

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



Course Information:

History 310-01 (CRN 816168); TR 11:00-12:15; MHRA 1209

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 several 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):

Emilie Amt., ed., *Women's Lives in Medieval Europe: A Sourcebook*, 2nd edition (Routledge, 2010). ISBN: 978-0415466837. **REQUIRED**

Judith Bennett and Ruth Karras, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe* (Oxford, 2013). ISBN: 9780198779384. **RECOMMENDED**. I have also placed this book on Reserve in Jackson Library.

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	10%
Essay 1: Gender as a Tool of Analysis	10%
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 for introducing the readings assigned for that day on two separate occasions.

What does that mean? It means that the group should decide together what the most important 'take-away' points from the reading(s) are. This can be accomplished by face-to-face or electronic communication. I suggest that each member of the group jot down 4-6 questions about the readings and 1-2 analytical points derived from the questions. These questions should not be factual ('who said x?', but rather thoughtful and analytical (about meaning); the analytical point might an answer to one of the questions, or it might reflect a summary of several questions. Then, in discussing the readings with your group, your group must come up with one analytical point for each member of the group. The group should tabulate their analytical questions in advance and send me a SINGLE document with all of the analytical points listed on the document; I need to receive that document by 10:30 AM on the day your group is responsible for presenting the readings.

In class, after I make announcements, EACH MEMBER of your group will present your analytical point, and then invite comments and observations from the rest of the class. You can do this by asking specific questions of your classmates. Other members of the group can also chime in once the first member has posed (and/or restated, redirected, or followed-up) her/his point. Each person should talk for a couple of minutes before opening up to the rest of the class; simply rushing out a one-sentence observation is not enough. I anticipate that presentations by the entire group will take about 10-15 minutes

You will notice that groups need to collaborate in advance of class; your group will need to produce the single document with all its points; your group will need to decide which member discusses each point.

Your individual grade will depend on a combination of the quality of the point that you make about the readings and your oral performance in presenting your points(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 [Goals: 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 or topic related to medieval gender norms. 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 October 18, 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. That is, you should pose some analytical question and answer it using the primary and secondary sources you have located. 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	Course Intro	n.a.	
	August 16	Women, Gender, the Middle Ages, and Speaking	1. Dyan Elliott, "Gender and the Christian Traditions," in Judith Bennett and Ruth Karras, eds., <i>The Oxford Handbook of Women & Gender in Medieval Europe</i> (Oxford, 2013), p. 21-35. 2. speaking	
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. Amt, p. 21-25	

	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) 3. Amt, 182-183	Group A
	August 30	Early Medieval Laws	1. Amt, 26-32, 34-35, 68-70 2. Canvas: Janet Nelson and Alice Rio, "Women and Laws in Medieval Europe," in Judith Bennett and Ruth Karras, eds., <i>The Oxford Handbook of Women & Gender in Medieval Europe</i> (Oxford, 2013), p. 103-117.	1. Group B 2. Quiz
Week 4	September 4	Later Medieval Laws	1. Amt, 35-40 (Gratian, Lateran IV), 52-60 (Spanish Laws), 61-63 (London Crimes and Punishments) 2. Sara McDougall, "Women and Gender in Canon Law", in <i>The Oxford Handbook of Women & Gender in Medieval Europe</i> (Oxford, 2013), p. 163-178	1. Group C 2. Quiz
	September 6	Early Medieval Marriage, c. 400-850: Gregory of Tours	1. Amt, 108-109 2. Canvas: Frankish Queens (17 pp) 3. Amt, 110-114 (Dhuoda)	Group D
Week 5	September 11	Medieval Marriage, c.850-1300	1. Canvas: the Lothar-Theutberga Dossier (11 pp) 2. Amt, 71-74 (Christina of Markyate) 3. Amt, 86-94 (Householder)	1. Group E 2. Quiz
	September 13	Medieval Medical "Knowledge"	1. Amt, 95-106 2. Monica Green, "Caring for Gendered Bodies," in <i>The Oxford Handbook of Women & Gender in Medieval Europe</i> (Oxford, 2013), p. 347-361	1. Group F
Week 6	September 18	Abelard and Heloise	1. Canvas: Abelard and Heloise, Letters 1-5 (92 pp)	1. Group A 2. Quiz 3. Gender

