, Christians and Their Many Identities in Late Antiquity, North Africa, 200-450 CE* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), 34-60. **[Catalyst/Online]**

---., "History, Fiction, Document, Testimony," in *idem, The Early Martyr Narratives: Neither Authentic Accounts nor Forgeries* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021), 59-84. **[Catalyst/Online]**

[Recommended]: Maia Kotrosits, *The Lives of Objects: Material Culture, Experience and the Real in the History of Early Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020), (Introduction), chapters 2, 3, and 5. **[Catalyst/Online]**



Week 3 | Feb 4: *Relics, Fragments, and Presence: The Challenge of the Body after Death*

We begin with a basic question: What were relics of the saints? What constituted a relic? How did one know if you had one in past or if you had interacted with relic? How were relics made, carried, collected, and venerated? What are our sources? What did early Christian intellectuals say about relics? What did they do for people, or promise to do? How did relics related to or defy ideas about the body? Why was bodily resurrection so important to early Christians?

Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*, enlarged edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981, rpt. 2015). **[Online & Reserve]**

Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), Introduction, Chapters 1 & 2, pp. 1-114.

[Online/Catalyst]

Julia M. H. Smith, "Relics: An Evolving Tradition in Latin Christianity," in *Saints and Sacred Matter: The Cult of Relics in Byzantium and Beyond*, ed. Cynthia Hahn and Holger A. Klein (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2015), 41-60.

[OneDrive/Reserve]

---, "Portable Christianity: Relics in the Medieval West (c. 700-1200)," *The Raleigh Lecture on History, Proceedings of the British Academy* 181 (2012): 143-67. **[Online/OneDrive]**

Ann Marie Yasin, "Sacred Installations: The Material Conditions of Relic Collections in Late Antique Churches," in *Saints and Sacred Matter: The Cult of Relics in Byzantium and Beyond*, ed. Cynthia Hahn and Holger A. Klein (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2015), 133-51. **[OneDrive/Reserve]**

---, "Sight Lines of Sanctity at Late Antique Martyria," in *Architecture of the Sacred: Space, Ritual, and Experience from Classical Greece to Byzantium*, ed. Bonna D. Wescoat and Robert G. Ousterhout (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 248-80. **[OneDrive & Catalyst]**

Week 4 | Feb. 11: Sacred Writing: The Challenges of Hagiography and the Limits of Genres

****Prof. Lester is away-- research tools day with Siân Evans (meet in 305)****

Consider the challenges of hagiography as a genre of history. How can or should historians use hagiography as an *historical* source? What sorts of challenges does the genre pose particularly? And what benefits does it offer? How can one compensate for its pitfalls? Is there a consensus about how best to approach and interpret a hagiographical source? How can we think beyond the limits of texts? Submit a response that grapples with these questions.

Read James T. Palmer, *Early Medieval Hagiography* (Kalamazoo, 2018) **[Catalyst/Online]**

And at least **TWO** of the following:

Patrick Geary, "Saints, Scholars, and Society: The Elusive Goal," in idem, *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, 1994), 2–29 **[Catalyst/Online]**

Felice Lifshitz, "Beyond Positivism and Genre: Hagiographical Texts as Historical Narrative," *Viator* 25 (1994): 95–113. **[Online/OneDrive]**

Anna Taylor, "Hagiography and Early Medieval History," *Religion Compass* 7 (2013): 1–14 **[Catalyst/Online]**

Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, "Powers of Record, Powers of Example: Hagiography and Women's History," in *Gendering the Master Narrative: Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, ed. Mary C. Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (Ithaca, 2003), pp. 71–93 **[Catalyst/Online]**

Emma Campbell, "Hagiography, Gender, and the Power of Social Norms," in *Hagiography and the History of Latin Christendom, 500–1500*, ed. Samantha Kahn Herrick (Leiden, 2020), pp. 375–96 **[Catalyst/Online]**

Meet with Siân History Librarian – Begin to discuss research tools like the IMB, BHL, the MGH and the Acta Sanctorum all online databases. Be sure to bring your computer to this meeting!

