

History 310 – 01 (GL, WGS)
Fall 2008
Daughters of Eve: Women in the Middle Ages

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Course Description

To study the history of women in the Middle Ages, we will abandon the traditional political narrative in favor of issues of concern to medieval women and to their historians: the changing definitions of feminine gender, the understanding of women's roles in family and marriage, the religious activities and concerns of women, the role of queens in shaping medieval society, and the activities of women who worked in various capacities on the land and in the towns. In emphasizing these aspects of medieval history, we will use primary sources written by and about women to confront the central dichotomy of medieval women's history that women (in the words of one historian) were both "defamed and defended." That is to say, that women were lauded as those who shared in the special status of the Virgin Mary as the mother of God but who also participated in the sin of Eve which brought death into the world. Our roughly chronological study will examine selected individuals and social changes from roughly 500 to 1500. Keep in mind that we are not aiming for an exhaustive overview of women's history during this period, but rather for a thematic study focused on women's roles in the family and in society at large.

Primary Sources

Amt, Emilie, ed. *Women's Lives in Medieval Europe. A Sourcebook*. (Routledge), 1993. ISBN 978-0-415-90628-9.

Heloise & Abelard, *The Letters of Heloise and Abelard*, ed. Betty Radice. (Penguin), 2003, revised edition. ISBN 978-0-140-44899-3.

Chrétien de Troyes. *Erec and Enide*, ed. Dorothy Gilbert (California), 1992. ISBN 978-0-520-07346-3.

The Life of Christina of Markyate: A Twelfth-Century Recluse, ed. C. H. Talbot (MART) 978-0-802-08202-2.

Kempe, Margery. *The Book of Margery Kempe*. (London: Penguin), 1994. ISBN 978-0-140-43251-0.

Christine de Pisan. *The Book of the City of Ladies*.

Student Learning Goals

Upon successful completion of the course the student will be able to:

- Construct an analytical essay using related primary source material as evidence to support an argument in answer to a specific historical question.
- Assess the validity of the argument of a secondary source.
- Demonstrate how historians' understandings of the theoretical concept of gender shape their understandings of medieval women's history.
- Use tools at your disposal to locate relevant secondary sources – articles and book chapters.

For Your Information

Attendance: After you have missed four class periods for any reason, your final average for the course will be reduced by one percentage point (ie from 84 to 83) for each additional absence.

Honor code: Any violation of the honor code (such as plagiarism or cheating) will be dealt with according to UNCG's academic integrity policy. I am particularly concerned about plagiarism from the web. I do not want you to use websites for any of the writing assignments unless a particular website is specifically included as part of the assignment. The primary sources and the lectures will provide you with sufficient information to complete the assignments. For specific explanations about UNCG's academic integrity policy, see the Student Affairs website at <http://academicintegrity.uncg.edu/>.

Assignment completion: Failure to complete any part of the course – especially any of the three essays or the article review – will result in an “F” for the course.

Computer Use: You are more than welcome to use your laptop computer to take notes and to look at websites to which I refer during lecture. I reserve the right, however, to ask you not to bring your computer to class if I discover that you have been using it for personal purposes (e-mail, shopping, web surfing, etc.) during class. Not only is this rude to me as the instructor, it's incredibly distracting to your fellow students.

Reading Advice

Because most of these documents will be totally unfamiliar to you, I recommend taking notes on them as you read. It is also useful to write a brief summary (2-3 sentences) of each document so that you can remember the contents of each text for class discussion. Taking notes on the primary sources you will be writing papers on is especially important. It's much easier to note down important points as you read than it is to go back and find those points again once you've finished reading. Finally, I recommend reading each document more than once. Sometimes it will take

two (or even three) readings for something to make sense to you. Because the amount of reading for our course is fairly small, you'll have plenty of time for re-reading.

Blackboard

Be sure to check on Blackboard (<https://blackboard.uncg.edu/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp>) for course announcements, assignments, and links to important websites.

Adverse Weather Conditions

If you think that the university might be closed due to weather, either call the UNCG Adverse Weather Line at (336) 334-4400 or check the university's website (www.uncg.edu). If the university is open, I will hold class.

Grade Breakdown

Discussion	10%
Source Analysis	15%
Midterm	20%
Term Paper	30%
Final Exam	25%

Course Components

Discussion: Be sure to prepare for class each day by reading and taking notes on the primary and secondary source materials assigned for that day. Keep in mind that asking informed questions, as well as answering mine, are ways to participate in class discussions.

