**Miracles: From Wonder-workers to Canonized Saints**

(2016/2017 Fall Semester, Elective class, 2 credits)

Instructor:

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What has happened and what is being told? Is it not the question that fascinates us through our whole existence, whether in a historical, scientific or personal context? Creating a story out of an event is the creative process of giving meaning to an experience, collective or individual and this narrative framework is often the interpretation itself.

The present course will offer an introduction to the general topic of miracles as a specific narrative form, their typology and functions, i.e., their use in association with various types of literary and cultic discourse in order to define, illustrate, and promote the status as wonderworkers of various individuals, as well as their audience and reception over a period of time stretching from classical and late antiquity to the end of the Middle Ages.

The course will provide a theoretical discussion of the main issues involved, such as the conceptualization of miracles in philosophical/theological contexts, the literary conventions that inform narrative accounts of miracles and of miracle collections, the use of such accounts in Christian and non-Christian milieus by various forms of hagiography and biography, the processes that led to the progressive standardization of miracle accounts and their progressive instrumentalization in the context of canonization processes, and the interaction between the authors and promoters of such accounts and their intended audiences.

These as well as other connected issues will be addressed from a more general perspective in the first half of the course, which will provide a chronological survey of the formation and evolution of miracle accounts and miracle collections; this overview will be articulated in three sections (Classical and Late Antiquity, Early and Central Middle Ages, Later Middle Ages) and will cover a geographic area extending from Byzantium to Western Europe. The formation, evolution, and ultimate standardization of miracle narratives in the context of hagiographic accounts will be traced with the help of selected examples from the most significant authors and texts.

The second part of the course will take a closer look at several individual saints' cults in an attempt to illustrate the way general theological trends and narrative typologies were reflected in a specific context (such as debates over Orthodoxy and other theological controversis in Byzantium). We will move on to see how definitions of miracles as those elaborated by the papacy and other authorities within the Catholic Church were adopted, followed, and adapted in the context of local cults, relying mainly on Western and Central European examples. Within this survey we will also try to reflect upon the needs and the ideological concerns of communities and individuals in a local/regional context as well as of wider unities, like religious orders.

All throughout the course students will be given the possibility to discuss critically relevant items of modern literature on the topics addressed and to apply in practice the theoretical principles outlined during the lectures by analyzing a selection of relevant texts or by discussing concrete examples taken from their own research.

**Goals**

-to provide students with a working knowledge of miracles both in terms of theoretical narrative and in terms of practical ability to identify and use miracle narratives in their own research

-to provide an overview of typological and historical development of miracles and miracle collections in the context of hagiographic discourse

-to foster a better understanding of the literary structures that form miracle narratives and equip students with the necessary tools that will allow them to analyze miracle narratives on their own

-to facilitate the understanding of the role and function of miracle narratives in connection with the development of various concepts of sacred power and sanctity.

**Learning outcomes**

-The ability to exercise critical thinking, i.e., to select relevant primary source material as well as secondary literature and read it with an awareness of the linguistic and cultural background implied. Assessed regularly through interactive discussion in class and short critical presentations of the recommended literature.

-The ability to summarize, present and discuss ideas and arguments orally in a clear, effective and engaging way. Assessed through oral presentations during the semester.

-The ability to locate, synthesize and critically evaluate literature relevant to the research topic. Assessed through the end-of-term written assessment.

-The ability to select, synthesize, and disseminate academic knowledge relevant to a wider audience. Assessed through the end-of-term written assessment.

-Multicultural understanding as manifested in the awareness of and respect for points of view deriving from other national, social, or cultural backgrounds. Assessed regularly through discussions in class of passages from the readings that offer relevant topics.

-Learning to refer local/regional/particular issues to larger/universal structures with a full awareness of the similarities and differences as well as the limitations involved in this process.

**Required Readings**

**1. Source Material**

Early Christian Lives, ed. and trans. Carolinne White, London: Penguin Books, 1998, pp. 129-59 (“Life of Martin of Tours by Sulpicius Severus”) and 163-204 (“Life of Benedict by Gregory the Great”) (selected chapters).

Medieval Hagiography: An Anthology, ed. Thomas Head, New York: Garland Publishing, 2000 (selected texts).

Medieval Saints: A Reader, ed. Mary-Ann Stouck, Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1999 (selected texts).

Miracle Tales from Byzantium. ed. A.-M. Talbot, S. Johnson, Harvard UP, 2012.

“The Epidaurian Miracle Inscriptions,” in Asclepius: A Collection of the Testimonies, ed. Emma Jeannette Levy Edelstein, and Ludwig Edelstein, 2 vols, 2 nd ed., Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University, 1998, pp. 229-37.

The Miracles of St. Artemios. A Collection of Miracle Stories by an Anonymous Author of Seventh-Century Byzantium, ed. Virgil S. Crisafulli and John W. Nesbitt, Leiden: Brill, 1997 (selected miracles).

“The miracles of Saint Margaret of Hungary” [BHL XXX] (ms), selected miracles in English translation to be provided ahead of class.

**2. Required Readings**

de Nie, Giselle. Word, Image, and Experience: Dynamics of Miracle and Self-Perception in Sixth-Century Gaul, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003 (selected studies).

Efthymiades, Stephanos. “A Day and Ten Months in the Life of a Lonely Bachelor: The Other Byzantium in Miracula S. Artemii 18 and 22,” Dumbarton Oaks Papers 58 (2004), pp. 1-26.

Kee, Howard Clark. Medicine, Miracle and Magic in New Testament Times, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

Goodich, Michael E. “Filiation and Form in Late Medieval Miracle Story,” Hagiographica 3 (1976): 306-322. (Reprinted in Lives and Miracles of the Saints. Studies in Medieval Latin Hagiography, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004).