Part II: Circulation, Networks, and Communications



Week 5 | **Feb. 18:** *Movable Parts: Circulation of Relics in the Merovingian World*

As James Palmer pointed out in his short book last week, hagiography begins to come into its own as a composed genre during the Merovingian period. We can see this in the formidable dossier of materials related to the Queen and relic collector, Radegund, whose example (mirrored in part on St. Helene) left a lasting imprint on the genre and as a model collector. What did relics, and particularly the relic of the True Cross mean to Radegund? How is her life (vita) conveyed differently by her female and male hagiographers? What does this tell us about her world, about power and gender, and about the use and authority of relics? What does the circulation of relics during the so-called 'Dark Ages' tell us about the larger social and religious network of early medieval Europe?

A Princess's Dossier: Radegund, The Great Collector

Venantius Fortunatus, *Life of Radegund*, in *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages*, ed. Jo Ann McNamara, John E. Halborg, and E. Gordon Whatley (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992), 60–86 and Baudovinia, *Life of Radegund*, in *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages*, 86–105. [\[Online/Catalyst\]](#)

Simon Coates, "Regendering Radegund? Fortunatus, Baudonivia and the Problem of Female Sanctity in Merovingian Gaul," in *Gender and Christian Religion*, ed. R. N. Swanson, *Studies in Church History* 32 (London, 1998), pp. 37–50. [\[Online/OneDrive\]](#).

Lisa Kaaren Bailey, "Handmaids of God: Images of Service in the *Lives* of Merovingian Female Saints," *Journal of Religious History* 43 (2019): 359-79. [\[Online/Catalyst\]](#)

Cyntha Hahn, "Collector and Saint: Queen Radegund and Devotion to the Relic of the True Cross," *Word & Image: A Journal of Verbal/Visual Enquiry* 22 (2006): 268-74. [\[Online/Catalyst\]](#)

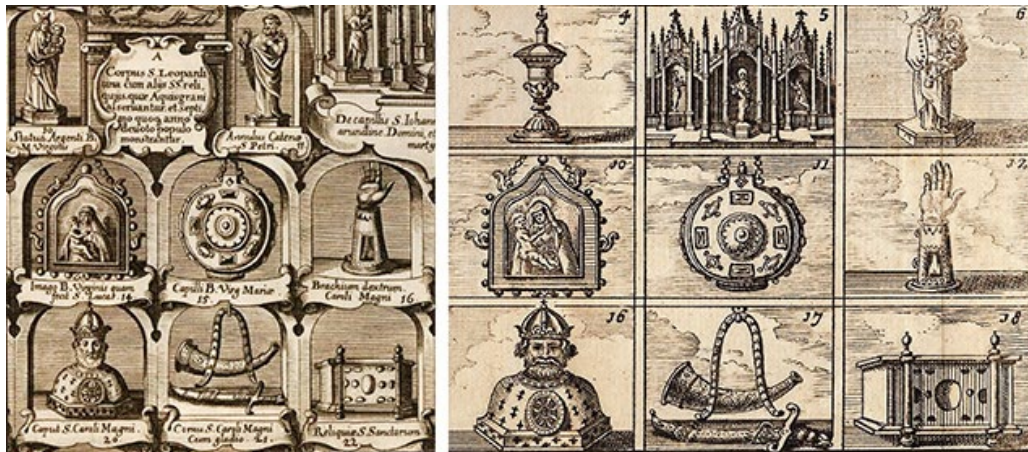
Lynn Jones, "Perceptions of Byzantium: Radegund of Poitiers and Relics of the True Cross," in *Byzantine Images and Their Afterlives: Essays in Honor of Annemarie Weyl Carr*, ed. Lynn Jones (London: Routledge, 2014), Chapter 5. [\[OneDrive\]](#)

Radegund in Context:

Jonathan P. Conant, "Europe and the African Cult of Saints, circa 350-900: An Essay in Mediterranean Communications," *Speculum* 85 (2010): 1-46. [Online/Catalyst]

Michael McCormick, *The Origins of the European Economy, Communications and Commerce AD 300-900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), Introduction, 1-24; chapter 10, "Hagiographical Horizons" 283-318. [Online/Catalyst]

Edina Bozóky, "Hagiography, Relics and Secular Politics in Western Europe, 6th-13th Centuries," in *Hagiography and the History of Latin Christendom, 500-1500*, ed. Samantha Kahn Herrick (Leiden, 2020), pp. 272-94. [Catalyst/Online]



Details of two engravings, published by Gerhard Altzenbach (left, British Museum, Q5.375, 1664) and from Jacobus Harrewijn (right, 1711), both representing the treasury of Aachen Cathedral. A stylized Talisman of Charlemagne appears in the center, as number 15 (left engraving) and number 11 (right engraving). Represented on the right engraving: (4) a piece of the rope with which Jesus was bound, (5) a piece of the Holy Cross, (6) a statue of the Virgin Mary, (10) a portrait of the Virgin Mary according to St. Lucas, (11) hairs of the Virgin Mary, (12) the right arm of Charlemagne, (16) St. Charlemagne's bust, (17) his hunting horn and sword, and (18) relics of the sanctuary.

