

Daughters of Eve, or Sisters of Mary? Women in the Middle Ages



Course Information:

History 310-01 (CRN 80158); TR 9:30-10:45; BRYN 106

Instructor Information:

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Course Description:

This course offers an introduction to the experience of women in the Middle Ages through close examination of writings by and about women. In so doing we will be less concerned with the more traditional elements of medieval history and more interested in how such elements came to shape women's lives and opportunities. One of the central themes will be the importance of gender as a category of cultural difference; with this in mind we will spend a fair amount of time considering the ways in which medieval society defined femininity, appropriate female behavior, and the female body, as well as the ways in which those definitions and understandings changed over time. Among the two paradigms to be considered will be the two most common and paradoxical medieval understandings of women: as "daughters of Eve" women were inherently sinful and inferior, but as "sisters of Mary" women shared in the virtues and special status of the Virgin. A second organizing principle will involve power and agency; we will be concerned to ask whether and how women could exercise power (or act as 'agents' as opposed to 'subjects'). To do so we will need to think about

how we conceive of power, and how power can be located in some untraditional forms and places. Third, since in the Middle Ages, as now, women and femininity were understood and culturally defined only in relation to men and masculinity, we will also spend some time comparing female experience with the experience of men. Fourth, we will examine the changing role of Christianity in shaping both women's lives and spirituality. In our exploration of these themes we will depend upon analysis of significant primary sources about women and femininity written both by men and by women.

What is Speaking Intensive, and How Will it Appear in this Class?

Speaking Intensive is a marker that may be attached to any course at UNCG; it indicates that in that class students will be expected to perform a number of different kinds of oral communication. Although many students are nervous about such classes, I find that they are actually more fun than ordinary classes, since everyone gets to know each other and we all get into the readings in a more engaged way. For this course, you will be asked to perform two general kinds of speaking during the semester:

Individual speaking - you will be offering your analysis and/or opinion to the class. This will come in a number of different ways:

- presentation of an author's or a source's argument
- presentation of your own research

Group Speaking - you will participate in a group (of 5 or 12) students in a more collaborative form of oral communication:

- participation in general discussion
- debate participation
- group presentation of topic for the day

REQUIRED BOOKS (available for sale at the UNCG bookstore):

Conor McCarthy, ed., *Love, Sex and Marriage in the Middle Ages: A Sourcebook* (NY: Routledge, 2003). ISBN: 9780415307468. Ordered

Other readings are available on Canvas. You **MUST** print out and bring the canvas readings to class. I won't be sympathetic to the claim that this represents an additional cost, as I have only assigned one book. Plan ahead to print your canvas readings!

Teaching Strategies

As a speaking intensive class, the course is primarily organized around discussion of texts. We will be reading original sources from the Middle Ages along with some modern commentaries and will be discussing them as a class. Written work will include analysis and interpretation of these texts. Once in a while I will offer a mini-lecture so as to contextualize the reading material.

Student Learning Goals:

A student who successfully completes this class ought to be able to:

1. Analyze historical duration, succession, and change in terms of human agency and larger systems or structures in a wide variety of places and periods.
2. Use historical thinking to contextualize and analyze primary and secondary sources representing different points of view.
3. Conduct original research by investigating and interpreting primary and secondary sources.
4. Use evidence-based reasoning to interpret the past coherently while developing and presenting an original argument, orally and in writing. [
5. Apply theoretical frameworks of analysis - including gender, agency, and power - to interpretations of the past

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Presentation of readings	10%
General discussion	5%
Average of 10 best Weekly Quizzes	10%
Debate	5%
Essay 1: Gender as a Tool of Analysis	15%
Essay 2: Interpreting one of the Debates	15%
Annotated Bibliography	5%
Oral Presentation (8 min.) to the class	15%
Final Assignment	20%

Explanation of Course Requirements:

1. General Participation [Goals 2, 4, 5]

This course emphasizes the reading and discussion of written texts. To get the most out of the course, you should attend regularly and come to class prepared to discuss the readings that were assigned for that class meeting. You are strongly encouraged to take written notes on the readings. With primary sources, this might involve significant comments or events (with the appropriate page number so you can find them again if necessary). With secondary sources, you should try to jot down the main interpretive points of the reading. It is essential that you know the argument of any assigned secondary source. In terms of grading discussion, I have found that if you rarely or never open your mouth in class, your discussion grade will probably be in the low C range. To get in the A range, you should be making regular comments and/or asking questions each day. The notes you take on the readings is a good jumping-off point for discussion.

2. Group Presentation of Readings [Goals, 2, 4, 5]

I expect participation and discussion of all students. To facilitate this process, students will be assigned to 4- or 5-person groups at the end of the second week of class. Each group will be responsible TWICE for introducing the readings assigned for that week.

