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HIST310-01, Women in Medieval Europe, Fall 2006

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Authors	Dronzek, Anna
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History 310: Women in Medieval Europe
Fall 2006 • MWF 2:00-2:50 • Kennedy Hall 104

Instructor: Prof. Anna Dronzek
Office: Clough 317
Phone: 843-3882
E-mail: dronzeka@rhodes.edu

Office Hours: MW 3:00-4:00; Th 1:00-2:00; and by appointment.
Please feel free to come see me with any questions or concerns! If my scheduled office hours don't fit your schedule, I will happily arrange to meet you at another time.

Description

Perhaps the most popular modern image of medieval women is that of damsels in distress, waiting Rapunzel-like in towers for knights in shining armor to come to their rescue. In fact, while medieval women faced many restrictions on their behavior and encountered negative attitudes that women would find intolerable today, they were nonetheless far from passive victims. They found many opportunities to express their opinions, to act in their own and others' interests, and to improve their lives. This semester we will examine both ideas about medieval women and women's lived experiences. We will explore how precisely medieval women negotiated the patriarchal society in which they lived, what they could and could not do, and how they felt about it. At the same time, we will examine the legacy of medieval women's experiences on our own modern culture. Finally, we will consider how to study medieval women – what sources remain, what methods are most fruitful, and what questions historians have spent the most time addressing.

No previous knowledge of the European Middle Ages or of women's history is expected for this course. This course is organized thematically rather than chronologically, so we will be jumping around in time quite a bit. I will try to provide the necessary background and chronological connections, but if you find yourself confused about what's happening in the general narrative of European history at a given time, or about where we are in time, please let me know!

Course Goals

My goals are that by the end of the semester, you should be able to do the following:

- describe the typical range of experiences for medieval women of different social classes
- analyze and evaluate those experiences within their medieval intellectual, political, economic, religious, social, and cultural contexts
- read, analyze, and evaluate primary sources written both by and about medieval women
- read, analyze, and evaluate modern historical scholarship about medieval women
- synthesize the semester's learning and put it into writing in the form of exams and papers.

Books

The following books are required and are available in the Rhodes College Bookstore (as well as at most online booksellers):

Peter Abelard, *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, ed. Michael Clanchy, trans. Betty Radice (New York: Penguin Classics, 2004), ISBN 0140448993.

Alcuin Blamires, ed., *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended: An Anthology of Medieval Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), ISBN 0198710399.

Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), ISBN 0520063295

Theodore Evergates, ed., *Aristocratic Women in Medieval France* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), ISBN 0812217004.

Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies*, trans. Rosalind Brown-Grant (New York: Penguin, 2000), ISBN 0140446893.

Katharina M. Wilson, ed., *Medieval Women Writers* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1984), ISBN 082030641X.

In addition, a small number of readings will be available online for you to download from my Faculty Folder on the Academic Programs and Departments server.

Requirements

Participation – 25%

Research has demonstrated that students learn material more effectively and retain it more thoroughly through active participation than by listening passively to lectures, and therefore I place a great deal of importance on class participation. To succeed in this portion of the course, complete all reading and writing assignments prior to class, and come to class prepared to answer questions, to raise comments and/or questions of your own, to otherwise participate in class activities, and to listen to others present their perspectives. Attendance alone will not earn you an A in participation; you are expected to contribute actively. Participation will be graded on a combination of factors, namely attendance, frequency of participation, and most importantly, quality of participation. Also see "Discussion" under Policies, below.

Short Response Papers – 25%

Over the course of the semester you will complete five brief (2-3 pp.) papers. The purpose of these papers is to focus your reading, to make connections between different readings, to provide you with more experience analyzing specific readings in greater depth, and to give you an opportunity to practice your writing skills. The due dates for these papers are marked on the schedule below; for topics and other details, see the end of this syllabus.

Take-Home Midterm Exam – 20%

The purpose of the midterm exam is to ensure that you have learned and synthesized the material of the course to this point, and that you are able to apply what you have learned to analyzing unfamiliar material. I will provide more information about the exam well in advance of its due date (marked on the schedule below).

Presentation – 10%

In order to practice your oral communication skills, part of your final grade will be based on a presentation of your final paper (see below). I will provide more information about this assignment over the course of the semester.

Final Paper – 20%

This assignment asks you to synthesize your learning from throughout the semester by combining it with an individualized project. You will choose a medieval woman about whom to write an 8-10 pp. paper, in which you will research the most pertinent conditions and experiences of her life, discuss the ways in which she does and/or does not fit the patterns of women's experiences that we've explored over the course of the semester, and discuss what your individual subject can tell us about the practice of writing women's history. I will provide more details about this assignment over the course of the semester.

Please note that to be eligible to pass this class, you must complete all assignments.

