

**HS-SP707:** Patron Saints for Postmoderns Syllabus  
Fall 2010: Sept 27 – Dec 10  
7:00 – 10:15 pm Tuesdays

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## **PATRON SAINTS FOR POSTMODERNS**

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course examines the lives and work of ten figures from Christian history, seeking light on our own vocations and spirituality, and on the church's continuing task of translating the gospel anew for different cultural situations. The ten figures are Antony of Egypt, Gregory the Great, Dante Alighieri, Margery Kempe, John Comenius, John Newton, Charles Simeon, Amanda Berry Smith, Charles M. Sheldon, and Dorothy L. Sayers.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

1. Encounter, assess, and begin to apply in our own lives some of the rich array of spiritual and vocational resources available to Christian ministers (and laypeople) through reading Christian history and biography.
2. Learn how various Christian leaders translated the gospel culturally for a variety of historical situations, and consider whether, and how, these models illuminate the cultural-translation task we now face in our "postmodern" situation.
3. Learn to evaluate critically and process communally the primary sources that are the raw materials of history-writing.

### **REQUIRED TEXTS TO PURCHASE:**

Chris Armstrong, *Patron Saints for Postmoderns* (IVP, 2009)

**NOTE WELL: BEFORE THE CLASS BEGINS, YOU WILL BE ASSIGNED TO READ PRIMARY-SOURCE MATERIAL ON FIVE OF THE TEN FIGURES IN THE COURSE, AND TO PRESENT AND LEAD DISCUSSION ON THOSE FIVE FIGURES. THOSE ARE THE ONLY FIVE FIGURES FOR WHOM YOU WILL NEED TO BUY THE TEXTBOOKS LISTED BELOW**

Of the following, buy only the texts for figures you will be presenting/discussion-leading on.

#### 1. Antony of Egypt

Athanasius, *Life of Anthony*, tr. & intr. Robert C. Gregg (Paulist Press, 1979).

*The Sayings of the Desert Fathers* (Cistercian studies 59), tr. Benedicta Ward (Cistercian Publications, rev. ed., 1987).

#### 2. Gregory the Great

Gregory the Great, *Pastoral Care* (Ancient Christian Writers) (Paulist Press, 1978).

3. Dante Alighieri

Dante Alighieri, *Purgatory*, translated and with notes by Dorothy Sayers (old Penguin edition)

4. Margery Kempe

Margery Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. Barry Windeatt (Penguin, 2000).

5. John Amos Comenius

John Comenius, *The Labyrinth of the World and The Paradise of the Heart* (Classics of Western Spirituality), tr. Howard Louthan & Andrea Sterk (Paulist Press, 1997).

6. John Newton

John Newton, *The Life & Spirituality of John Newton: An Authentic Narrative* (Sources of Evangelical Spirituality), Introduction by Bruce Hindmarsh, Regent College Publishing; Reprint of 1841 edition edition (January 1, 1998).

OR

*Letters of John Newton* (Banner of Truth Trust, 1976).

7. Charles Simeon

*Evangelical Preaching: An Anthology of Sermons by Charles Simeon*, ed. James M. Houston, John R. W. Stott

8. Amanda Berry Smith

**No need to purchase; source online**

Amanda Berry Smith, *Autobiography*, <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/smitham/smith.html>

9. Charles M. Sheldon

**No need to purchase; source online**

Charles M. Sheldon, *In His Steps*, <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/4540>

10. Dorothy L. Sayers

Dorothy Sayers, *Letters to a Diminished Church* (W Publishing Group, 2004)

**See Readings Schedule Grid, below, for full reading list including Moodle materials**

**PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS:**

The heart and soul of this course is close reading of the assigned material. We will read together both from secondary material on each figure (including chapters of the course text, *Patron Saints for Postmoderns*) and from their own writings. Each week we will spend time discussing what we have learned from each figure. Our discussion will focus first on what they can teach us about the church's perennial task of "translating the gospel" for the surrounding culture, and second on how their writings illuminate our own vocations and spiritual lives.