What does that mean? It means that each member of the group must write 4-6 thoughtful questions about the assigned readings; these questions are ones that the group members will pose to the rest of the class as a means of initiating discussion. The group must collect their questions in advance and send me a SINGLE document with all the questions listed on them, along with indication of who wrote them; I need to receive that document by 9 AM on the day your group is responsible for presenting the readings. In addition, your group must decide upon five or six of the larger set of questions that you will pose (in other words, if four students each write 6 questions, then it might be hard to discuss all 24 questions; your group is to boil down the questions to a manageable 5-6); you can indicate this on the document you send to me by asterisks or however else you like. When you come to class, EACH MEMBER of the group must pose at least one question to the group (even if the question was not originally her/his). Follow-up, or clarifying questions are also encouraged, especially if you feel as if the class isn't getting the drift of your question. Other members of the group can also chime in once the first member has posed (and/or restated, redirected, or followed-up) her/his question.

You will notice that groups need to collaborate in advance of class; your group will need to produce the single document with all question; your group will need to decide which of the larger set of questions are the ones it wants to pose; and your group will need to decide which member asks which questions.

Your individual grade will depend on a combination of the quality of the questions that you wrote for both presentations and your oral performance in presenting your question(s) and directing your fellow students. I'll provide you with feedback after the first time introducing the readings.

3. Quizzes [Goals 1, 2, 5]

Most Thursdays there will be a short (10 minute) quiz on the readings assigned for that week (including the material assigned for the day of the quiz). Of the 12 quizzes, I will count the ten best towards your quiz grade. Most quizzes will contain objective (multiple choice, true/false, etc.) questions, and will be based directly on the primary source readings. I will not try to trip you up with trivial-pursuit style questions, but rather will aim towards larger, interpretive questions. On some weeks, however, quizzes may contain short answer questions or even a single interpretive question.

4. Debates [Goals 1, 2, 4, 5]

Twice during the semester, we will engage in formal debate. On these occasions, the ordinary small groups will be merged into two 'sides', each of which will take one side of an issue; the two sides will prepare arguments and assemble specific evidence to support their side of the issue; finally, we will have formal debate. Half of each team will have primary speaking responsibility for the first debate, while the other half will take over the second debate. Your debate grade will be based only on that debate in which you are a primary speaker (although you are expected to help prepare your overall team for both debates). Grades will be based on oral performance in the debate. Specific debate guidelines will be issued during the semester.

5. Essay: Gender as a Tool of Analysis [Goals: 2, 4, 5]

For this 3-4 page essay I will ask you to explain the concept of gender and evaluate its strengths and weaknesses as a tool of historical analysis by considering one of the topics covered in class to this point. The essay should be at least three (3) full pages in length.

6. Essay: Interpreting one of the Debates [Goal:, 2, 4]

Following the second debate, students will write a 3-4 page analytical essay arguing for one of the two sides of either of the cases which the class debated. That is, you may write either on Heloise and Abelard, or on Joan of Arc. You must use solid historical evidence (i.e., the primary sources!) to back up your argument (i.e., don't write solely from emotion). You need not argue the side that your team debated orally, nor do you need to write about the case in which you participated. I am looking here for well-constructed, well-organized arguments that flow logically and are well-supported with evidence.

7. Short Research Project

Each student will conduct a short research project on a specific medieval woman. You will not have to write an actual research paper, but instead will conduct some preliminary research on the woman in question. The project will be comprised of three short assignments

a. Choice of a topic

Choose the subject of your research and inform me in writing.

b. Annotated Bibliography [Goals: 3]

You must locate 5-10 items, comprising both primary and secondary sources, and present them in the Chicago Style for bibliographies. You must also provide a 1-2 sentence evaluation of its value for your project. Note: try to acquire the most up-to-date and scholarly works on your subject. This means, for instance, that *Uppity Women of the Middle Ages* (as fun as it is and I should know, since I own it!) is not an appropriate source for your research. And, if there are two biographies of your person, written in 1900 and 2000 respectively, the more recent one (if it is academic) will almost always be superior. If you're having difficulties evaluating the quality of a source, come talk to me.

c. Oral Presentation [Goals: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5]

Beginning on November 8, we will cease to have group presentations and will turn instead to individual presentations by students on the subject of their research. Each student will have about 8 minutes of time to introduce (very quickly) and say something analytical about their person. There will be 3 or 4 presentations each day, on a schedule to be determined.

Students will be evaluated by me and by the rest of the class in terms of content and presentation.

