

TR 11-12:15
Clough 304

Prof. S. Uselmann
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Palmer 311
Office hrs: MW 9:30-11:30

English 385: Medieval Literature
Nuns, Mothers and Others: Medieval Women Writers

This course is designed to introduce you to women writers of the Middle Ages who wrote in English, French, and Latin. It examines the writings of medieval women -- abbesses, merchants, wives, mothers, and mystics -- to explore the challenges that female writers presented to orthodox Christianity, to gender stereotypes, and to medieval political and social structures. The course has three primary objectives: to discover the rich variety of women's literary voices in the Middle Ages, to analyze the works of medieval women in their historical context, and to explore the relationship between medieval and contemporary theoretical issues concerning gender and literature. As a junior seminar for the English major, this course also has a secondary objective, which is to hone your skills of analyzing literary criticism and literary theory to develop your readings of the literature itself.

TEXTBOOKS:

Cambridge Companion to Medieval Women's Writing, ed. Dinshaw and Wallace (CC)
The Letters of Abelard and Heloise (Penguin)
Chretien de Troyes, *Arthurian Romances* (Penguin)
The Lais of Marie de France (Penguin)
Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies* (Persea Books)
Anchoritic Spirituality, ed. Savage and Watson (Paulist Press) (AS)
Julian of Norwich, *The Revelations of Divine Love* (Penguin)
The Book of Margery Kempe (Penguin)
Recommended: *The Wife of Bath*, Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. Peter Beidler (Case Studies in Contemporary Criticism)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Class Participation, Quizzes, In-Class Writing. This class comes with a heavy reading load and will be run primarily in a discussion format. It goes without saying that I expect you to come prepared with your book and having done the assigned reading for the day. Regular, active participation is also required, although I will periodically give quizzes or informal writing assignments in class to help boost the grade of those who feel they haven't had a chance to contribute.

WebCT/Blackboard: As part of your class participation, you will be required to respond to the readings by posing a question or series of questions to the class at least TEN (10) times over the course of the semester. The questions are due by **12:00 midnight the Monday before class**. The response should be in the form of a question(s) that struck you as you read – for example some incident, passage, framing device, etc. that struck you as strange, unfamiliar, or problematic. You may also, if you like, offer a brief answer to your own question, but this is not required.

Group-Led Discussion and Critical Essay. In addition to the required readings, each member of the class will be responsible for leading a discussion and writing an essay on ONE of the supplementary readings. To do this, you will read an extra essay (on reserve at the library) that addresses some of the core theoretical concepts that underscore the week's assigned texts. This assignment is 25 % of your final grade (5% summary and discussion; 20% essay), and consists of three parts:

1. Reading the supplementary article and posting a brief summary (250 words or less) on WebCT **by the 5:00 on Tuesday before your presentation.**
2. Leading a 15-minute discussion of the critical readings assigned for class. Here, you might introduce the most salient concepts of your research and/or ask them questions about the day's reading that struck you as a result of your supplementary reading. There is an art to asking discussion questions and I'd be happy to help you with this part of the assignment, so please feel free to come see me. Be sure to email me to let me know your plans **by 5:00 on Tuesday before your presentation.**
3. Writing an essay (5-7 pp.) that explores the intersection between the critical essay, the supplementary reading and the texts we have been reading in class. The essay is **due two weeks following your presentation.**

All three parts must be completed in order to receive a passing grade on the assignment. If you have any questions about the readings or the assignment, or just want to run some ideas past me, please don't hesitate to email or come by to see me.

Essays and Exams. There will be 3 essays and a "midterm" exam (which actually occurs rather late in the semester). The Close Reading Essay will be a literary analysis of one or more texts that uses no outside sources. The Critical Essay and the Final Essay, as well as the midterm exam, will require you to integrate supplementary reading material – including (1) the essays from the *Cambridge Companion*, (2) your own supplementary reading, and (3) the presentation/summaries of those of your classmates.

Absences. Regular, punctual attendance is required. Arriving more than 15 minutes late three times counts as an absence. Failure to bring your book to class or to pass the day's quiz also counts as an absence. Absences for extracurricular activities, religious holidays, or illness may be excused as long as you have contacted me in advance and completed the necessary homework/make-up work on time. You are allowed two (2) absences free-of-charge; each additional absence will cost your *final course average* two tenths of a point. If you miss more than 6 classes, you will fail the course.

Late Paper Policy. There will be NO extensions on any assignments in this class. Instead, you will be allotted three (3) "free" days at the beginning of the semester, which you may use when and as you wish. Each day is worth 24 hours (e.g. a paper due on Thursday may be handed in by Friday by 12:15), and you are free to use them up all at once or space them throughout the semester. It's up to you, but be aware that once these three days are used up, your letter grade on any given essay will drop 1/3 grade *for each day it is late.*

Grading.

Class participation, quizzes, informal/in-class writing assignments and e-postings – 10%
 Group-Led Discussion and Summary – 5%
 Proposal and Annotated Bibliography – 5 %
 "Midterm" Exam — 15%
 Close Reading Essay (5-7 pp.) – 15 %
 Critical Essay (5-7 pp.) – 20%
 Final Essay (8-10 pp.) – 30 %

Honor Code. All work must adhere to the honor code.