Source analysis: Students will write a two-page analysis on *The Passion of Saints Perpetua and Felicity*. This analysis will focus on a question concerning the gender roles highlighted in this text.

Midterm: Students will write two short (1/2-1 page) source identifications and 2 essays based on the course reading materials. This is a take-home assignment.

Term Paper: Students will consult relevant primary and secondary source material concerning a medieval woman in order to show how her life and work is related to one or more of the themes discussed in our course.

Final Exam: As with the midterm, students will write two source identifications and 2 essays on the source material. In addition, students will answer a thought question. Like the midterm, this is a take-home assignment.

Lecture Topics and Readings

Monday, August 25 – Introductions: Sex and Gender

Wednesday, August 27 – Sex and Gender, part 2

Secondary Source Readings: Ruth Mazo Karras, chapter 1 of *Sexuality in Medieval Europe: Doing Unto Others* (Handout)

Monday, September 1 – Labor Day – No class

Wednesday, September 3 – Classical Medical/Biological Understandings of Woman

Monday, September 8 – Christian Origins: The first three centuries

Primary Source Readings: Amt, 1-23; *The Passion of Saints Perpetua and Felicity* (Handout)

Wednesday, September 10 – Latin Church Fathers

Primary Source Readings: Amt, 23-28.

Monday, September 15 – Merovingian Women

Source analysis due at the beginning of class.

Wednesday, September 17 – Merovingian Queens – Saints & Jezebels

Primary Source Readings: Gregory of Tours on queens and the *lives* of Radegund and Bathild (Handouts)

Monday, September 22 – A Royal Divorce: Lothar & Theutberga

Primary Source Readings: The divorce of Lothar & Theutberga (Handout)

Wednesday, September 24 – Aristocratic Women in Feudal Society

Secondary Source Readings: Kimberly LoPrete, “The gender of lordly women: the case of Adela of Blois” in *Studies on Medieval and Early Modern Women. Pawns or Players?* Christine Meek and Catherine Lawless, eds.

Monday, September 29 – Wives & Mothers: Women in the Family

Wednesday, October 1 – Heiress, Queen, Prisoner: Eleanor of Aquitaine

Monday, October 6 – The Role of the Church: Alexander III & Gratian

Primary Source Readings, Amt, Chapter 2, 79-94.

Wednesday, October 8 –Heloise and Abelard: part 1

Primary Source Readings: *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, Letter 1, *Historia calamitatum*, 3-43.

Monday, October 13 –Heloise and Abelard: part 2

Primary Source Readings: *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, Letters 2-5, 47-89.

Monday, October 20 – Fall Break –No class

Wednesday, October 22 – High Medieval Sanctity: Christina of Markyate
Primary Source Readings: The *Life* of Christina of Markyate

Monday, October 27 – *Matrologia Latina*: Hildegard of Bingen
Primary Source Readings: Amt, 233-235; hymn lyrics (Handout)
Midterm due at the beginning of class.

Wednesday, October 29 – “Holy Feast and Holy Fast”
Primary Source Readings: Caroline Walker Bynum, “Fast, Feast, and Flesh: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women” in *Representations*, vol. 11, no. 1, 1-25.

Monday, November 3 – Women in Literature: Marie de France and troubadour poetry
Medieval poetry (Handout)

Wednesday, November 5 – Women and Literature: *Erec and Enide*
Primary Source Readings: Chrétien de Troyes, *Erec and Enide*, 41-252.

Monday, November 10 – Working Women: Alewives
Primary Source Readings: Amt, 194-208.

Wednesday, November 12 – Working Women: Prostitutes
Primary Source Readings: Amt, 210-213.

Monday, November 17 – Late Medieval Women: Joan of Arc
Primary Source Readings: The trial of Joan of Arc (Handout)

Wednesday, November 29 – Late Medieval Women: Margery Kempe
Primary Source Readings: *The Book of Margery Kempe*, 31-297.

Monday, November 24 Late Medieval Women: gossips & Scolds
Primary Source Readings: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/CT-prolog-bathmod.html>
Term paper due at the beginning of class.

Wednesday, November 26 – Thanksgiving Holiday – No class

Monday, December 1 – Christine de Pisan
Primary Source Readings: Christine de Pisan, *The Book of the City of Ladies*

Wednesday, December 3 – Christine de Pisan

Monday, December 8 – “Woman’s Place...”

Monday, December 15 – *Final due in my office (MHRA 2102) at 3:30.*