8. Final Assignment

I am going to give you a choice here. Either you can write an 8-10 page research paper on the subject of your short research project, or you can write a take-home final exam. I don't care which you choose to do, nor do I think one is 'harder' than the other. It's really up to you. I will only ask that you make your decision before the last day of class.

Option 1: Research Paper [1, 2, 3, 4, 5]

Remember that your paper should not be a summary of your subject's life; it should be an analysis of some problem relating to her life and/or influence. The paper should be 8-10 pages in length, with foot- or endnotes, and a bibliography. It should also argue a clear point (and thus should not merely report facts). If you are considering this option, I strongly urge you to make an appointment to see me before Thanksgiving so we can talk about your ideas.

Option 2: Take-Home Final Exam [1, 2, 4, 5]

This will be a comprehensive written synthesis of the themes of the course. I will distribute questions during the last week of classes, and will expect a total of 6-10 pages of typed answers to a combination of short-answers and a longer essay. You may expect to see some 'big picture' questions (i.e., on gender, identity, women and power, etc.)

Grading Scale:

100-97% = A+	89-87 = B+	59 or lower = F
96-93 = A	86-83 = B	
92-90 = A-	82-80 = B-	
79-77 = C+	69-67 = D+	
76-73 = C	66-63 = D	
70-72 = C-	60-62 = D-	

Attendance Policy

Attendance is mandatory. You are allowed to miss 2 classes without explanation; for every subsequent absence, I will deduct 1 point from your final cumulative course grade. Missed quizzes cannot be made up.

Academic Honor Code

Each student is required to sign the Academic Integrity Policy on all major work submitted for the course. Refer to this address on the UNCG website for more details:
<http://studentconduct.uncg.edu/policy/academicintegrity/complete/>.

Additional Requirements and Advice

1. In case later consultation should prove necessary, students are asked to keep copies of all graded assignments until at least the end of the semester.
2. All course requirements must be completed to receive a grade for the class.
3. **Late work** will be penalized by 1/3 of a letter grade (ie., A to A-) per day it is late unless previous arrangements have been made with the instructor.
4. **Plagiarism** is a serious academic offense that occurs when someone - whether knowingly or not - uses the words or ideas of someone else without giving that person credit for those words or ideas with a formal citation. I therefore expect that all written (and oral) work will be your own. Should I find evidence to the contrary, I will consider any and/or all of the punitive sanctions made available to me by the university. When in doubt, cite your source. If you are unclear about what constitutes plagiarism, please see me in private - I'm happy to discuss it.

SEQUENCE OF CLASSES:

Notes on Readings:

You are expected to do the readings in full before the class for which they are assigned.

I recognize full well that medieval texts can sometimes seem dense and unforgiving. Don't despair! Our collective mission is to force them, through discussion and analysis, to reveal their secrets. I don't expect you to be masters of a topic after doing the reading, especially if it is hard. I do expect, however, you to think carefully both about the surface meaning of the medieval author's text (what he or she said) and about the significance or value that each text may hold for modern readers. In the case of works by modern authors, you should attempt to understand the author's main argument (that is, of what is the author trying to convince you? What does s/he want you to believe? Why?) and to spend some time evaluating it (does the author succeed? Why or why not? Do you buy it? Why or why not? Does the author present enough - and convincing enough - evidence to persuade you?).

Week	Date	Class Topic	Readings	Due-Dates
Week 1	August 14	No Class (Semester hasn't begun yet)		
	August 16	Course Intro	n.a.	
Week 2	August 21	Gender? and, Greek and Roman Backgrounds	1. Canvas: Aristotle and Galen on the Nature, Biology and Social Position of Women 2. Canvas: Roman Laws on Marriage and Sexuality (5 pp) 3. J-Stor: Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis?," <i>American Historical Review</i> 91 (1986): 1053-75.	
	August 23	Biblical Archetypes	1. Amt, 9-16 2. Canvas: Biblical Texts on Women (some overlap with Amt)	quiz

Week 3	August 28	Church Fathers	1. Canvas: the Church Fathers (10 pp) 2. Amt, 17-20 (some overlap)	Group A
	August 30	Early Medieval Laws	1. Amt, 26-32, 34, 68-70 2. Canvas: Janet Nelson and Alice Rio, "Women and Laws in Medieval Europe," in Judith Bennett and Ruth Karras, eds., The Oxford Handbook of Women & Gender in Medieval Europe (Oxford, 2013), p. 103-117.	1. Group B 2. Quiz
Week 4	September 4	NO CLASS: Labor Day		
	September 6	Later Medieval Laws	1. Amt, 35-38, 40-66	1. Group C 2. Quiz
Week 5	September 11	Early Medieval Marriage: Gregory of Tours	1. McCarthy, 13-22 2. McCarthy, 163 3. Canvas: Frankish Queens (17 pp)	Group D
	September 13	Early Medieval Marriage: Lothar v. Theutberga	1. Canvas: the Lothar-Theutberga Dossier (18 pp)	1. Group E 2. Quiz
Week 6	September 18	The Marriage Revolution: Gratian, Clerical Celibacy and Marriage	1. Canvas: Gregorian Reform and Clerical Celibacy 2. Canvas: Marriage Law and Marriage Texts 3. McCarthy, 61-64 (Gratian, Peter Lombard, Greg IX) 4. McCarthy, 68-72 (Lateran IV) 5. Canvas: Amt, 79-80, 83-84 (cases)	1. Group F 2. Gender Essay
	September 20	Abelard and Heloise	1. Canvas: Letters 1-5 (92 pp)	1. Group A 2. Quiz 3. Choice of Subject for Research

