

German 268A/ English 301
Graduate Colloquium
Professors S. Poor and J. Summit
Fall 2001, Thursdays 6:15-9:05pm 200-105
and alt. Thursdays 4:15-5:30

Medieval Women: Faith, Love, and Learning

Course Description:

This graduate colloquium examines medieval texts written by and about women, from love lyrics and autobiographical writings to religious treatises and devotional works. Focusing on English and continental works from the twelfth through the fifteenth centuries, we will also work with selected critical texts to address current issues in the field: women's contributions to and roles in medieval literary production; the relationship between such concepts as gender, authorship, and heresy; the intersections of the secular and the sacred; and women's responses to medieval concepts of gender, sexuality, and writing. In the process, the course aims to illuminate and explore the productive challenges that medieval women pose to modern concepts of literary value and canonicity, cultural authority, and the literary career.

In addition to the weekly colloquium meetings, the course will feature a lively series of guest lecturers, drawn from among the most influential scholars in the field. These lectures will take place on (mostly) alternate Thursday afternoons from 4:15 to 5:30. Lectures will be followed by dinner for the colloquium participants and the visiting scholar (provided), before the colloquium meeting, in which students will be able to engage in discussion with the visiting scholars about their lecture, their recent work, and that week's primary readings. The syllabus further details the schedule of speakers and meetings.

All readings will be in English, with the option of additional Middle English readings for English Ph.D. students wishing to fulfill the Department's Middle English requirement (see below).

Required Texts: (available at the Stanford Bookstore)
Marcelle Thiébaux, The Writings of Medieval Women
Katharina Wilson, Medieval Women Writers
Betty Radice (ed.), Letters of Abelard and Heloise
Christine de Pisan, The Book of the City of Ladies
COURSE READER (R)

Optional Texts: (these books will be available on Reserve in Green Library)
Mechthild of Magdeburg, The Flowing Light of the Godhead
Hildegard of Bingen, Scivias
Marguerite Porete, The Mirror of Simple Souls
Julian of Norwich, The Shewings of Julian of Norwich (TEAMS, middle English)
Julian of Norwich, Julian of Norwich Revelations of Divine Love (Penguin)
Margery Kempe, The Book of Margery Kempe (TEAMS, middle English)
Margery Kempe, The Book of Margery Kempe (Penguin)

Course Outline:

Week 1 (9/27):

Introduction

Week 2 (10/4): The Problem of Women, Women and Courtly Poetry

Readings: Selection 1 in R (Aristotle, Bible, Aquinas, Hildegard); Selection 2 in R (Jaufre Rudel, Bernart de Ventadorn); Thiébaux, ch. 11; Wilson, pp. 131-52

Week 3 (10/11): Men, Women, and Writing in Courtly Romance

Guest Lecture: "Title," E. Jane Burns, Women's Studies, University of North Carolina

Readings: The Lais of Marie de France in Thiébaux, ch. 12 (intro and texts 1-3); Wilson, pp. 64-83; E. Jane Burns, Bodytalk: "Introduction" (Handout); E. Jane Burns, "Speculum of the Courtly Lady: Women, Love, and Clothes" (Handout)

Week 4 (10/16): Female Authority, Education, and the Church

Readings: Abelard, *Historia Calamitatum*: the story of his misfortunes (Radice, ed, 57-106), Heloise and Abelard, *The Personal Letters* (Letters 1-4) (Radice, ed, 109-156); Hildegard of Bingen, Scivias: Book One

Week 5 (10/25): The Sacred and the Secular: Women write Courtly Mysticism

Guest Lecture: "Conquering Love: the Bride of God as Knight Errant" Barbara Newman, English and Comparative Literature, Northwestern University

Readings: Mechthild of Magdeburg, The Flowing Light Book I; Wilson 153-85; Selections 3 and 4 in R (Song of Songs, Bernard of Clairvaux); Hadewijch Poems: Wilson, pp. 186-203; Selection 5 and 6 in R

Week 6 (11/1): Vernacular Theology, Women, and Heresy

Guest Lecture: "Ventriloquizing Hysteria: Reading the Lives of Thirteenth-Century Holy Women," Amy Hollywood, Religious Studies, Dartmouth College

Readings: Marguerite Porete, "The Mirror of Simple Souls;" Beatrice of Nazareth in Thiébaux, from ch. 16 pp. 404-12; Selections 7-8 in R (Eckhart, Seuse); Amy Hollywood, "Inside Out: Beatrice of Nazareth and Her Hagiographer," (Handout). Additional optional reading: Selection 9 in R, (Newman, "Possessed by the Spirit").

Week 7 (11/8): Visual Culture: Women in Medieval Books and Art

Readings: Selections 10 and 11 in R (Bell and Hamburger essays)

Week 8 (11/15): Enclosed Visions

Guest Lecture, “Revealing Language: Julian of Norwich as a Vernacular Intellectual”
Nicholas Watson, English, Harvard University

Readings: Selection 12 in R (Ancrene Wisse), Julian of Norwich, “The Showings”; Nicholas Watson, “Conceptions of the Word: The Mother Tongue and the Incarnation of God” (Handout)

Week 9 (11/20): (Special time TBA) Worldly Visions

Readings: “The Book of Margery Kempe”

THANKSGIVING BREAK

Week 10 (11/29): The Professional Writer

Guest Lecture: “Christine de Pisan’s Visual Legacy in the Renaissance” Susan Groag Bell, Institute of Research on Women and Gender, Stanford University

Readings: Christine de Pisan, “The Book of the City of Ladies;” Rosalind Brown Grant, *Christine de Pizan and the Moral Defence of Women; Reading Beyond Gender* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), Introduction and Chapter 4 (Handout).

Week 11 (Dec. 6): The Female Saint in Film

Screenings: Carl Dreyer’s “The Passion of Joan of Arc”; Luc Besson’s “The Messenger” (Screening Times TBA)

Requirements:

Graduate Students from the DLCL should register for German Studies 268A for 3, 4 or 5 units according to their unit needs/limits. Graduate students from English should register for English 301 for 5 units. However, the requirements are the same for all students:

- 1) In groups of two or three depending on class size, students will be expected to open discussion on secondary reading by one of visiting lecturers.
- 2) One posting per week to class newsgroup required. This should be in the form of a reaction, question, comment on one of the readings assigned for that week. The posting should be about 250 words and should be posted at the latest by Wednesday before the class where the readings will be discussed.
- 3) Attendance and participation in colloquium discussions

4) Final Seminar/Research Paper (15 pp.; Chicago or MLA style notes and bibliography) (Due dates TBA)

5) Graduate students in the English department who want to fulfill the Middle English requirement will read Middle English texts in full (Margery Kempe, Julian of Norwich).