Policies

General

Readings on the syllabus are listed on the day for which they are due. Therefore, on Monday, August 28, you should come to class having read the article by Joan Scott assigned for that day. Please also bring the assigned readings to class with you, as we will often refer specifically to passages in the readings.

Discussion

This course is organized as a seminar. While I will lecture on occasion, discussion is by far the more important component, and the quality of your experience depends on your own preparation and participation. I view the classroom as an intellectual community, and see us all as scholars with the responsibility to contribute their perspectives to that community. No one ever reads historical material in quite the same way, and each of you has important insights to offer to the group as a whole (including me); please share those insights to help further everyone's learning. I encourage you to disagree with each other and with me, but expect you to do so in a way that shows respect for others. One form of respect is according your classmates (including me) the courtesy of your undivided attention; please do not read or work on materials not related to this course during class time. Please also turn off all cell phones during class time unless I have approved their continued activation in advance. If you have any concerns about how the discussion is going in this class – either about your own or others' contributions – please feel free to raise them with me!

Late Assignments and Incompletes

All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date for which they are assigned. Late assignments will not be accepted, because the assignments for this course are time-sensitive – that is, they are related to the material we will be discussing at the time that you complete them, and turning them in late robs them of most of their purpose. Incompletes will not be granted in this course unless there are extreme extenuating circumstances, and they must be arranged with me before finals week.

Academic Dishonesty

Each of you is bound by the Honor Code as elaborated in the Student Handbook, and no violation will be tolerated. **Note that carelessness or error is not an acceptable excuse for academic dishonesty, and that I am bound to bring any academic dishonesty to the Honor Council, regardless of the reason for it.** Please review the Student Handbook if you are unclear about the details of the Honor Code, particularly the definitions in Article I, Section 3, including the definition of "plagiarism." On every assignment, you should reaffirm the Honor Code by writing the entire honor pledge and signing your name. No work will be accepted without an Honor Code pledge. Studying together and reading one another's papers is always a good idea, but make sure that your work is your own.

Accessibility

It is College policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. Course materials are available in alternative formats to persons with disabilities upon request. Please contact the instructor or the Disability Services office, 843-3994, to discuss accommodation needs.

Grading Guide

"A" work shows that you have done all the assigned readings, attended class, and participated in discussion. You know and understand the material covered by the course and can use it appropriately to support your own particular, clearly written argument or interpretation. You are also able to follow instructions and do the assignment asked of you, not another one with which you are more comfortable.

"B" work differs from "A" work in that it might not always use the material to support an independent argument or interpretation; or may not present its argument as clearly in writing; or may not exactly address the assignment.

"C" work shows that you know the material covered in the course, but does not use the material to sustain a clear argument or interpretation, either through lack of evidence, factual inaccuracies or misunderstandings, problems in writing clearly, or not answering the assignment.

"D" work shows only that you have a minimal knowledge of the course material.

"F" demonstrates no knowledge of the course material at all. If you receive an F on an assignment, please come see me so we can talk about how to improve on future work.

Schedule of Classes and Assignments

W 08/23

Introduction

***Reminder: Opening Convocation, 3:30 pm, Evergreen Presbyterian Church*

F 08/25

The Middle Ages, Part One

Reading: Joan Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," available in my Faculty Folder (Academic Departments and Programs server → History → Dronzek → Public → Hist 310)

M 08/28

The Middle Ages, Part Two

Reading: Judith Bennett, "Medievalism and Feminism," available in my Faculty Folder

Reminder: Drop/Add Period Ends Tu 08/29

W 08/30

Misogyny: Ancient Roots

Reading: *Woman Defamed, Woman Defended*, Introduction (pp. 1-16) and I (i): Ancient Satire (pp. 17-30)

F 09/01

Misogyny: Christian Roots from Scripture

Reading: Excerpts from Genesis, etc. (available on Faculty Folder); *Woman Defamed, Woman Defended*, I (ii): Scripture (pp. 31-7)

Short Response Paper #1 Due: *In light of Joan Scott's argument in "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," discuss the ways in which the images of women presented in the Creation stories in Genesis can be interpreted both positively and negatively. What factors would be most important in determining how people in a society chose to interpret those images?*

M 09/04

NO CLASS - Labor Day Holiday

W 09/06

Misogyny: Christian Roots from the Church Fathers

Reading: *Woman Defamed, Woman Defended*, 2: The Church Fathers (pp. 50-82)

F 09/8

Misogyny: Medicine and Science

Reading: *Woman Defamed, Woman Defended*, I (iii-iv): Physiology and Etymology, "Matter" and "Form" in Later Writings (pp. 38-49)

M 09/11

Misogyny: Legacies in the Medieval Church

Reading: *Woman Defamed, Woman Defended*, 3: The Legacy of the Church Fathers (pp. 83-98) [NB: skip Heloise and Abelard, 87-91, as we will be reading their letters later]