Week 6 | **Feb. 25: Rulers, Thieves, and Ambitious Courtiers: Carolingians and Imperial Ambitions**

From the sixth century onwards, Rome became the center of relic accumulation and production. What was the sacred landscape of Rome like? How were its relics later disseminated? What did Roman relics mean to those in northern Europe? And what did it mean for Charlemagne and his associates to collect relics? How was this related to ideas or practices of imperial authority. Consider Kotrosits's arguments about ruins and ruination: how is the possession of pieces of ruins (even bones) as aspect of imperial power or claims to power? What was the role of memory, or to use Remensnyder's term "imaginative memory" in the new cultivation of the cult of the saints under the Carolingians?

Look at both books with care, spending about 45-60 minutes with each. Then choose one to read closely and write a **review** of **one** of the books.

Maya Maskarinec, *City of Saints: Rebuilding Rome in the Early Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), esp. chapters 1,2,5, 6 and 7. [Catalyst/Online]

OR

Patrick J. Geary, *Furta Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978, rev. 1990)-- all of the book, with especial attention to chapters 2-6. [Catalyst/Online]

Also read:

Julia M. H. Smith, "Old Saints, New Cults: Roman Relics in Carolingian Francia," in *Early Medieval Rome and the Christian West: Essays in Honor of Donald A. Bullough*, ed. Julia M. H. Smith (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 317-34. [Catalyst/Online]

OR ---, "Einhard: The Sinner and the Saint," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 13 (2003): 55-77. [Catalyst/Online]

Anne Latowsky, "Charlemagne as Pilgrim? Requests for Relics in the *Descriptio Qualiter* and the *Voyage of Charlemagne*," in *The Legend of Charlemagne in the Middle Ages*, ed. Matthew Gabriele and Jace Stuckey (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008) [OneDrive]

OR Amy G. Remensnyder, "Legendary Treasure at Conques: Reliquaries and Imaginative Memory," *Speculum* 71 (1996): 884-906.

AND

Jace Stuckey, "The Twelfth-Century *Vita Karoli* and the Making of a Royal Saint," in *The Charlemagne Legend in Medieval Latin Texts*, ed. William J. Purkis and Matthew Gabriele (Boydell & Brewer, 2017), 33-58. [Catalyst/Online]



Week 7 | Mar. 4: *Passion Relics, and the Holy Land: The Problem of Presence*

Reconsider Julia Smith's idea of portability. Why were Holy Land relics, and especially relics of the True Cross or Wood of the Lord so portable and hence ubiquitous? Why did this appeal to medieval Christians and what were the effects? How does Orsi characterize abundance when it comes to sacred matter and its effects? How might this play out in the medieval context? Similarly, to most observers, holy land relics are bits of ruins, or symbols of ruination. What does Stewart offer as a way to interpret such ruins and their persistent meaning? Were Holy Land and Passion relics more powerful than others? How might we frame these objects in relation to those collected and amassed in church treasures from the Merovingian period? Is a sense of competition among the sacred in fact misplaced? What other framings are useful here?