Week 7	September 25	Debate Preparation		
	September 27	DEBATE: Abelard and Heloise		Debate
Week 8	October 2	High Medieval Noblewomen	1. Canvas: Norman Noblewomen 2. Amt, 118-124	1. Group B 2. Annotated Bibliographies
	October 4	Late Medieval Noblewomen	1. Canvas: Paston Letters 2. McCarthy, 149-151 (paston letter) 2. Amt, 127-140	1. Group C 2. Quiz
Week 9	October 9	NO CLASS: Fall Break		
	October 11	Women and Work: Peasants	1. Amt, 147-160	1. Group D 2. Quiz
Week 10	October 16	Women and Work: Townswomen	2. Amt, 161-180	Group E
	October 18	Holy Women: Radegund and Balthild	1. Canvas: lives of Radegund and Balthild	1. Group F 2. Quiz
Week 11	October 23	Holy Women: Christina of Markyate and Hildegard of Bingen	1. Canvas: excerpts from Christina's Life 2. Amt, 193-194 3. Canvas: excerpts from Hildegard's writings	Oral Reports
	October 25	Holy Women and Food: Catherine of Siena and Others	1. Canvas: Catherine of Siena 2. McCarthy, 137-138 3. Bynum, Holy Feast/Holy Fast	1. Oral Reports 2. Quiz
Week 12	October 30	Holy Women? Margery Kempe	1. Canvas: Excerpts from the Booke of Margery Kempe	Oral Reports

	November 1	Holy Women? Joan of Arc	1. Canvas: Trial of Joan of Arc	Quiz
Week 13	November 6	Medieval Medical and Scientific Knowledge	1. McCarthy, 257-273	
	November 8	Debate: Joan of Arc		Debate
Week 14	November 13	'Deviants'? Prostitutes, Lesbians and Transvestites	1. McCarthy, 8-13 2. Canvas: London Prostitutes (see Amt, 176-178, plus a bit more not in Amt) 3. McCarthy, 126-128 (John/Eleanor) 4. McCarthy, 183-184 (on lesbians) 5. McCarthy, 177-179 (against same-sex love) 6. McCarthy, 216-219 (Gower) 7. McCarthy, 155-156	1. Oral Reports 2. Due: Essay on Debates
	November 15	'Deviants' Heretics and Witches	1. Canvas: Women in Popular Movements 2. Canvas: Marguerite Porete (heretic) 3. Amt, 249-257 4. Laura Stokes, "towards the Witch Craze," in <i>the Oxford Handbook of Women & Gender in Medieval Europe</i> , p. 577-589	1. Oral Reports 2. Quiz
Week 15	November 20	Women in Literature: Courtly Love (Chretien de Troyes, Marie de France)	1. McCarthy, p. 4-7 2. Canvas: excerpts from Chretien de Troyes, Yvain, or the Knight of the Cart 3. McCarthy, 184-191 (Marie de France, Yonec) 4. Canvas: June Hall McCash, "The Image of Women in the 'Lais' of Marie de France," <i>Medieval Perspectives</i> 11 (1996): 96-112 5. Canvas: Lynn Ramey,	Oral Reports

“Representations of Women in Chrétien’s *Erec and Enide*: Courtly Literature or Misogyny?” *Romanic Review* 84 (1993): 377-386.

	November 22	NO CLASS: Thanksgiving		
Week 16	November 27	Women in Literature: Chaucer, the Wife of Bath, and Patient Griselda	1. McCarthy, 219-242 2. McCarthy, 198-203 (Christine, Griselda)	Oral Reports
	November 29	Women of Literature: Christine of Pizan and the Debate of the Rose	1. McCarthy, 191-195, 203-206 2. Canvas: excerpts from Christine de Pizan	1. Oral Reports 2. Quiz
	November 30 (Thurs.)	Reading Day		
Week 17	Monday, December 4			Due: Final Paper, at noon, in my office