W 09/13

Misogyny: Legacies in Medieval Latin

Reading: *Woman Defamed, Woman Defended*, 4: The Satirical Tradition in Medieval Latin (pp. 99-129)

****Reminder: Extended Drop Period Ends Today; Pass/Fail Period Ends Today****

F 09/15

Misogyny: Legacies in the Medieval Vernacular

Reading: *Woman Defamed, Woman Defended*, 5: Antifeminist Tales (pp. 130-147); 6: Vernacular Adaptations in the Later Middle Ages (pp. 148-197)

Short Response Paper #2 Due: *Choose one of the sources presented in today's reading (Woman Defamed, Woman Defended, Chs. 5 and 6) and outline the ways in which it 1) borrows from earlier misogynous writings and 2) departs from them.*

M 09/18

Chaucer: Medieval Misogyny or Not?

Reading: *Woman Defamed, Woman Defended*, 7: The Wife of Bath (pp. 198-222)

W 09/20

Medieval Responses to Anti-Feminism

Reading: *Woman Defamed, Woman Defended*, 8: Responses to Antifeminism (pp. 223-277)

F 09/22

Noblewomen: The Early Middle Ages

Reading: *Medieval Women Writers*, Introduction (pp. vii-xxix); "The Frankish Mother: Dhuoda" (pp. 1-29)

M 09/25

Noblewomen: Ladies as Lords I

Reading: *Aristocratic Women in Medieval France*, Introduction, Chs. 1-2 (pp. 1-73)

W 09/27

Noblewomen: Ladies as Lords II

Reading: *Aristocratic Women in Medieval France*, Chs. 3-4 (pp. 74-137)

F 09/29

Noblewomen: Ladies as Lords III

Reading: *Aristocratic Women in Medieval France*, Ch. 5 (pp. 138-78)

Short Response Paper #3 Due: *Describe and evaluate the methods that the authors in Aristocratic Women in Medieval France use to analyze the actions and feelings of the women about whom they write. How do the arguments presented in this collection change your assessment of the impact of misogyny on medieval women's lives, if at all?*

M 10/02

The Literary Noblewoman: The High Middle Ages I

Reading: *Medieval Women Writers*, "The French Courtly Poet: Marie de France" (pp. 64-89)

W 10/04

The Literary Noblewoman: The High Middle Ages II

Reading: *Medieval Women Writers*, "The Provençal *Trobairitz*: Castelloza" (pp. 131-52)

F 10/06

The Literary Noblewoman: The Later Middle Ages

Reading: Leonor López de Córdoba, "Autobiography" (available in Faculty Folder)

Take-Home Midterm Exam Distributed in Class: *Details to be provided.*

M 10/09

The Records of the Noblewoman: The Later Middle Ages

Reading: Excerpts from *The Paston Letters* and *The Household Records of Alice de Bryene* (available in Faculty Folder)

W 10/11

The Silent Majority: Peasant Women

Reading: Excerpts from *Women's Lives in Medieval Europe* (available in Faculty Folder)

F 10/13

NO CLASS

Take-Home Midterm Exam Due: *Turn in your exams to me in class at the beginning of the class period, or to my department mailbox by the beginning of the class period (I will not accept e-mailed exams).*

M 10/16
NO CLASS - Fall break

W 10/18
Religious Women: The Early Middle Ages
Reading: *Medieval Women Writers*, "The Saxon Canoness: Hrotsvit of Gandersheim" (pp. 30-63)

F 10/20
Religious Women: The High Middle Ages I
Reading: *Medieval Women Writers*, "The German Visionary: Hildegard of Bingen" (pp. 109-30)

Choice of Topic for Final Paper Due: *Details to be provided.*

M 10/23
Religious Women: Abelard and Heloise I
Reading: Introduction, "In Today's Scholarship," and "*Historia Calamitatum*," in *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise* (pp. xiii-43) [NB: skim the Introduction and "In Today's Scholarship"; spend more time on *Historia Calamitatum*]

W 10/25
Religious Women: Abelard and Heloise II
Reading: *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, "The Personal Letters," "The Letters of Direction, 6-7" (pp. 47-129)

F 10/27
Religious Women: Abelard and Heloise III
Reading: *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, "The Letters of Direction, 8" (pp. 130-210)
Reminder: Withdraw Period Ends Today

Short Response Paper #4 Due: *In her letters to Abelard, does Heloise reinforce misogynous views of women in the Middle Ages, or does she subvert them? Or is it possible to do both at the same time?*

M 10/30
Religious Women: Mysticism I
Reading: *Medieval Women Writers*, "The German Mystic: Mechthild of Magdeburg" (pp. 153-85), "The Brabant Mystic: Hadewijch" (pp. 186-203)

