

BOOKS: Kathleen Norris: *Cloister Walk*;
Emily Dickinson, ed. Joyce Carol Oates;
Bugbee, *Inward Morning*; Basho, *Narrow Road*;
Thoreau, *Walking*, Emerson, *Nature*

WEEK

- 1) Jan-13 Norris: *Cloister Walk*
- 2) Jan-20 ""
- 3) Jan-27 ""
- 4) Feb-3 Dickinson
1st Paper due Feb-10
- 5) Feb-10 Thoreau: "Walking"
- 6) Feb-17 ""
- 7) Feb- 24 Emerson, *Nature*
2nd Paper Mar-3
- 8) Mar-3 Inward Morn
[break Mar. 9-15]
- 9) Mar-17 Inward Morning
- 10) Mar-24 ""
3rd Paper Mar-31
- 11) Mar-31 "For Love of the World"
- 12) Apr-7 Emerson, *Nature*
- 13) Apr-14 Basho
- 14) Apr-21 **no class tues**, Mayfest
- 15) Apr 28 Basho [no class thurs]
4th Paper Due May-5 [no exam]
I'll have handouts of the essay "For love of the world".

There are **four required papers**; the lowest grade will be dropped. Your three best papers, (each 33%) will determine your grade. Poor attendance will drop points, raising your hand will add points.

REFLECTION PAPERS: In your reading, be alert for moments that *strike you* in some fashion, and *make marginal notes* of these moments. Why do they ring a bell or jump out at you (for good or ill)? I have a special format for the *three page* (double spaced) papers.

Before your first paragraph begins, set out, in bold, sentences that grab you.

The paper then becomes an *elaboration, exploration, and clarification* of that focus.

You'll find yourself drawing on your own memories and experiences. And you'll find yourself remembering other passages or moments in the text that work in tandem with whatever you put in focus in your opening sentences. Don't forget, if nothing grabs you, *you'll have nothing to say*. You can, of course, use the first person. And please, *avoid anything that reads like a book report*.

As well as parts of a text, the paper shows you – through your *response*. I should learn something about how your mind and imagination work as I read your back and forth dialogue with parts of your passage. *Let your voice and personality come out*. The human condition, to which mysticism responds, after all is *your condition*.

Mysticism, as a strain of religious as well as non-religious writing, practice, and experience, provides luminous accounts of a human sojourn, in all its varieties and complexities. It often springs from wounds or trauma and can blossom toward surpassing beauty and sublimity, wondrously subtle appreciations of nature and spirit and others. Though its background may be the unspeakable horrors of existence, nevertheless, in the writing of Thoreau and Teresa, St Francis and Eckhart, Rumi and endless others, it evokes, resources for celebration of presence to whatever life delivers, and hence ways to stave off at least part of the suffering that afflicts us. In this, mysticism has an alliance with art, literature, and philosophy,

The texts we read evoke struggles between defeat and hope that no life can escape. The quest for the sort of vision and sensibility we call mystical is part of humanity's effort, individually and collectively, to shore up capacities for confidence and poise in the face of all that would crush us.