## I. READINGS AND PRESENTATION/DISCUSSIONS SCHEDULE GRID

| Figure  | # of pages                                | Readings and discussions   |
|---------|---|--|
|         | 100 pp.                                   | <p><b>Within the first two weeks, read the following:</b></p> <p><i>Patron Saints for Postmoderns</i>, “Introduction”</p> <p><i>On Moodle</i>, in “Course Documents”</p> <p>Paul Hiebert, “The Gospel in Our Culture: Methods of Social and Cultural Analysis”</p> <p>Paul Russ Satari, “‘Translatibility’ in the Missional Approach of Lamin Sanneh”</p> <p>Craig Van Gelder, “Mission in the Emerging Postmodern Condition”</p> <p>Craig Van Gelder, “Defining the Center—Finding the Boundaries”</p> <p>Kevin Vanhoozer, “Theology and the Condition of Postmodernity”</p>  |
| Sept 28 |   | Introductory lecture   |
| Oct. 5  | 70 pp. plus <i>Sayings</i> pages (50-100) | <p><b>Discussion based on <i>Patron Saints Antony of Egypt</i> chapter and:</b></p> <p><i>Athanasius: Life of Antony</i> (Paulist, 1979), pp. 29-99; <i>The Sayings of the Desert Fathers</i> (Cistercian studies 59), tr. Benedicta Ward, the following sections: Preface, Foreword, Translator’s Note, Prologue, Anthony, Arsenius, Gelasius, Theodore of Pherme, Theodora, John the Dwarf, Cassian, Macarius, Moses, Poemen, Pambo, Sarah, Syncletica, Glossary</p> <p>SECONDARY CRITICAL READING: Rowan Williams, <i>Where God Happens</i>, selections; “Scripture and the Quest for Holiness in Late Antiquity,” in Douglas Burton-Christie, <i>The Word in the Desert</i> (Oxford University Press: 1983).</p> |
| Oct. 12 | 161 pp.                                   | <p><b>Discussion based on <i>Patron Saints Gregory the Great</i> chapter and:</b></p> <p><i>Pastoral Care</i>: pp. 20-44 (all of part 1); pp. 45-88 (all of part 2); part 3: pp. 89-113 (prologue-chap. 9), 136-171 (chaps. 16-23), 182-186 (chap. 26), 192-208 (chaps. 28-30), 217-231 (chaps. 34-38).</p> <p>*****SECONDARY CRITICAL READING: Thomas Oden, <i>Care of Souls in the Classical Tradition</i>, 54-74; Carole Straw, “Introduction,” <i>Gregory the Great: Perfection in Imperfection</i>, 1-27; Robert Markus, “Introduction,” <i>Gregory the Great and His World</i>, 1-16.</p>  |
| Oct. 19 |   | <p><b>Discussion based on <i>Patron Saints Dante Alighieri</i> chapter and:</b></p> <p>Dante Alighieri, <i>Purgatory</i>, tr. Dorothy Sayers (older Penguin edition)</p> <p>SECONDARY CRITICAL READING: Notes &amp; “Images” in Sayers’s translation of <i>Purgatory</i>, Peter Hawkins, <i>Dante: A Brief History</i> (TBA)</p>   |
| Oct. 26 | 135 pp.                                   | <p><b>Discussion based on <i>Patron Saints Margery Kempe</i> chapter and:</b></p> <p><i>The Book of Margery Kempe</i>: pp. 33-88 (“proem”-chap. 22), 102-130 (chap. 28 - chap. 38), 209-261 (chap. 70 - chap. 89).</p> <p>SECONDARY CRITICAL READING: Martin Thornton, <i>Margery Kempe: An Example in the English Pastoral Tradition</i>, all (short)</p>   |

