

**History 310 – 01 (GL, WGS)**  
**Fall 2010**  
**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 and noblewomen 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, women were lauded as those who shared in the special status of the Virgin Mary as the mother of God but also participated in the sin of Eve which brought death into the world. Our 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**

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

Margery Kempe. *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. Lynn Staley (Norton), . ISBN 978-0-393-97639-4.

McCarthy, Conor, ed. *Love, Sex and Marriage in the Middle Ages. A Sourcebook*. (Routledge), 2004. ISBN 978-0-415-30746-8.

**Secondary Sources**

Bitel, Lisa. *Women in Early Medieval Europe, 400-1100*. (Cambridge), 2002. ISBN 978-0-521-59773-9.

Ward, Jennifer. *Women in Medieval Europe 1200-1500*. (Longman), 2002. ISBN 978-0-582-28827-0.

### **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, book chapters, and websites.

### **Grade Breakdown**

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

### **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.

Quizzes: Each Thursday you will turn in a take-home quiz that will consist of one or more questions about the week's readings. The quizzes will be posted in Blackboard the Monday prior to the Thursday on which they're due.

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 2 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 2 source identifications and 2 essays on the source material. Like the midterm, this is a take-home assignment.

### **For Your Information**

**Attendance:** After you have missed three class periods for any reason other than athletics, religious observances, or specific personal reasons, 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 written assignments– will result in an “F” for the course. (You will not fail, however, simply for missing a quiz or two.)

**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.

**Cell Phones:** Turn off your cell phones prior to the beginning of class. If you use your phone for talking or texting during class, I will ask you to leave it on the front table every class period for the rest of the semester.

**E-mail:** I will make every attempt to respond to an e-mail from you within 24 hours. If you don't hear from me within that timeframe, feel free to write again. Remember also that I don't stay up particularly late, so if you e-mail me at 2:00 a.m. I won't get it until the next morning. Finally, be sure to check your UNCG e-mail regularly. All mail that I send to the class through Blackboard will come to that account.

### **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](http://www.uncg.edu)). If the university is open, I will hold class.

## **Lecture Topics and Readings**

Tuesday, August 24 – Introductions

Thursday, August 26 – Perpetua and Felicity

Primary Source Readings: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/perpetua.html>

Tuesday, August 31 – “Doing unto others ...”

Secondary Source Readings: Ruth Mazo Karras, chapter 1 of *Sexuality in Medieval Europe: Doing Unto Others* in Blackboard (e-reserves.)

Thursday, September 2 – Greek and Christian Understandings of Women

Primary Source Readings: McCarthy, 27-43.

Secondary Source Readings: Bitel, 95-109.

*Primary Source Analysis (Perpetua and Felicity) due at the beginning of class.*

## **Section 1: Holy Women**

Tuesday, September 7 – Holy Women: Bathild and Radegund

Primary Source Readings: The *Lives* of Bathild and Radegund in Blackboard (e-reserves.)

Secondary Source Readings: Bitel, 114-125.

Thursday, September 9 – Holy Women: the abbesses Heloise and Hildegard

Primary Source Readings: McCarthy, 146-149; selections from Hildegard's writings in Blackboard (e-reserves.)

Secondary Source Readings: Ward, 154-175.

Tuesday, September 14 – Holy Women: Christina of Markyate and other virgins

Primary Source Readings: McCarthy, 134-137.

Thursday, September 16 – Holy Women: *Holy Feast, Holy Fast*

Secondary 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; Ward, 191-208.

Tuesday, September 21 – Holy Women: Saints and Heretics

Primary Source Readings:

[http://www.sjsu.edu/people/nancy.stork/courses/c4/s1/Beatrice\\_de\\_Planissoles](http://www.sjsu.edu/people/nancy.stork/courses/c4/s1/Beatrice_de_Planissoles)

[http://www.sjsu.edu/people/nancy.stork/courses/c4/s1/Barthelemy\\_Amilhac](http://www.sjsu.edu/people/nancy.stork/courses/c4/s1/Barthelemy_Amilhac)

Secondary Source Readings: Ward, 238-251.

Thursday, September 23 – Holy Women: Joan of Arc

Primary Source Readings: in Blackboard (e-reserves.)

Tuesday, September 28 – Holy Women: Margery Kempe (Text)

Primary Source Readings: *The Book of Margery Kempe*, 3-184.

Thursday, September 30 – Holy Women: Margery Kempe (Contexts)

Primary Source Readings: "Contexts" in the Norton Edition of *The Book of Margery Kempe*, 187-222.

Tuesday, October 5 – Holy Women: Margery Kempe (Criticism)

Secondary Source Readings: Criticism in the Norton Edition of *The Book of Margery Kempe*, 225-298.

## Section 2: Aristocratic Women

Thursday, October 7 – Aristocratic Women: Fredegund and Brunhild

<http://www.uncg.edu/~rebarton/frankish-queens.htm> (sections F-O)

Secondary Source Readings: Bitel, 80-88; 154-199.

Tuesday, October 12 – Fall Break, No class

Thursday, October 14 – Aristocratic Women: Theutberga

Primary Source Readings: <http://www.uncg.edu/~rebarton/theutberga.html>

*Midterm due at the beginning of class.*

Tuesday, October 19 – Aristocratic Women: Mathilda/Maud

Secondary Source Readings: Bitel, 277-285; Ward, 110-132.

Thursday, October 21 – Aristocratic Women: Adela of Blois

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.

Tuesday, October 26 – Aristocratic Women: Eleanor of Aquitaine

Primary Source Readings: <http://epistolae.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/woman/24.html>  
(selections)

Thursday, October 28 – Aristocratic Women: Margaret of Anjou

### **Section 3: Women and Law**

Tuesday, November 2 – Women and Law: Marriage (Part 1)

Primary Source Readings: McCarthy, 61-96.

Secondary Source Readings: Ward, 26-44.

Thursday, November 4 – Women and Law: Marriage (Part 2)

Primary Source Readings: McCarthy, 97-128.

Tuesday, November 9 – Women and Law: Prostitution

Primary Sources Readings: in Blackboard (e-reserves.)

Secondary Source Readings: Ward, 102-109.

Thursday, November 11 – Women and Law: Work

Secondary Source Readings: Bitel, 200-239, Ward, 74-93.

### **Section 4: Women and Literature**

Tuesday, November 16 – Women and Literature: Women in Old English Literature

Primary Source Readings: McCarthy, 168-173.

Thursday, November 18 – Women and Literature: the Troubadours and Marie de France

Primary Source Readings: McCarthy, 184-191; Troubadour poetry in Blackboard (e-reserves.)

*Term paper due at the beginning of class.*

Tuesday, November 23 – Women and Literature: *Erec and Enide*

Primary Source Readings: *Erec and Enide*, 41-252.

Thursday, November 25 – Thanksgiving Break, No class.

Tuesday, November 30 – Women and Literature: Chaucer: The Wife of Bath and Patient Griselda

Primary Source Readings: McCarthy, 220-241; 198-203;

<http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/webcore/murphy/canterbury/7wife.pdf> (just the portrait)

Thursday, December 2 – Women and Literature: Christine de Pisan and the *Romance of the Rose*

Primary Source Readings: McCarthy, 191-195; 203-206.

Thursday, December 9 at noon – *Final Essay due in my office (MHRA 2102.)*