

DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY  
McAnulty College & Graduate School of Liberal Arts

## Sinners & Saints

CLSX 234/WSGS 234  
Sarah Alison Miller, Ph.D.

### *Description and objectives*

This course examines the representations of sin and sanctity in ancient and medieval texts, and focuses specifically on the ways in which models of corporeality, sex, and gender shape notions of hellishness and holiness. In the early Christian and medieval texts we will read, the boundaries between divine inspiration, visionary experience, religious passion, demonic possession, madness, and symptoms deriving from gynecological ailments were not clearly delineated. The female soul and body often became the domains where these phenomena were discerned and contested. A range of literary genres will be consulted: hagiography, autobiography, and medical treatises.

Students will examine:

- how medieval writers conceptualized the mystical experiences, martyrdoms, and illnesses of women
- how male-authored and female-authored texts constructed these phenomena
- how textual genres and the discursive systems germane to those genres shaped representations of female spiritual and physiological experience

### *Required textbooks*

*Medieval Writings on Female Spirituality*, ed. Elizabeth Spearing. New York: Penguin, 2002.

Caciola, Nancy. *Discerning Spirits: Divine and Demonic Possession in the Middle Ages*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003.

Kramer, Henreich and James Sprenger. *The Malleus Maleficarum*. Trans. Montague Summers. New York: Dover Publications, 1971.

☞ Other readings will be supplied to you via Blackboard. ☞