|         |                           |  |
|---------|---------------------------|--|
| Nov. 2  | 121 pp.                   | <p><b>Discussion based on Patron Saints John Amos Comenius chapter and:</b></p> <p>John Amos Comenius, <i>Labyrinth of the World, Paradise of the Heart</i>: <b>skip</b> the introduction (I summarize important points in my <i>Patron Saints</i> chapter); <b>read closely and journal</b> pp. 55-86, 93-101, 110-112, 121-122, 125-138, 149-160, 171-173, 180-225.</p> <p>SECONDARY CRITICAL READING: Matthew Spinka biography chapter(s), 3 (36-49), 4 (50-71), 9 (151-155); optional: Comenius video in seminary library</p>  |
| Nov. 9  | 85 pp. + about 50 pp. TBA | <p><b>Discussion based on Patron Saints John Newton chapter and:</b></p> <p>John Newton, <i>Life and Spirituality of John Newton: An Authentic Narrative</i>, pp. 11-95 (85 pp.) AND: Another reading totaling about 50 pp., TBA.</p> <p>SECONDARY CRITICAL READING: Bruce Hindmarsh biography chapter(s): 1 (13-48), 6 (221-256), conclusion (325-331); brief articles on Newton from <i>Christian History</i></p>  |
| Nov. 16 | 165 pp.                   | <p><b>Discussion based on Patron Saints Charles Simeon chapter and:</b></p> <p>PRIMARY READINGS ON MOODLE: Charles Simeon, <i>Memoirs</i> (79 pp.) and TEXTBOOK: <i>Evangelical Preaching: Sermons</i> on pp. 3-6, 7-9, 19-24, 77-81, 95-98, 99-103, 127-133, 135-140, 169-175, 211-216, 217-223, 233-237, 267-272 (about 60 pages, taking into account partial pages)</p> <p>SECONDARY CRITICAL READING: See <i>Evangelical Preaching</i>, “Editor’s Note,” xv-xxv (11 pp.); “Introduction,” xxvii-xli (15 pp.); PLUS these chapters from his biographer, Hugh Evans Hopkins: 10 (153-172) and 11 (173-189), 13 (204-221)</p>   |
| Nov. 23 | 154 pp.                   | <p><b>Discussion based on Patron Saints Amanda Berry Smith chapter and:</b></p> <p>READ SELECTIONS (see list on Moodle for brief summaries of each section; page numbers are iii-xv, 17-49, 57-83, 92-102, 109-120, 147-148, 156-158, 174-185, 193-204, 256-261, 264-265, 321, 431-450) FROM: Amanda Berry Smith, <i>Autobiography</i>, <a href="http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/smitham/smith.html">http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/smitham/smith.html</a></p> <p>*****SECONDARY CRITICAL READING: Kelly Willis Mendiola, <i>The Hand of a Woman: Four Holiness-Pentecostal Evangelists and American Culture, 1840-1930</i>, <a href="http://www.lib.utexas.edu/etd/d/2002/mendiolak022/mendiolak022.pdf">http://www.lib.utexas.edu/etd/d/2002/mendiolak022/mendiolak022.pdf</a> , chapter 2, “‘Color-Line Holiness’: Amanda Berry Smith, Race and the Holiness Movement,” <b>just read the section</b> “‘It Has Its Moral if We Choose to See It’: Smith’s Autobiography as a Discussion of Race in America,” <b>on pp. 255-276</b>; Adrienne Israel’s biography of Smith, sections TBA.</p> |
| Nov. 30 |                           | <p><b>Discussion based on Patron Saints Charles M. Sheldon chapter and:</b></p> <p>Charles M. Sheldon, <i>In His Steps</i>, <a href="http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/4540">http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/4540</a></p> <p>*****SECONDARY CRITICAL READING: Susan Wharton Gates, “Rediscovering the heart of public administration: The normative theory of in his steps” (1998 PhD dissertation, Virginia Polytechnic), at <a href="http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/theses/available/etd-41498-211556/unrestricted/SWGates.pdf">http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/theses/available/etd-41498-211556/unrestricted/SWGates.pdf</a> , chaps 1 (1-11), 6 (79-92), 7 (93-111)</p>  |

|        |                       |  |
|--------|-----------------------|--|
| Dec. 7 | 155 pp.               | <p><b>Discussion based on <i>Patron Saints</i> Dorothy L. Sayers chapter and:</b></p> <p>Dorothy Sayers, <i>Letters to a Diminished Church</i>: 1-14, 49-71, 117-146, 147-169 These pages include the following essays: “The Greatest Drama Ever Staged,” “What Do We Believe?” “Creed or Chaos?” “The Triumph of Easter,” “Why Work?” “Toward a Christian Esthetic.” (87 pp.)</p> <p>MOODLE: Loades <i>Sayers’s Spiritual Writings</i>: 17, 96-101, 104-5. These pages comprise excerpts showing her approach to presenting the life of Christ in dramatic form (including examples from her plays). (9 pp.)</p> <p>MOODLE: play from Dorothy Sayers, <i>Man Born To Be King</i> cycle (about 20 pp.)</p> <p>MOODLE: “Statement of Aims for the proposed <i>Bridgehead</i> series of books,” appendix of Brabazon biography: pp. 278-282 (5 pp.)</p> <p>SECONDARY CRITICAL READING: MOODLE: Laura Simmons <i>Creed Without Chaos</i>: chapters 7 “Work, Vocation, and Business Ethics,” 8 “Words and Language,” and 9 “Creativity and Art”—111-144 (34 pp.)</p> |
| Dec 10 | Last day of fall term | <b>Final paper due</b>   |

## II. THE THREE ASSIGNMENT CATEGORIES

### 1. READING JOURNALS

- a. Sometime during the first two weeks, you will write a total of **3 to 4 pages (900 to 1200 words) worth of short reading journal entries reflecting on your reading of the postmodernity articles** by Paul Hiebert, Paul Russ Satari, Craig Van Gelder, and Kevin Vanhoozer. In these entries, you should address the following questions: *What particular challenges do Americans in this “postmodern age” face as we seek to translate the gospel for our culture? What modes or methods of thinking about, talking about, and living the gospel may prove helpful today?* These entries should be entirely (except for a few *short*—that is, 3 lines or fewer—quotations) in your own words. \*\*\*\*Upload these to the discussion board on the Moodle site. Discussion on these is welcome!