Wood of the Lord & Relics of Christ

Choose 4 of these articles

Robert Ousterhout, "The Sanctity of Place and the Sanctity of Buildings: Jerusalem versus Constantinople," in *Architecture of the Sacred: Space, Ritual, and Experience from Classical Greece to Byzantium*, ed. Bonna D. Wescoat and Robert G. Ousterhout (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 281-306. [OneDrive & Catalyst]

- Michele Bacci, "Relics of the Pharos Chapel: A View from the Latin West," *Eastern Christian Relics-Восточнохристианские реликвии* (2003): 234-248. [OneDrive]
- John Wortley, "The Wood of the True Cross," in idem, *Studies on the Cult of Relics in Byzantium up to 1204* (Ashgate-Variorum, 2009), VI, 1-19. [OneDrive]
- Jannic Durand, "Byzantium and Beyond: Relics of the Infancy of Christ," in *Saints and Sacred Matter: The Cult of Relics in Byzantium and Beyond*, ed. Cynthia Hahn and Holger A. Klein (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2015), 253-88. [OneDrive/ Reserve]
- Nikolas Jaspert, "The True Cross of Jerusalem in the Latin West: Mediterranean Connections and Institutional Agency," in *Visual Constructs of Jerusalem*, ed. Bianca Kühnel, Galit Noga-Banai, and Hanna Vorholt (Turhout: Brepols, 2014), 207-221. [OneDrive]
- Anne E. Lester, "Beyond the Borders, Outside the Frame: Translating Presence from Byzantium to the West after 1204," *Material Religion in Byzantium and Beyond: Papers from the 54th Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies*, ed. Ine Jacobs, Jaś Elsner and Julia M. H. Smith (London: Routledge, 2026), 120-46. [OneDrive]

OR

Cynthia Hahn, *Passion Relics and the Medieval Imagination: Art, Architecture and Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2020).

Legends and Growth: Materiality of Wood and its Meanings

- Barbara Beart, *A Heritage of Holy Wood: The Legend of the True Cross in Text and Image*, trans. Lee Preedy (Leiden: Brill, 2004), Introduction, Chapters, 1, 3 (skim, 2 & 4) [Catalyst/Online]
- Gregory C. Byrda, *The Trees of the Cross: Wood as Subject and Medium in the Art of Late Medieval Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2023), Introduction, and Chapter 4. [Catalyst/Online]

Collecting and Cataloguing Relic Fragments in the Modern Day:

Spend some time in the PDF of Forlow's *Vraix Croix* to get a sense of how many and how far spread were the fragments of the cross. [OneDrive]

Relic Tales: A Descriptive Catalogue of Medieval Narratives Recounting the Circulation of Christian Passion Relics in Mixed Muslim-Christian Contexts, by Siobhain Calkin; Hasham Al Khatib; and Danielle Taylor (2026):

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/relictalesadescriptivecatalogue/>

Artifacts and Raw Materials in Byzantine Archival Documents:

<https://www.typika.fr/index/synthesisearch>

A Theoretical Turn: Challenge of Abundance, Ruins & Memory (please read if you can manage it!)

- Robert A. Orsi, "Abundant History: Marian Apparitions as Alternative Modernity," *Historically Speaking* 9 (2008): 12-16. [Catalyst/Online]
- Susan Stewart, *The Ruins Lesson: Meaning and Material in Western Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020), Introduction, 1-20; Chapter 8: Resisting Ruin, 257-71. [Catalyst/Online]
- Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations* 26 (1989): 7-24. [Catalyst/Online]

Part III: Miracles, Belief, Proof: Producing the Sacred



Week 8 | Mar. 11: Seeing & Touching: Doubt as a Problem of Belief, Or the Problem with Bodies
** If possible, this week we may meet at the **Walters Art Museum****

By the turn of the thirteenth century, belief and doubt come to complement and challenge one another. We can see how some of this is addressed in the Canons of the Fourth Lateran Council. Indeed, how did Pope Innocent III attempt to use canon law to regulate belief? What did it mean for the papacy to come to control saint-making – a process and practice that largely resides in the minds and hearts of everyday Christians who are the devotees and who experience miracles? What was the role of sight in relation to belief? And what was the role of containment? Can we or should we think of reliquaries as a kind of technology of the sacred?

The Canons of Lateran IV (1215) [OneDrive]

Caroline Walker Bynum, “Resurrection, Heresy, and Burial *ad Sanctos*,” in *eadem*, *Resurrection of the Body*, 200-25. [Catalyst/Online]

Michael Goodich, “Innocent III and the Miracle as a Weapon against Disbelief,” in Andrea Sommerlechner, ed. *Innocenzo III: Urbs et Orbis: Atti del Congresso Internazionale Roma, 9-15 settembre 1998*, 2 vols. (Rome: Nella sede dell’ istituto palazzo Borromini, 2003), vol. 1: 456-70. [OneDrive]

