

German 168A/ English 65D, 165D -- Fall 2001
Undergraduate Lecture
Fulfills GR Area 4c (Gender Studies)

Medieval Women: Faith, Love, and Learning

T/Th 4:15-5:30pm
History Corner (Bldg. 200) Rm. 205

Professors S. Poor and J. Summit

Office Hours:

Poor -- Bldg. 260-208, Wednesdays, 9:30-11:30

Summit -- Bldg. 460-318, Mondays, 10:30-12 and Wednesday 1:15-2:45

Course Home Page: <http://www.stanford.edu/class/engl165d/>

Course Description:

This course surveys medieval texts written by and about women, from love lyrics and romances to religious treatises and devotional works. These texts share some key concerns that will direct our focus: the representation of women, gender, and sexuality; the conflict between and possible resolution of religious ideals and the secular life; the problem of women's self-definition in a culture in which definitions of creativity and authority commonly excluded women. By tracing these concerns across a range of canonical and non-canonical works, this course aims not only to illuminate the complex role of women in medieval literature and thought but also to demonstrate the vital importance of medieval writings by and about women to our own age, in which women's roles and concepts of gender continue to attract debate.

This course will be primarily taught by lecture, with built-in time for discussion, and weekly sections. As well as lectures by Summit and Poor, it will feature a lively series of guest lecturers, drawn from among the most influential scholars in the field. These guest lectures will take place during regularly-scheduled class time, on (mostly) alternate Thursdays.

Students are not required to have any prior experience with medieval studies; a healthy intellectual curiosity about the Middle Ages and the history of women are the only prerequisites. All readings are in English.

Required Texts: (available at the Stanford Bookstore)
Marcelle Thiébaux, The Writings of Medieval Women
Katharina Wilson, Medieval Women Writers
Chrétien de Troyes, Lancelot: or The Knight of the Cart
Betsy Radice (ed.), Letters of Abelard and Heloise
Christine de Pizan, The Book of the City of Ladies
COURSE READER (R)

Requirements:

For 3 units (German Studies 168A/ English 65D):

20% Attendance in lecture and discussion section

30% Mid-term essay (3-5 pp.)

50% Final Exam (will consist of two sections: I - identification of key terms of discussion; II - two short essays).

For 5 units (German Studies 168A/ English 165D):

Same as above

Final Paper (5-7 pp.) -- this will be averaged in with the Final exam

Class Schedule

Week 1:

9/27 - Introduction

Week 2: The Case of Women: For and Against

10/2 -The Problem of Women (medieval medical and cultural views of women and gender relations)

Readings: Selection 1 in R (Aristotle, Bible, Aquinas, Hildegard)

10/4 - Women's answer to troubadour poetry: the Trobairitz

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

Week 3: Men, Women, and Writing in Courtly Romance

10/9 - Women and the Romance Narrative

Readings: Chrétien de Troyes, "Lancelot, or the Knight of the Cart"

10/11 - Guest Lecture: "Love Songs in Cloth: Women Poets Who Sing and Sew in Medieval France" 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

Week 4: Women, Education, and the Church

10/16 - Heloise and Abelard,

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)

10/18- Hildegard of Bingen

Readings: Thiébaux, ch. 14; Wilson, pp. 109-30 (optional)

Week 5: The Sacred and the Secular: Women write Courtly Mysticism

10/23 - Mechthild von Magdeburg -- Female Poet and/or Vessel of God

Readings: Wilson 153-85; Thiébaux, from ch. 16, pp. 394-404; Selections 3 and 4 in R (Song of Songs, Bernard of Clairvaux)

10/25 - Guest Lecture: "Conquering Love: the Bride of God as Knight Errant" Barbara Newman, English and Comparative Literature, Northwestern University

Readings: Wilson, pp. 186-203; Selection 5 in R (selected poems in Stanzas)

Week 6: Popular Religion and Heresy

10/30 - Marguerite Porete's burned book: "The Mirror of Simple Souls;" Meister Eckhart's Condemnation; Heinrich Seuse's "Exemplar"

Readings: Wilson, pp. 204-26; Selections 6 and 7 in R (Eckhart, Seuse)

11/ 1 - Guest Lecture: "Ventriloquizing Hysteria: Reading the Lives of Thirteenth-Century Holy Women," Amy Hollywood, Religious Studies, Dartmouth College

Readings: Beatrice of Nazareth in Thiébaux, from ch. 16 pp. 404-12

Week 7: Visual Culture

11/6 - Women and Medieval Art

11/8 - Women and Medieval Books

11/9 - ****Midterm Paper due**** Choose one of the following topics and write a 3-5 page paper (double-spaced, 1-inch margins, 12 pt. Font):

1) Consider how the work of one woman writer selected from our readings in weeks 2-6 (one of the *Trobairitz*, Marie de France, Heloise, Hildegard, Hadewijch, Mechthild, Beatrice, Marguerite) revises, subverts, or repeats the terms in which women are represented in one of the contemporary medical, social, theological, or literary (Chrétien, Troubadour lyric) works we examined in week 2 and 3.

2) How does one of the religious writers (Hildegard, Heloise, Hadewijch, Mechthild, Beatrice, Marguerite) refigure women's role in the Church as represented in the biblical passages we examined in week 2.

Week 8: Enclosed Visions

11/13 - How to be an anchoress" - The *Ancrene Wisse*

Readings: Selection 8 in R

11/15 - Guest Lecture, "Revealing Language: Julian of Norwich as a Vernacular Intellectual" Nicholas Watson, English, Harvard University

Readings: Julian of Norwich, "The Showings" in Wilson, pp. 269-97; Thiébaux, ch. 18

Week 9: Worldly Visions

11/20 - "The Book of Margery Kempe"

Readings: Wilson, pp. 297-319; Thiébaux in ch. 19 pp. 467-503

THANKSGIVING BREAK

Week 10: The Professional Writer

11/27 - Christine de Pizan, "The Book of City of Ladies"

Readings: Christine de Pizan, "The Book of the City of Ladies"

11/29- Guest Lecture: "Christine de Pizan's Visual Legacy in the Renaissance" Susan Groag Bell, Institute of Research on Women and Gender, Stanford University

Readings: Christine, "The Book of the City of Ladies" cont'd.

Week 11: Medieval Women in Film

DEC 4 - Carl Dreyer's "The Passion of Joan of Arc"

Screening: (TBA)

Reading: Joan of Arc in her own words (web-sites:

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/joanofarc.html>

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/1431joantrial.html>)

6 - Luc Besson's "The Messenger"

Screening: (TBA)

FINAL EXAM: Monday, December 10, 12:15-3:15