

WGSS 491 Medieval and Early Modern Women Authors

Spring 2017, TR 9:30-10:50, LA 138

Instructor Information:

1. Professor Elizabeth A. Hubble
2. Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies
3. Office: LA 138A-B
4. Office Hours: T 11-12:30, 2-3; R 11-11:30, 4-5; and by app't
5. Phone: 243-2584—messages only
6. Beth's E-mail: elizabeth.hubble@umontana.edu

Course Description:

This course will examine writings by, for, and about (but mostly by) women in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern period with a focus on secular and religious authors from the twelfth through the fifteenth centuries. We will explore how medieval and early modern female authors found their voices and constructed alternative discourses of gender, religion, and sexuality against the dominant medieval vision of woman as Bride of Christ or Devil's Gateway. Medieval mystical writings by Hildegard of Bingen, Margery Kempe, Julian of Norwich, Marguerite Porete, and Angela of Foligno will be put into dialogue with writings by Church fathers and theologians such as St. Bernard and St. Jerome. The secular works of Marie de France, Christine de Pizan, the Paston Women, and the troubadours will provide a counterpoint to the religious writings and to the misogyny of texts such as *The Romance of the Rose*. The class will end with two early modern women authors whose work exemplifies women finding their voices. Supplementary readings will include secondary scholarship and criticism in the fields of medieval, queer, and gender studies. All texts will be read in translation. Students will have the option to read primary texts in Old French, Middle English, and Latin, as appropriate.

Major Theoretical Questions:

How did medieval and early modern women find and authorize their voices? How did the medieval and early modern world conceive of and construct gender and sexuality? How might women have done resistant readings of popular texts such as *The Romance of the Rose*? What power structures dominated medieval and early modern society? What is a medieval author? What is a medieval text? How were medieval and early modern identities formed?

Classroom Etiquette:

Students should arrive on time and not leave until class is over. All cell phones must be turned off and left off your desk or table. Students may use laptops or tablets to take notes. Students should not text while in class, and Internet use should be limited to topics related to class. First offense=tardy. Second offense=absence.

Attendance:

Attendance is required. After one unexcused absence, your participation grade will be lowered one notch for each absence (A to A-). An excess of 5 unexcused absences will result in an F in the course. A failure to prepare and participate may also be grounds for being counted absent. Tardiness will not be tolerated. Two tardies will equal one absence. There will be NO make-up assignments or late submission of homework for unexcused absences. If you are sick or have some other emergency, please contact me.

Texts:

All books are required and are available at the UC Bookstore. Additional readings are available on Moodle.

- 1) *Cambridge Companion to Medieval Women's Writings*, ed. Carolyn Dinshaw and David Wallace (Cambridge) ISBN 9780521796385
- 2) Marie de France, *Lais*, trans. Glyn Burgess and Keith Busby (Penguin Classics, 2003) ISBN 978-0140447590
- 3) *Medieval Women Mystics (Gertrude the Great, Angela of Foligno, Birgitta of Sweden, Julian of Norwich)*, ed. Elizabeth Ruth Obbard (New City Press, 2007) ISBN 978-1565482784
- 4) Margery Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, trans. Lynn Staley (Norton, 2001) ISBN 9780393976397
- 5) *Abelard and Heloise: Letters and Other Writings*, trans. William Levitan (Hackett, 2007) ISBN 978-0872208759
- 6) *The Paston Women: Selected Letters*, trans. Diane Watt (Brewer) ISBN 978-1843840244
- 7) Hildegard of Bingen, *Secrets of God: Writings of Hildegard of Bingen*, trans. Sabina Flanagan (Shambhala) ISBN 978-1570621642
- 8) *Selected Writings of Christine de Pizan*, (Norton) ISBN 978-0393970104
- 9) Louise Labé, *Complete Poetry and Prose*, UChicago Press ISBN 978-0226467153
- 10) Marie de Gournay, *Apology for the Woman Writing* (UChicago Press) ISBN 978-0226305561

Assessment:

- Weekly Response Papers: 25%
- Midterm Essay: 25%
- Final Essay: 25%
- Preparation and Participation: 25%

Weekly Response Papers: In addition to the two longer essays you will submit this semester, you will also be expected to submit weekly response papers due each Friday by midnight. Your response papers are 2 page, typed, double-spaced responses to the readings and class discussions. Margins must be 1 inch on the left, right, and bottom, and 2 inches on the top. Your name and other identifying information should be in the top margin. Papers must be uploaded to Moodle. Electronic files must be .doc, .docx, .pdf, .rtf. I will NOT accept emailed assignments or assignments in any other format—if you submit a paper using .pages or some other format, you will receive a zero because university computers do not open those files.