W 11/01
Religious Women: Mysticism II
Reading: *Medieval Women Writers*, "The French Heretic Beguine: Marguerite Porete" (pp. 204-226), "The Swedish Visionary: Saint Bridget" (pp. 227-51)

F 11/03
Religious Women: Mysticism III
Reading: *Medieval Women Writers*, "The English Mystic: Julian of Norwich" (pp. 269-96)

Bibliography and Progress Report for Final Paper Due: *Details to be provided.*

M 11/06
Religious Women: Mysticism IV

Reading: *Medieval Women Writers*, "The Tuscan Visionary: Saint Catherine of Siena" (pp. 252-68)

W 11/08

Religious Women: A Mystic Wannabe

Reading: *Medieval Women Writers*, "The English Religious Enthusiast: Margery Kempe" (pp. 297-319); further excerpts from *The Book of Margery Kempe* (available in Faculty Folder)

Short Response Paper #5 Due: *Margery Kempe has never been declared a saint (nor has anyone seriously suggested that she should be). Given the other examples of women mystics that we have read, most of whom have been revered as saints or at least very holy women, is this fair to Margery or not?*

F 11/10

Religious Women: *Holy Feast, Holy Fast I*

Reading: *Holy Feast, Holy Fast*, Part I: Background (pp. 13-69)

M 11/13

Religious Women: *Holy Feast, Holy Fast II*

Reading: *Holy Feast, Holy Fast*, Chs. 3-4 (pp. 73-149)

W 11/15

Religious Women: *Holy Feast, Holy Fast III*

Reading: *Holy Feast, Holy Fast*, Chs. 6, 9-10, Epilogue (pp. 189-218, 260-302)

F 11/17

Return to Misogyny: A Late-Medieval Woman Responds

Reading: *Medieval Women Writers*, "The Franco Italian-Professional Writer: Christine de Pizan" (pp. 333-50) [NB: skip the excerpts from *The Book of the City of Ladies*, as we will be reading this on its own]; Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies*, Introduction (pp. xvi-xxxvii)

First Draft of Final Paper Due: *Details to be provided.*

M 11/20

Christine de Pizan, *Book of the City of Ladies I*

Reading: *The Book of the City of Ladies*, Part I: Chs. 1-17 (pp. 5-39)

W, F 11/22, 11/24

NO CLASSES - Thanksgiving Break

M 11/27

Christine de Pizan, *Book of the City of Ladies II*

Reading: *The Book of the City of Ladies*, Part I: Chs. 27-8, 32-34, 37-8; Part II: Chs. 7-8, 13-14, 19, 25, 28-30, 36-42 (pp. 57-59, 63-8, 70-3, 101-4, 108-12, 117-18, 123-4, 126-31, 139-45)

W 11/29

Christine de Pizan, *Book of the City of Ladies III*

Reading: *The Book of the City of Ladies*, Part II: Chs. 44, 47-8, 53-6, 62-4, 66-9; Part III: Chs. 1-3, 10, 18-19 (pp. 147-8, 150-4, 169-75, 188-91, 192-8, 201-6, 218-23, 235-40)

F 12/01
Student Presentations

M 12/04
Student Presentations

W 12/06
Student Presentations
Last day of class

**Due Date of Final Paper: Saturday December 9, 5:00 p.m.
(end of the day of the scheduled final exam)**

Hand in to me in my office (Clough 317). No other exam.

Short Response Paper Guidelines

Requirements: 2-3 pp. typed, double-spaced, with 1" margins and in 10- or 12-point font; stapled, separate title page, no name or identification on subsequent pages.*

Purpose: The short papers ask you to respond to a specific question (found in the class schedule) using any of the readings assigned *up to and including* the day on which your short paper is due. These papers are designed to ensure focused reading of the assignments throughout the course of the semester, and to provide you with the opportunity to make connections between different readings and practice your analytical and writing skills. They must be treated as formal essays, with an introduction, conclusion, and in between, use of specific materials from the readings as evidence to support your arguments.

Citations: All references to material in the readings, whether a direct quote or a paraphrase, must be properly cited. You are not expected to consult outside resources; your paper should draw on, and engage, the readings assigned for the course. If you do consult outside sources, **they must be properly cited**. Moreover, **Wikipedia will NOT be accepted as a source for this class**. All citations should be in Chicago (or Turabian format); guidelines may be found in Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations*, 6th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), LB2369 .T8 1996 (available at the Circulation Desk at Burrow Library), or on the web at <http://library.osu.edu/sites/guides/chicagogd.html> (if you are especially ambitious, you can also consult the print *Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th ed. [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003], Z253 .U69 2003, available at the reserve desk in Burrow Library). Papers that do not give complete citations for all references will be marked down at the instructor's discretion. If you have any questions about citations, please ask me!

* This is because I prefer to turn back the title pages and grade the papers blind, so that I don't know who wrote it at the time that I'm grading. It also keeps the length of the papers consistent.