- b. For the five weeks in which you are presenting/discussion-leading (see “B” below), you will also write **polished reading-journal entries on your primary readings**. These entries will be *at least one and a half double-spaced pages (450 words) and certainly not more than three double-spaced pages (900 words) long*. \*\*\*\*Upload your journals to the discussion board on the Moodle site as you go. Discussion on these is welcome!

For each primary reading, you will **answer at least two of the following three questions**, using a polished essay style. It would be a very good idea to revise your reading journal entries at least once before uploading, just as you would do for any significant course paper.

- i. **THE SUMMARY/CRITIQUE QUESTION:** *For autobiographical writings:* What does the author present as the theme(s) or central concern(s) of her life? Second, to what authorities does she appeal to support this theme or these themes? Third, what rhetorical devices or explicit arguments does she use to get her point across? And finally, do those authorities, devices, or arguments work for you? Why or why not? (You might want to start your engines on this one started by imagining: if this person was on her deathbed, communicating her most crucial advice to a son or daughter, what do you suppose she would say?)
- For other kinds of writings:* What is the author saying? What are the central contentions or themes of the document(s); what arguments does the author marshal in support of the contentions or what evidence does the author give to support the themes? What notable things does she foreground, background, and omit altogether? Which arguments do you find stronger? Weaker?
- ii. **THE CULTURAL TRANSLATION QUESTION:** How do you see the author translating the gospel in ideas, expressions, or actions designed to address his or her cultural context? Did he or she *push the church* to translate the gospel for that cultural context in particular ways? And can we learn anything useful for our own postmodern setting, either directly or by analogy, from the ways this author translated the gospel for his or her church and society? (For more ideas on approaching this section, see section V below, on “student-led discussions.”)
- iii. **THE PERSONAL APPLICATION QUESTION:** What did you learn vocationally and/or spiritually from this person’s writings? In your answer to this third question, strive for balance between “autobiography” and “interpretation”: Although I do want you to talk about how and why you connected personally with this reading (“autobiography”), you should also be as specific as possible about which aspects of the writer’s ideas really spoke to you (“interpretation”). In other words, do not use the basic idea(s) of the reading as a jumping-off point for a purely autobiographical statement. If you begin by writing something like this: “Sayers’s idea of intellectual integrity made me think about my own academic career . . .,” then *don’t* proceed to spin off into a personal testimony that never again refers to Sayers’s ideas described in the readings! N.B.: *I am a strong believer that you learn from everything you read—even if by negative example!*

*An important strategic note on how to approach your reading journal:* Though this may seem obvious, you *must* take notes in some form as you read. That means reading in light of the reading journal questions. And it means recording your thoughts as you read. It is probably best to do this both in the margins of your texts and on separate sheets of paper (or in word processing files). This note-taking process will provide the raw material for your reading journal.

## 2. QUESTIONS ON SECONDARY READINGS FOR IN-CLASS DISCUSSION

For each figure you will find critical secondary material listed in the schedule grid. You will skim this material each week (even when you are not presenting on that week's figure; when you *are* presenting, you'll want to read this material carefully!), along with the chapter in *Patron Saints*.

For each week that you are *not* leading discussion, you will **prepare 3 substantive, discussable questions** based on the *Patron Saints* chapter and critical secondary material, which will feed into our in-class discussion time. **Please bring to class a copy of your questions (either on a laptop or in hard copy)** to have in front of you as the discussion proceeds.

Definition of a substantive, discussable (that is, *non-trivial*) question:

- a. First, to be discussable and non-trivial, your interpretive question must not lead to a dead end because it is *unanswerable from the text*. So the question, "Did John Newton secretly desire to overthrow the government of England?" or the question, "Would John Newton have espoused Confucian thought?" are both trivial questions because there's no way to answer either of them from the text. Any answer we might give would be conjecture or would require some other source text or piece of evidence we don't have. Note that a "trivial" question in this sense is not necessarily an un-important one—just not useful for discussion.