Because this is a discussion course, you should spend a considerable amount of time reflecting on the readings and class discussions. Writing down and organizing your thoughts in a response paper is an effective way to prepare for class. The response paper is intended to help you better understand the reading and its relation to class discussions. Your response papers should not be a summary of the texts, but should record reflections on them. For example, you may choose a short citation or discrete part of the reading and write a reaction to it. You may also compare and contrast passages from different works and discussions that have similar themes. You may pose questions about particularly provocative or difficult readings. There is no right way to write your response papers, and there are no assigned topics. The sole requirement is that your response papers show internal organization and indicate that you have spent time thinking about the readings and discussions.

Major Essays:

Rather than exams, you will be required to research and write two major essays over the course of the semester. Each paper will be 6-8 pages in length. The first paper is due March 17 and should focus on

medieval women and religion. The second paper is due May 8 and should focus on medieval women's secular writings. Each paper must use at least 3 outside sources, i.e. books, articles, etc., not read for class. Wikipedia does not count. Use of websites as outside sources must be pre-approved by me. Essays must conform to the basic standards of proper composition. They should be typed, double-spaced with 12-point font, 1-inch margins. Essays must be carefully organized with proper paragraphing, correct sentence structure, and appropriate punctuation. You will be graded not just on content but also on organization, rhetorical skills, strength of argument including supporting evidence, and adherence to the convention of standard, written English. I will provide you with a handout of potential topics and more detailed instructions. Several weeks before the due dates, you will be required to submit a half-page proposal for your essays. Electronic files must be .doc, .docx, .pdf, .rtf.

Notice about written assignments: An essay or response paper is not an occasion to show how well you can quote, paraphrase or summarize an author, but how well you can think as an explorer of the work and ideas of your author. Any utilization of the words or work of others (including ideas) in any assignment must be given full reference credit. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism. If you have questions about proper citation and/or plagiarism, please see me.

Participation and Preparation:

Coming to class prepared, i.e. having read all material and ready to participate in discussions, is essential and counts for a large percentage of your final grade. Participation does not merely mean responding when called upon but showing a willingness to raise your hand and enter discussions. Quizzes may be given at the beginning of class as necessary.

Graduate Increment:

Students enrolled in the course for graduate credit must also:

- 1) write one essay of 15-18 pages (6 outside sources), or two essays of 8-10 pages (4 outside sources each).
- 2) facilitate one class discussion on an author or topic chosen from the course readings

Grading Scale:

Percentage	Grade
93-100%	A
90-92%	A-
87-89%	B+
83-86%	B
80-82%	B-
77-79%	C+
73-76%	C
70-72%	C-
67-69%	D+
63-66%	D
60-62%	D-
59% and below	F

Disability Accommodations:

Students with disabilities may request reasonable modifications by contacting me. The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students (DSS). “Reasonable” means the University permits no fundamental alterations of academic standards or retroactive modifications. For more information, please consult the [Disability Services webpage \(http://www.umt.edu/disability\)](http://www.umt.edu/disability).

Content Warning:

This course deals with several difficult topics, including misogyny and medieval rape culture. You should feel free to talk to me about any issues you have with the topics we are discussing and ask for excused absences.

Statement of Inclusivity and Diversity:

This classroom is a hate-free zone, and is part of WGSS’s commitment to addressing and redressing racism, Islamophobia, sexism, xenophobia, homophobia, transphobia, anti-Blackness, and all systems of privilege and oppression in our classes, in our academic units, and in higher education.