John Arnold, “Believing in Belief: Gibbon, Latour and the Social History of Religion,” *Past & Present* 260 (2023): 236-68. [Catalyst/Online]

Cynthia Hahn, “What to Reliquaries do for Relics?” *Numen* 57 (2010): 284-316. [Catalyst/Online]
Seeking Transparency: Rock Crystals Across the Medieval Mediterranean, ed. Cynthia Hahn and Avinoam Shalem (Berlin: Gerb. Mann Verlag, 2020). Read: Bissera V. Pentcheva, “The ‘Crystalline Effect’: Optical and Sonic Aura and the Poetics of the Resurrected Body”; and Gia Toussaint, “The Sacred Made Visible: The Use of Rock Crystals in Medieval Church Treasuries.” [OneDrive]

Week 9 | March 18 – SPRING BREAK – Enjoy!



Cowl of Saint Francis, mended by Saint Clare from her own tunic. First quarter of the 13th century, Assisi, Italy; Lower church of San Francesco

Week 10 | March 25: *Francis & Clare: Franciscan Humility and its Paradoxes*

What role did humility (*humilitas*) play in the lives of the first Franciscan saints? How was it expressed? What relics are associated with either Francis or Clare? How was sainthood (to use Vauchez's term) changing by the thirteenth century? What was the role of the papacy as an arbiter of the holy? How was that expressed or controlled? Choose either to read about Francis or Clare. Be prepared to give a 10-15-minute presentation on the saint and the book the chose. What are some of the gendered differences between the two saints and their experiences in life and after death.

Thomas of Celano, *The First Life of Saint Francis* [Selections – OneDrive]

Read and write a review of ONE of the following:

Augustine Thompson, *Saint Francis: A New Biography* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012).
[Catalyst/Online]

OR

Catherine M. Mooney, *Claire of Assisi and the Thirteenth-Century Church: Religious Women, Rules, and Resistance* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016). [Catalyst/Online]

Mechthild Flury-Lemberg, "St Francis's Tunic," in *Textile Conservation and Research: A Documentation of the Textile Department on the Occasion of Twentieth Anniversary of the Abegg Foundation*, (Bern: Abegg-Stiftung, 1988), 314–17. [OneDrive]

Recommended:

André Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, trans. Jean Birrell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 3: The Process of Canonization, 33-57; and 16-17, 479-535.

[Reserve]

Jacques Dalarun, *To Govern Is to Serve: An Essay on Medieval Democracy*, translated by Sean Field (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2023), 1-65. [Catalyst/Online]



Fig. 7.1: Staurotheca or True-Cross reliquary, ca. 1130. Zwiefalten, Katholisches Münsterpfarramt.

Week 11 | April 1: *The Eucharist, the Body of Christ & the Material of (Female) Devotion*

Belief in the power, presence and efficacy of the Eucharist come to sweep across Europe in the first decades of the thirteenth century. What accounts for this? How is it regarded and regulated by canon law? In what ways, according to Snoek, is the eucharist related to or like a relic of Christ? How did the presence of hundreds of relics of the passion relate to the rise of eucharistic piety? What was about such piety and the material presence that seemed to appeal (as both Bynum and Rubin argue) to women in particular? What did it mean for hosts to bleed when violated?

Godefridus J. C. Snoek, *Medieval Piety from Relics to the Eucharist: A Process of Mutual Interaction* (Leiden: Brill, 1995). [Catalyst/Online]-- Spend time with this book, but you do not need to read in full. It is much more of a catalogue of the development and parallels between relics and the eucharist. Do choose one example, however, that you find particularly emblematic of the power afforded to the host as a relic to share in class.

Thomas M. Izbicki, *The Eucharist in Medieval Canon Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), [Catalyst/Online]-- look at, and read closely Chapter 1, pp. 21-85. Like Snoek's text, this also reads in a cataloging manner. But consider how closely linked canon law and church authority were to decreeing belief. Did it work?

Caroline Walker Bynum, "Women Mystics and Eucharistic Devotion in the Thirteenth Century," in *eadem, Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone, 1992), 119-150. [Catalyst/Online]

Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 83-211. [Reserve]

Mitchell B. Merback, *Pilgrimage & Pogrom: Violence, Memory, and Visual Culture at the Host-Miracle Shrines of Germany and Austria* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), Part I: Cult-Formation, Event, Legend, chapters 1-2. [Reserve/OneDrive]



Thomas of Cantimpré, *Bonum universal de apibus* (*The Book of Bees*), French, ca. 1372. Brussels, Belgium, KBR ms 9570, fol. 1.

