History 393 Constructions of Gender in the Middle Ages: Body, Culture and Sexuality, c. 400-1500

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Office Hours: MTuTh, 2:00-3:30

Required Texts:
- John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality* (Chicago)
- Christine de Pisan, *The Book of the City of Ladies* (Penguin)
- *The Book of Margery Kempe* (Penguin)
- Emilie Amt, ed. *Women’s Lives in Medieval Europe* (Routledge)
- Hildegard of Bingen, *Selected Writings* (Penguin)
- Chretien de Troyes, *Erec and Enide* (Yale)

Course requirements:
- Attendance and participation (20% of course grade). You are expected to attend all class meetings and to participate vigorously, insightfully, and respectfully in class discussions. Discussion will be the primary teaching format for the course. Note that non-attendance is grounds for failing the course. Occasionally absences are necessary because of health- or family related emergencies. If you must miss class because of such an emergency, please have the office of the Dean of Students contact the instructor.
- Three in-class papers (10% of course grade each). On three occasions during the semester, you will need to prepare a short (three pages, double-spaced) paper on that day’s reading assignment and present it to your colleagues. Attach an additional page that presents at least three discussion questions. These papers are designed to encourage discussion and therefore should make a strong argument regarding the reading. Simple summaries will not provide real insight into the reading, so you need to engage with the reading in an original and assertive manner. Please bring a copy of the paper for each member of the class.
- Primary source paper (15%). During the semester you will need to read a primary source (or set of related sources) taken from a list provided by the instructor. You may, if you wish, supplement this reading with secondary sources. Submit a five-page paper on your selected source by Friday, November 14.
- Secondary source paper (15%). You will also need to submit a five-page analysis of a secondary source, again chosen from a list provided by the instructor, by Friday, December 5.
- Synthetic “think piece” paper (20%). In lieu of a final examination you will submit an eight-to-ten page synthesis of your understanding of the range of course materials. The paper will be due at 11:00 am on December, May 15. The instructor will provide questions for the assignment.
- A note on deadlines: Papers should be submitted on or before the stated deadlines. Extensions will be granted only in the case of family or medical emergencies documented through the office of the Dean of Students. Please note that your own failure to budget your time and/or the press of other academic work will NOT be considered sufficient grounds for an extension.
Schedule of Class Meetings

WEEK ONE: Introduction

September 2 Introduction to the course

4 Gender, culture and biology
   • Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*, 1-24 (e-reserve)

WEEK TWO: The Ancient Background

September 8 Ancient medicine and the problem of sexuality
   • Laqueur, 25-62

9 Women in the ancient world
   • The Homeric “Hymn to Aphrodite” (handout)

11 Women and sexuality in ancient thought
   • Selections from Plato and Aristotle (handout)

WEEK THREE: The Early Christian Background

September 15 Scriptural and patristic witnesses to the status of women
   • Amt, *Women’s Lives*, 1-28

16 Women in Early Christianity
   • Monique Alexandre, “Early Christian Women,” in *A History of Women, Volume I*, 409-444 (e-reserve)

18 Perpetua and models of sanctity
   • *The Passion of SS Perpetua and Felicity*, online at: [http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/perpetua.html](http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/perpetua.html)

Week Four: Women in the Early and Central Middle Ages

September 22 Merovingian female saints
23 Documents on the place of women in early medieval culture
   • Amt, 36-48, 121-29, 179-80, 219-31

25 Hroswita of Gandersheim and female authorship
   • Hroswita of Gandersheim, Dulcitus (handout)

WEEK FIVE: Homosexuality and Sexual “Deviance”

September 29 Writing the history of gay people
   • Boswell, Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality, 3-60, 137-66

30 A “gay subculture” in the Middle Ages?
   • Boswell, 207-66

October 2 The framework for a persecuting mentality
   • Boswell, 269-334

WEEK SIX: Hildegard of Bingen and the Religious Life

October 6 Introduction to female monasticism
   • Amt, 219-252

7 Hildegard of Bingen’s life and times
   • Hildegard of Bingen, Selected Writings, ix-xxv, xl-xlili, 3-32, 51-52

9 Hildegard of Bingen as theologian and physician
   • Hildegard, 89-127

WEEK SEVEN: (Short Week)

October 13 No Class

14 No class

16 Issues in Male Sexuality
   • Dyan Elliott, “Pollution, Illusion and Masculine Disarray: Nocturnal Emissions and the Sexuality of the Clergy,” in Fallen Bodies: Pollution, Sexuality and Demonology in the Middle Ages (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 14-34 (e-reserve)
   • Abelard and Heloise, selections from the “personal letters” (e-reserve)
WEEK EIGHT: Gender roles and Vernacular Culture

October 20 Chivalry and “courtly love”
- Chrétien de Troyes, Erec and Enide, 1-57

21 What does a woman do while the man fights?
- Erec and Enide, 58-124 (to line 3914)

23 The joy of the court
- Erec and Enide, 124-219

WEEK NINE: Mysticism and Women’s Religious Experience

October 27 Mysticism and authority
- Caroline Walker Bynum, “Women Mystics in the Thirteenth Century: The Case of the Nuns of Helfta,” in Jesus as Mother, 170-262 (e-reserve)
- Mechtilde of Magdeburg, selections (e-reserve)

28 The body and perceptions of female piety
- The Life of Christina the Astonishing (e-reserve)

30 The theology of Julian of Norwich
- Julian of Norwich, the “short text” of Revelations of Divine Love (e-reserve)

WEEK TEN: Gender Symbolism in the High Middle Ages

November 3 Jesus as mother
- Caroline Walker Bynum, “Jesus as Mother and Abbot as Mother” in Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982), 110-69 (e-reserve)

4 Food, women, and gendered religious symbols

6 No class (Cotts at a conference)

WEEK ELEVEN: Women on the Margins

November 10 No class
11 Love and sex in a peasant village

13 An unfortunately short look at women outside the Christian tradition
• Amt, 278-304

WEEK TWELVE: Margery Kempe and Female Piety

November 17 Piety and pilgrimage in the early fifteenth century
• The Book of Margery Kempe, 33-102

18 Margery Kempe and the rising middle class
• The Book of Margery Kempe, 102-30

20 Margery Kempe: discussion
• The Book of Margery Kempe, 145-75, 265-97

***NOVEMBER 21-30: THANKSGIVING BREAK***

WEEK THIRTEEN: Was Christine de Pisan a Feminist?

December 1 The humanism of Christine de Pisan
• Christine de Pisan, Book of the City of Ladies, 5-54, 63-71, 78-80

2 Christine and feminine virtue
• Book of the City of Ladies, 91-104, 122-131, 138-39, 144-145

4 Christine’s models for sanctity
• Book of the City of Ladies, 195-240

WEEK FOURTEEN: Conclusions

December 8 Let’s see how we do with this article!
• Nancy Partner, “No Sex, No Gender,” Speculum 68 (1993): 419-443 (online through J-STOR)

9 Women and the Problem of the Renaissance
• Joan Kelly, “Did Women Have a Renaissance?” (e-reserve)

11 Summary and Review

“Think Piece” assignment due Monday, December 15 at 11:00am