Goodich, Michael E. “Reason or Revelation? The Criteria for the Proof and Credibility of Miracles in Canonization Processes,” in Procés de canonisation au Moyen Âge: Aspects juridiques et religieux, ed. Gábor Klaniczay, Rome: École Française de Rome, 2004, 181-197.

Goodich, Michael E. Miracles and Wonders. The Development of the Concept of Miracle, 1150-1350, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007, pp. 8-28.

Johnson, Scott F. The Life and Miracles of Thekla: A Literary Study, Washington, DC: Center for Hellenic Studies, 2006.

McCready, William D. Signs of Sanctity: Miracles in the Thought of Gregory the Great, Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1989.

Van Dam, Raymond. Saints and Their Miracles in Late Antique Gaul, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993, pp. 82-149.

Vauchez, André. Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages, trans. Jean Birrell, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp. 11-33 and 427-79.

Ward, Benedicta. Miracles and the Medieval Mind: Theory, Record and Event 1000-1215, Aldershot: Wildwood House, 1987, pp. 3-19 and 166-91.

**Recommended readings**

Bynum, Caroline Walker. “Miracles and Marvels: The Limits of Authority,” in Vita Religiosa im Mittelalter: Festschrift für Kaspar Elm zum 70. Geburtstag, ed. Franz J. Felten and Nikolas Jaspert, Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1999, pp. 799-817.

Cotter, Wendy. Miracles in Greco-Roman Antiquity: A Sourcebook. London: Routledge, 1999.

de Vries, Hent. “Fast Forward, or: The Theologico-Political Event in Quick Motion (Miracles, Media, and Multitudes in St. Augustine),” in How the West Was Won: Essays on Literary Imagination, the Canon and the Christian Middle Ages for Burcht Pranger, ed. Willemien Otten, Arjo Vanderjgt, and Hent de Vries, Leyden: Brill, 2010, pp. 255-80.

Finucane, Ronald C. Miracles and Pilgrims: Popular Beliefs in Medieval England, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977; repr. 1995.

Head, Thomas. Hagiography and the Cult of Saints: The Diocese of Orléans, 800-1200, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Justice, Steven. “Did the Middle Ages Believe in Their Miracles?” Representations 103 (2008), no. 1, pp. 1-29.

Klaniczay, Gábor. “Proving Sanctity in the Canonization Processes (Saint Elizabeth and Saint Margaret of Hungary),” in Procés de canonisation au Moyen Âge: Aspects juridiques et religieux, ed. Gábor Klaniczay, Rome: École Française de Rome, 2004, pp. 117-48.

Metzler, Irina. Disability in Medieval Europe: Thinking about Physical Impairment During the High Middle Ages, c. 1100-1400, Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2006, pp. 126-85.

Moore, Robert I. “Between Sanctity and Superstition: Saints and their Miracles in the Age of Revolution,” in The Work of Jacques Le Goff and the Challenges of Medieval History, ed. Miri Rubin, Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1997, pp. 63 – 75.

Smith, Julia M. “Oral and Written: Saints, Miracles, and Relics in Brittany, c. 850-1250,” *Speculum* 65 (1990), no. 2, pp. 309-43.

Twelftree, Graham H., ed. The Cambridge Companion to Miracles, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

**Weekly outline**

**Part I: Historical and Theoretical Overview**

*Week 1*

General Introduction. From Wondrous Event to Miracle Story. Definitions,

Concepts, Forms, Functions.

[Format: lecture]

*Week 2*

Historical Overview I: Classical Antecedents and Genre Confusion (Classical & Late Antiquity).

[Format: lecture & interactive seminar]

*Week 3*

Historical Overview II: Jesus the wonder worker and Miracles in the Early Church.

[Format: lecture & interactive seminar]

*Week 4*

Historical Overview III: The role of miracles in early Western Hagiography;

[Format: lecture & interactive seminar]

*Week 5*

Student Presentations I: Assessing Critical Contributions.

[Format: lecture & interactive seminar]

**Part II: Miracles in Action (Case Studies)**

*Week 6*

Byzantium (6-12th Centuries): Miracle collections as literary feats

[Format: lecture & interactive seminar]

*Week 7*

Miracles in ritual, cult and Church propaganda in the East.

[Format: lecture & interactive seminar]

*Week 8*

When form changes the content: canonization trials in the West

[Format: lecture & interactive seminar]

*Week 9*

When saints and miracle stories travel: Case studies from Central Europe

[Format: lecture & interactive seminar]

*Week 10*

The Emergence of Native Cults: St. Margaret of Hungary.

[Format: lecture & interactive seminar]

*Week 11*

Central European Saints' Cults: Local and/or Universal?

[Format: lecture & interactive seminar]

*Week 12*

Student Presentations II: Case Studies. Concluding Discussion.

[Format: interactive seminar]

**Requirements and Assessment:**

Attendance in class is required (min. 80 %). Student performance will be assessed throughout the semester by means of short critical oral presentations of one item of recommended secondary literature (at the student's choice) and of a selected item of relevant source material (also at the student's choice), which will be then commented upon in class (formative assessment). The final assessment will take place at the end of the semester by means of a written assignment based on the students' second oral presentation; this will require the students to identify, analyze, and comment upon one miracle (or a cluster of miracles) of their choice by taking into account the theoretical discussions and the case studies introduced during the course as well as the instructors' feedback on their final oral presentations. In the final assessment, the ratio between class participation and final assessment will be 10% to 90%.

Elective for MA and PhD students