Second, to be discussable and non-trivial, your interpretive question must not lead to an *immediate, obvious answer*. So, "Did John Newton really believe a good Christian must be in community?" would also be trivial because we can immediately answer the question from the text. Again, "trivial" in this sense does not mean un-important, just not useful for discussion.

In a seminar such as this one, the journey is, in a significant sense, the destination. That's why we're investing time in primary as well as secondary source reading and discussion in this course: we're learning how to become our own interpreters of history.

## 3. PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSION LEADING

Each student will present and help lead in-class discussions on five figures chosen at the beginning of the course:

- a. First, remember Lamin Sanneh's idea of the "translatibility" of the gospel (see the Satari reading from the first two weeks' reading): Each time and place in world history—each cultural context—carries with it different questions (e.g. questions of who people are and what they should do as they relate to their creator, etc.) and problems (e.g. social sins, "idols" that compete with devotion to God, etc.) that complicate the teaching and living of the gospel in that culture.

Thus the "translation" of the gospel for each cultural context will look different: successful Christian workers in each setting will stress certain aspects of the full, rich message of the gospel in certain ways. Their speaking, writing, and living of the gospel

will be designed to address the challenges, needs, and questions that people of *their own particular time and place* are struggling with.

- b. Therefore, as you are reading the primary and secondary material for the figures on whom you are presenting/leading discussion, be especially alert to the cultural context of your figure. You are looking for the questions and problems that loomed in that figure's time and place (churchly and society-wide), which affected how people heard and lived the gospel.
- C. After you do the primary source and critical secondary source reading for each of your presentation figures, you will **prepare a brief presentation** placing that figure's ministry against the backdrop of the issues and challenges (questions and problems) native to his or her church and social context. **Presentation notes should be 900 – 1,200 words** or about 3 – 4 full pages of double-spaced, 12-point text— around 6 – 8 minutes at an average speaking rate of 150 wpm (a bit more if you speak more slowly).
- d. You will **hand in these written remarks on the day of the discussion** (so you'll probably want to print two copies).
- e. On the day dedicated to discussing your figure, you will **give your presentation** (as will any other students assigned to that figure) and then, drawing from Sanneh's idea of translatability,
- f. you will **lead the class in a discussion of the following questions** (same sorts of questions you've answered in your pre-course primary-source reading journals):
  - i. How do you see the author translating the gospel in ideas, expressions, or actions designed to address his or her cultural context?
  - ii. Did he or she *push the church* to translate the gospel for that cultural context in particular ways?
  - iii. Can we learn anything useful for our own postmodern setting, either directly or by analogy, from the ways this author translated the gospel for his or her church and society?

\*\*\*\*\* It's OK to go to the *Patron Saints* chapter and critical secondary reading in putting your presentation notes together, but the other students and I will be looking for **original thinking that will help us to learn lessons from that figure** that we haven't yet learned from those secondary sources.

During the panelist's presentation, the rest of the class should be jotting down notes. After the presentation, class members will address questions to the presenter and to each other, probing this matter of cultural translation as it relates to the figure under discussion.

### III. GRADING:

READING JOURNAL + DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (that is, your answers to the reading journal questions for each of the 5 weeks during which you are reading extra material and leading discussion plus the discussion questions that you post and bring to class on each of the weeks that you are *not* presenting) will count for **30%**—that is, **5%** for each of 5 journal entries and **1%** for each of 5 sets of questions.

Reading journals will be graded qualitatively—that is, I am not just looking for completion, but for real engagement with the material; e.g., clear understanding of the text, personal appropriation (whether positively or negatively!) of what you have read, and writing that is concise, meaty, and readable (good organization, flow, grammar, and yes, even spelling).

DISCUSSION LEADING: Your oral presentation and 3- to 4-page presentation notes on each of your five presentation figures, along with your discussion-leadership, will count for **55%** of your final grade (11% for each of 5 figures).

SECONDARY SOURCE QUESTIONS: Your three questions per figure (5 figures total, not including the figures on whom you lead discussion) will be worth a total of **15%** of your final grade.

PARTICIPATION (involvement in our discussions; attendance is assumed, and mandatory!) will be used as a “straw in the wind.” That is, my observation of your involvement in class discussion will serve to push you, if your final grade is on or near a “line” between two letter-grades, toward either the higher or the lower grade.

### IV. ACCESSIBILITY:

Please contact the instructor as soon as possible if disability-related accommodations are needed. Accommodations for students with documented disabilities are set up through the Office of Disability Services. Contact Kathy McGillivray, Director of Disability Services, at (651) 635-8759.