

Dear Student,

Thank you very much for your inquiry concerning “Mysteries of the Christian East” (RELG 491M), my Maymester offering, scheduled for May 9-27, 2011. Below you will find a draft of the syllabus to provide you with some further information on reading assignments and requirements. The details may change a little before May, but this will give you the general idea of what I have in mind.

As you can see from the schedule, there are two distinct parts to the course:

- We’ll be meeting on USC’s campus during the first and third weeks. During the first week, we’ll get together Monday, Wednesday, and Friday *only* (May 9, 11, and 13), but with *two* sessions each day, from 10 a.m. to noon, and from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. During the third week, we’ll meet on Monday and Wednesday (May 23 and 25) *only*, and again we’ll have two sessions each day at those same times.
- During the second week, we’ll be visiting St Anthony’s Greek Orthodox Monastery in the Sonoran Desert of southern Arizona. We’ll fly to Phoenix on Monday, May 16, where we’ll rent a van for a short drive (90 minutes) to the monastery. We’ll spend four nights (and three full days) at the monastery, returning on Friday, May 20.

The total cost for the off-campus portion of the course will be \$550. This figure includes your round-trip airfare to Phoenix, your share of the cost for a rental van, and all of your food and lodging at the monastery for the whole week.

In order to get the best airfares, we’ll need to reserve tickets early. Those who intend to register for the course are therefore asked to submit a deposit of \$500—in the form of a check made payable to the USC Department of Religious Studies. Space is limited, so if you’re interested, you’ll want to get your check in as soon as possible.

If you would like to learn more about St Anthony’s Monastery, you can visit their website: <http://www.stanthonysmonastery.org/index.php>. St Anthony’s is an extraordinarily beautiful place, a fully traditional Byzantine monastic complex set in a lush oasis in the midst of the southern Arizona moonscape. Whether it’s candlelit icons in the chapels during the services or the brilliantly starlit sky as you wander the pathways at night, there will be much to drink in.

Please let me know if I can provide any further information or be of assistance in any other way.

James S. Cutsinger
Professor of Theology and Religious Thought

Religious Studies 491M

MYSTERIES OF THE CHRISTIAN EAST

Maymester 2011: M, W, and F: 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m., 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Professor James S. Cutsinger

Rutledge 330 (777-2284) cutsinger@sc.edu; www.cutsinger.net

The aim of this course is to introduce students to the contemplative spirituality of Eastern Orthodox Christianity.

Discussions include Orthodox theology, spirituality, iconography, music, and liturgy and the various ways in which these and other elements of this ancient tradition contribute to the transformation—or “deification”, to use the classic Orthodox term—of the human person. Special emphasis will be placed on Hesychasm, a form of Christian mystical practice long associated with the Holy Mountain of Athos, a monastic republic in northeastern Greece.

The course features an off-campus trip to Saint Anthony’s Monastery in the Sonoran Desert of southern Arizona, an Orthodox monastic community founded in 1995 by a spiritual elder and former abbot of Mount Athos. Here students will gain firsthand experience of this unique religious tradition.

Readings

Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* [purchase on-line]

Kyriacos Markides, *The Mountain of Silence* [purchase on-line]

James S. Cutsinger, ed., *Mysteries of the Christian East* [PDF on course Blackboard site]

Requirements

1. *Reading.* Reading and thoughtful reflection are essential. The assigned materials will demand careful study and not just skimming.
2. *Participation.* Students should be active participants. One third of the final course grade will be based on constructive contributions to class discussion.
3. *Journal.* Students will keep a journal of their thoughts and experiences during the visit to Saint Anthony’s Monastery, reflecting in part their reading of *The Mountain of Silence* (one third of final grade).
4. *Examination.* A short-answer essay examination based on the assigned readings will be administered at the end of the course (one third of final grade).

Learning Objectives

- To understand the theory and practice of Eastern Christian spirituality
- To become acquainted with some of this tradition's classic texts
- To understand the principles of its theology and sacred arts (painting and music).

Schedule

On-Campus I

Monday, May 9

10 a.m. to Noon

Mysteries, 1, 2

Lossky, 1, 2

2:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Mysteries, 3, 4

Video about Mount Athos

Wednesday, May 11

10 a.m. to Noon

Mysteries, 5, 6, 7

Lossky, 3, 4

2:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Mysteries, 8, 9

Lossky, 6

Friday, May 13

10 a.m. to Noon

Mysteries, 10, 11, 12

2:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Mysteries, 13, 14, 15

Off-Campus

May 16 – 20

Trip to St Anthony's Greek Orthodox Monastery

While in residence at Saint Anthony's, the class will meet for about 90 minutes each afternoon for a discussion of *The Mountain of Silence*, and for reflection on their experiences. The emphasis during this week, however, will be placed on immersion in the daily life of the monastic community.

On-Campus II

Monday, May 23

10 a.m. to Noon

Mysteries, 16

Mountain, 5, 7

2:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Mysteries, 17

Mountain, 9, 10

Wednesday, May 25

10 a.m. to Noon

Mysteries, 18, 19

Lossky, 12, 14

2:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Mysteries, 20

Lossky, 15

Friday, May 27

Final Examination (2:00 – 4:00 p.m.)

Office Hours: By appointment.