Week 12 | April 8: *Exemplary Lives: Collecting and Using Exempla Stories*

Read the **two books** below and write a **review** of **ONE**.

Prepare a presentation the book you've written about and its main source/s. But think comparatively as you read. How was it differences to write for a Cistercian audience? What were the concerns of the Cistercian monk author? How did a Dominican like Thomas of Cantimpré consider his sources and his audience. What do they have in common. What was different between the two order and between the texts themselves?

Martha G. Newman, *Cistercian Stories for Nuns and Monks: The Sacramental Imagination of Engelhard of Langheim* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020).

[Catalyst/Online]

OR

Rachel J. Smith, *Excessive Saints: Gender, Narrative and Theological Invention in Thomas of Cantimpré's Mystical Hagiographies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019).

[Catalyst/Online]



Procession of relics. The remains of the saints were seen as a means of access to holiness and God's power. Jean Pucelle, *The Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux, Queen of France*, fol. 173v, detail, ca. 1324–28. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Cloisters Collection, 1954. www.metmuseum.org (CC0 1.0).

Week 13 | April 15: *Stripes Beatae: Louis & Isabelle and Liturgical Afterlives*

Royal saints were a particular type of saint and their veneration was intimately linked to the ascent of particular kinds of royal, political power and ideology. The Capetian Dynasty boasted two royal saints by the end of the thirteenth century: two siblings – Louis IX and his sister Isabelle of France. Their lives and the hagiographical accounts of their forms of sanctity raise a host of questions about status, gender, humility, religion at the French royal court. How were they venerated and by whom? What did it mean for France, and especially for the people of France – le menu people in particular, to have such accessible, seemingly humble, and charitable rulers at the helm? In what ways did the king and the princess cultivate a sense of intimacy with those around them? What did this do for perceptions of political power and influence? In what ways is sanctity a political tool? Or is it something more? What is the role of lineage in this sense?

Read *Life of Isabelle of France* AND the *Life of Saint Louis*:

The Sanctity of Louis IX: Early Lives of Saint Louis by Geoffrey of Beaulieu and William of Chartres, trans. Larry F. Field, edited and introduction by M. Cecilia Gaposchkin and Sean L. Field (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), 1-128

AND

The Writings of Agnes of Harcourt: The Life of Isabelle of France & The Letter on Louis IX and Longchamp, ed. and trans. Sean L. Field (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003).

M. Cecilia Gaposchkin, *The Making Saint Louis: Kingship, Sanctity, and Crusade in the Later Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), Chapter 3 & 8 (pp. 67-92, 197-239).

Sharon Farmer, "Down and Out and Female in Thirteenth-Century Paris," *The American Historical Review* 103 (1998): 345-72. [Catalyst/Online]

Sarah M. Guérin, *French Gothic Ivories: Material Theologies and the Sculptor's Craft* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), Epilogue, pp. 256-77.

Other Echoes -- *Additionally Consider*:

Gabor Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses: Dynastic Cults in Medieval Central Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), Introduction, 1-18; chapter 5: "Saintly Princesses and their 'Heavenly Courts,'" 195-293 (read for argument). [Reserve]
Jacqueline E. Jung, "The Boots of Saint Hedwig: Thoughts on the Limits of the Agency of Things," in *The Agency of Things in Medieval and Early Modern Art: Materials, Power and Manipulation*, ed. Grażyna Jurkowlaniec, Ika Matyjaskiewicz, Zuzanna Sarnecka (New York: Routledge, 2017), 173-96. [Catalyst/Online]

Part IV: Beyond Europe, Atlantic Crossings



Inside the Relic Altar of San Lorenzo del Escorial, Madrid, Spain

Week 14 | April 22: *Translators, Missionaries & Fixers: Worlds In-Between*

As we saw early in Week 3, relics and sanctity are often on the move, portable, and thus represent ideas and practices of religion and faith that are interactive and often proselytizing. Beginning in the early thirteenth century, if not before, Christian Europe cultivated an idea of an expansive Christendom that would come to characterize expansionist and colonial practices to come, stretching over the Mongol Steppe lands, the Mediterranean, and across the Indian and Atlantic Oceans. What did it entail to translate Christian ideas and practices and to appropriate material objects and wealth in turn? What were the dynamics of such translation processes and how, if at all, were they successful? Consider the translators this week, or those whom Stuljack calls "fixers." Is this an apt term? What were the roles of medieval fixers in relation to saints and relics? What did it mean for Franciscans to return to dynamic of martyrdom?