Questions, problems, or concerns? Please always feel free to contact me. Most difficulties can be prevented from becoming serious problems fairly easily -- if the professor knows about them in advance.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Unit 1: The Problem of Authorship

Week 1:

R 8/23

Introduction
Old English poetry

Week 2:

T 8/28

The Letters of Abelard and Heloise, pp. 3-111

R 8/30

The Letters of Abelard and Heloise, c'tued
Jennifer Summit, "Women and Authorship" (CC, pp. 91-108)
(optional: Christopher Baswell, "Heloise," CC, pp. 161-71)
Discussion #1: Summit's essay, "The Death of the Author" and "What is an Author?"

Week 3:

T 9/4

Chrétien de Troyes, pp. 207-94, "The Knight of the Cart (Lancelot)"

R 9/6

Chrétien de Troyes, "The Knight of the Cart," c'tued
Sarah McNamer, "Lyrics and Romance" (CC, pp. 195-209)
Discussion #2: McNamer's essay and Culler, "Reading as a Woman"

Week 4:

T 9/11

The Lais of Marie de France, pp. 41-126

R 9/13

The Lais of Marie de France, cont'd
Roberta Krueger, "Marie de France" (CC, pp. 172-83)
Discussion #3: Krueger's essay and Toril Moi, "Desire in Language"

Unit 2: The Problem of Antifeminism

Week 5:

T 9/18

Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies* pp. xxvi-xxx (list of Christine's works); pp. 3-55 (Book 1, sections 1-20); pp. 62-79 (sections 27-37); pp. 86-95 (sections 43-46); pp. 99-106 (book 2, sections 1-4).
Jean de Meun, excerpts from *Romance of the Rose* (class handout)

R 9/20

Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies*, c'tued
David Hult, "The *Roman de la Rose*, Christine de Pizan, and the *querelle des femmes*" (CC, pp. 184-94)
Discussion #4: Hult's essay and Toril Moi, from *Sexual/Textual Politics*

Week 6:

T 9/25

Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies*, pp. 110-126 (book 2, sections 7-17); pp. 134-135 (section 25); pp. 142-149 (sections 30-33); pp. 153-158 (sections 36-41); pp. 160-162 (section 44); pp. 164-168 (sections 47-48); pp. 184-192 (sections 53-57); pp. 209-223 (sections 2.66-3.4); 234-245 (sections 10-13); pp. 254-257 (section 19).
(optional: Barbara Hanawalt, "Widows," CC, pp. 58-69)

R 9/27 Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies*, c'tued
Karma Lochrie, "Between Women" (CC)
Discussion #5: Lochrie and Laqueur, "Destiny is Anatomy," from *Making Sex*

Week 7:

T 10/2 Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale
DUE: Essay on Abelard and Heloise/Chrétien/Christine

R 10/4 Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale, c'tued
Carolyn Dinshaw, "Glose/Bele Chose"
Discussion #6: Dinshaw and Helene Cixous, "Laugh of the Medusa"

Unit 3: The Problem of Women and the Church

Week 8:

T 10/9 Holy Maidenhood [excerpt] (AS pp. 234-43)
Saint Katherine (AS pp. 262-87)
Saint Margaret (AS pp. 288-305)
The Wooing of Our Lord (AS pp. 245-58)

R 10/11 Ruth Evans, "Virginites" (CC, pp. 21-39)
Discussion #7: Evans and Judith Butler, from *Gender Trouble*

Week 9:

T 10/16 No Class – Fall Break

R 10/18 *Ancrene Wisse*, pp. 47-207 in AS (read Intro, Part I (skim), Parts II-III, VI-VIII)

Week 10:

T 10/23 *Ancrene Wisse*, c'tued
Christopher Cannon, "Enclosure" (CC, pp. 109-23)
Discussion #8: Cannon and Eve Sedgwick, "Epistemology of the Closet"

R 10/25 Julian of Norwich, *The Revelations of Divine Love*, pp.41-63

Week 11:

T 10/30 Julian of Norwich, *Revelations*, pp. 63-180

R 11/1 Julian of Norwich, *Revelations*, c'tued
Caroline Walker Bynum, from *Jesus as Mother* (pp. 129-146) – class handout
Discussion #9: Bynum and Julia Kristeva, "Stabat Mater"

Week 12:

T 11/6 Margery Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, pp. 33-169

R 11/8 Margery Kempe, c'tued
Carolyn Dinshaw, "Margery Kempe" (CC, pp. 222-39)
Discussion #10: Dinshaw and Kristeva, "Women's Time"
DUE: Essay on Wife of Bath/Wooing Group/Ancrene Wisse/Julian of Norwich

*** 7:00 p.m. Film and discussion with Medieval Women's Spirituality class (Prof. Voss Roberts)

Week 13:

T 11/13 Margery Kempe, pp. 169-297
(optional: Sarah Salih, "At home; out of the house," CC, pp. 124-40)

R 11/15 Margery Kempe, c'tued
(optional: Alcuin Blamires, "Beneath the Pulpit," CC, pp. 141-60)
MIDTERM EXAM

Week 14:

T 11/20 TBA

R 11/22 No Class -- Thanksgiving

Week 15:

T 11/27 Joan of Arc
DUE: Proposal and Annotated Bibliography

R 11/29 Joan of Arc
Nadia Margolis, "Joan of Arc" (CC, pp. 256-66)

Week 16:

T 12/4 Joan of Arc

** Friday, December 7 -- Final Essay Due by 5:00 p.m.