	September 20	Debate Preparation		Essay 1. Choice of Subject for Research
Week 7	September 25	DEBATE: Abelard and Heloise		Debate
	September 27	High Medieval Noblewomen	1. Canvas: Norman Noblewomen 2. Amt, 118-124 3. Canvas: Joanna Drell, "Aristocratic Economies: Women and Family", in <i>The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe</i> , p. 327-342	1. Group B 2. Annotated Bibliographies
Week 8	October 2	Elite Women and Power: Eleanor of Aquitaine	1. Letters of Eleanor of Aquitaine, at Epistolaria: Medieval Women's Latin Letters (https://epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/woman/24.html). Read these letters: 1) to Pope Alexander III; 2) one of the 3 to Pope Celestine III; 3) to John, king of England; 4) from Peter of Blois; 5) from Richard, king of England (1193; the first letter, whose body opens "First to God and then to your serenity"); 6) from Rotrud (s/be Rotrou) of Rouen, archbishop. 2. Amalie Fössel, "The Political Traditions of Female Rulership in Medieval Europe," in <i>The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe</i> , p. 327-342	1. Group C 2. Quiz
	October 4	Women and Work: Peasants	1. Amt, 147-159 2. Canvas: Jane Whittle "Rural Economies", in <i>The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe</i> , p. 311-326	1. Group D 2. Quiz
Week 9	October 9	NO CLASS: Fall Break		
	October 11	Women and Work: Townswomen	1. Amt, 161-166, 168-173 2. Canvas: Kathryn Reyerson, "Urban Economies", in <i>The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe</i> , p. 295-310.	Group E

Week 10	October 16	Holy Women: Radegund and Balthild	1. Canvas: lives of Radegund and Balthild 2. Canvas: Lisa M. Bitel, "Gender and the Initial Christianization of Northern Europe (to 1000 CE)," in <i>The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe</i> , p. 415-431	1. Group F 2. Quiz
	October 18	Holy Women: Hildegard of Bingen	1. Amt, 193-194 2. Canvas: excerpts from Hildegard's writings 3. Fiona J. Griffiths, "Women and Reform in the Central Middle Ages," in <i>The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe</i> , p. 447-463	Oral Reports
Week 11	October 23	Holy Women and Food: Catherine of Siena and Others	1. Canvas: Catherine of Siena 3. Canvas: Caroline Walker Bynum, "Fast, Feast and Flesh: the Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women" <i>Representations</i> 11 (1985), 1-25	1. Oral Reports 2. Quiz
	October 25	Holy Women? Margery Kempe	1. Canvas: Excerpts from the Booke of Margery Kempe 2. Kathleen Ashley, "Cultures of Devotion," in <i>The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe</i> , p. 511-526	Oral Reports
Week 12	October 30	Holy Women? Joan of Arc	1. Canvas: Trial of Joan of Arc	Quiz
	November 1	Debate Prep	1. Canvas: Trial of Joan of Arc	
Week 13	November 6	Debate: Joan of Arc		Debate
	November 8	'Deviants'? Prostitutes, Lesbians and Transvestites	1. Canvas: London Prostitutes (see Amt, 176-178, plus a bit more not in Amt) 2. Canvas: selections from McCarthy, <i>Love, Sex and Marriage</i> , pp. 126-128 (John/Eleanor), 183-184 (on lesbians), 177-179 (against same-sex love), 216-219 (Gower), 155-156 3. Helmut Puff, "Same-Sex Possibilities," in <i>The Oxford Handbook of Women & Gender in Medieval Europe</i> , p. 379-395.	1. Oral Reports 2. Due: Essay on Debates

Week 14	November 13	'Deviants' Heretics and Witches	1. 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
	November 15	Women in Literature: Courty Love (Marie de France)	1. Canvas: Marie de France, <i>Lais</i> , Lanval and Yonec 2. Canvas: June Hall McCash, "The Image of Women in the 'Lais' of Marie de France," <i>Medieval Perspectives</i> 11 (1996): 96-112	Oral Reports
Week 15	November 20	Women in Literature: Chaucer, the Wife of Bath, and Patient Griselda	1. Canvas: Chaucer, <i>Canterbury Tales</i> , excerpts from McCarthy, 219-242 2. Christine of Pizan, story of Patient Griselda from <i>Book of the City of Ladies</i> , from McCarthy, 198-203	Oral Reports
	November 22	NO CLASS: Thanksgiving		
Week 16	November 27	Women of Literature: Christine of Pizan and the Debate of the Rose	1. Canvas: excerpts from Christine de Pizan 2. Amt, 135-138 (Christine on her own life) 3. Roberta Krueger, "Towards Feminism: Christine de Pizan, Female Advocacy and Women's Textual Communities in the Late Middle Ages and Beyond," in <i>The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe</i> , p. 590-606.	1. Oral Reports 2. Quiz
	November 29	NO CLASS: Reading Day		
Week 17	Tuesday, December 4			Due: Final Paper, at noon, in my office