Anne E. Lester, "The Tasks of the Translators: Relics and Communications between Constantinople and Northern France in the Aftermath of 1204," in *The French of Outremer: Communities and Communications in the Crusading Mediterranean* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2018), 179-200.

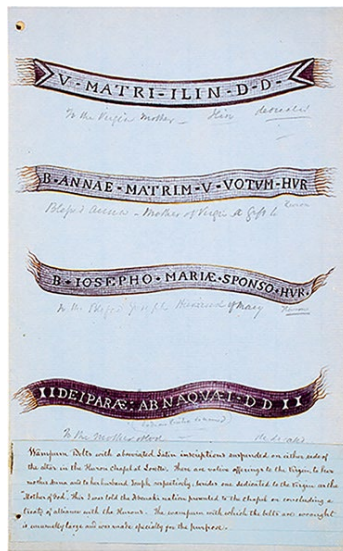
Amanda Power, "Going Among the Infidels: The Mendicant Orders and Louis IX's First Mediterranean Campaign," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 25 (2010): 187-202.

[Catalyst/Online]

John of Joinville, *The Life of Saint Louis*, "Chapter 10: Reports concerning the Tartars," paras: 470-514 [OneDrive]

Zrinka Stahuljak, *Fixers: Agency, Translation, and the Early Global History of Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2024), Introduction & Part 1: 1-109. [Catalyst/Online]

Christopher MacEvitt, *The Martyrdom of the Franciscans: Islam, the Papacy, and an Order in Conflict* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020). Read in full. *You may write a review if you wish.* [Catalyst/Online]



Huyghue, Drawings of Wampum Belts hanging in the Lorette Chapel, New France, before 1846 Fire : <https://www.musee-mccord-stewart.ca/en/blog/europeans-use-of-wampum-belts/>

Week 15 | April 29: *Collecting the World, Missionizing the Globe*

In many places across Europe, by the sixteenth century, the dynamics of sacred collection expanded to encompass objects from across the globe. This impulse to possession and to master was closely link to imperial ambitions and the goals of a universalizing Christian church. We will read only a small sample of texts reflecting how this dynamic was taking shape. Some of the collection process was related to ideas of reform and Reformation as a looking back and a return to the dynamics and exemplars of the early church and its martyr saints. Consider how the forms and expression of missionization and sanctity changed over time. How as the institutional church changed by new forms of “New World” sanctity and material religion?

Collecting and collections:

Harris, A. Katie. "Gift, Sale, and Theft: Juan de Ribera and the Sacred Economy of Relics in the Early Modern Mediterranean." *Journal of Early Modern History* 18, no. 3 (2014): 193-226. [Catalyst/Online]

Guy Lazure, "Possessing the Sacred: Monarchy and Identity in Philip II's Relic Collection at the Escorial," *Renaissance Quarterly* 60 (2007): 58-93. [Catalyst/Online]

Global Christianities:

Read and write a **review** of one of the following. Come to class prepared to present (ca. 10 mins) on the book you chose:

Erin Kathleen Rowe, *Black Saints in Early Modern Global Catholicism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019). **[Catalyst/Online]**

OR

Allan Greer, *Mohawk Saint: Catherine Tekakwitha and the Jesuits* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). **[Catalyst/Online]**

OR

Liam Brockey, *The Visitor: Andre Palmeiro and the Jesuits of Asia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014). **[Catalyst/Online]**

[If you're not familiar with Jesuit ideas and practices, it may be helpful to read:

Thomas V. Cohen, "Why the Jesuits Joined, 1540-1600," *Historical Papers/Communications historique* 9 (1074): 237-258. **[OneDrive/Online]**

Also, useful to know:

Colonial Saints: Discovering the Holy in the Americas, 1500-1800, ed. Allan Greer and Jodi Bilinkoff (New York: Routledge, 2003). **[Catalyst/Online]**