

## Daughters of Eve: Women in the Middle Ages

History 310  
MWF 1-1:50  
McIver 225

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Office Hours: MWF 2-3

### Course Description

To study the history of women in the Middle Ages, we will abandon the traditional political narrative in favor of issues of concern to medieval women and to their historians: the changing definitions of feminine gender, the understanding of women's roles in family and marriage, the religious activities and concerns of women, the role of queens in shaping medieval society, and the activities of women who worked in various capacities on the land and in the towns. In emphasizing these aspects of medieval history, we will use primary sources written by and about women to confront the central dichotomy of medieval women's history that women (in the words of one historian) were both "defamed and defended." That is to say, that women were lauded as those who shared in the special status of the Virgin Mary as the mother of God but who also participated in the sin of Eve which brought death into the world. Our roughly chronological study will examine selected individuals and social changes from roughly 500 to 1500. Keep in mind that we are not aiming for an exhaustive overview of women's history during this period, but rather for a thematic study focused on women's roles in the family and in society at large.

### Required Books

Amt, Emilie, ed. *Women's Lives in Medieval Europe. A Sourcebook*. (New York: Routledge), 1993. ISBN 0-415-90628-8.

Kempe, Margery. *The Book of Margery Kempe*. (London: Penguin), 1994. ISBN 0-14-043251-5

de Pisan, Christine. *The Book of the City of Ladies*. (New York: Persea Books), 1998. ISBN 0-89255-230-1.

### Recommended Books

Bitel, Lisa. *Women in Early Medieval Europe. 400-1100*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 2002. ISBN 0-521-59773-0.

Ward, Jennifer. *Women in Medieval Europe, 1200-1500*. (London: Longman), 2003. ISBN 0-582-28827-4.

## Student Learning Goals

At the end of the course you will be able to:

- Construct an analytical essay using related primary source material as evidence to support an argument in answer to a specific historical question.
- Assess the validity of the argument of a secondary source.
- Demonstrate how historians' understanding of the theoretical concept of gender shapes their understanding of medieval women's history.
- Use tools at your disposal to locate relevant secondary sources – articles and book chapters.

## Regulations

Attendance: If you miss more than six classes, you will automatically fail the course.

Honor Code: Any violation of the honor code (such as plagiarism or cheating) will be dealt with according to UNCG's academic integrity policy. For specific explanations, see the Student Affairs website at

<http://saf.dept.uncg.edu/conduct/policies/academic.integrity.html>.

Assignment Completion: Failure to complete any part of the course – class discussions, source analyses, midterms, term paper, final – will result in an “F” for the course.

## Grade Breakdown

Class Participation	5%
Source Analyses	10%
First Midterm	20%
Second Midterm	20%
Term Paper	25%
Final Exam	20%

## Assignments

Class participation: Each student will be assigned to a group and each group will begin class several times during the semester by raising questions about the primary source readings. I will hand out a list of the kinds of things you might ask the rest of the class before we begin our first rotation through the groups.

Source Analyses: Twice during the semester you will write a brief (1-2 page) analysis of a primary source based on a question I will pose. This will be an at-home assignment.

Midterms: There will be two in-class midterms: the first on Friday, February 13 and the second on Friday, March 26. Each will consist of two short-answer identification

questions and a longer essay question. You will need bluebooks in which to write your examinations.

Term Paper: A 4-5 page analysis of a secondary source (an article or a chapter in a book) related to one of the women we will discuss during our course due Monday, April 26.

Final Examination: This will be an at-home examination consisting of three essay questions. It will be due in my office on Friday, May 7 at 3:30 p.m. (the scheduled time for the final).

### Lecture Topics and Readings

Monday, January 12 Introductions – Sex & Gender

Wednesday, January 14 Classical Medical/Biological Understandings of Woman

Friday, January 16 Women in Late Antiquity – Roman Origins

Readings: Bitel: pp. 1-30; Amt pp. 29-38; Handouts: Joan Scott - “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis”

Monday, January 19 – no class

Wednesday, January 21 Christian Origins – The Gospels & the Epistles of St. Paul

Friday, January 23 Early Martyrs: Sts. Perpetua & Felicity

Readings: Amt: 13-23; Handout: *The Passion of Saints Perpetua and Felicity*

Monday, January 26 St. Augustine – Women, Marriage

Wednesday, January 28 St. Jerome – Christian asceticism

Friday, January 30 Gregory the Great – Mary Magdalene & Germanic Queens

### **First Source Analysis Due: Friday, January 30**

Readings: Bitel: 30-45; Amt: pp. 23-28; Handout: Excerpts from the writings of Gregory the Great

Monday, February 2 Merovingian Society – Family Structure & Marriage

Wednesday, February 4 Merovingian Queens – Fredegund & Brunhild

Friday, February 6 “Sainted Women of the Dark Ages:” Sts. Radegund & Balthild

Readings: Bitel: 46-94; Amt: 121-123 and 219-233; Handouts: excerpts from Gregory of Tours on Merovingian Queens; *Lives* of Sts. Radegund & Balthild

### **Choice of Secondary Source Due: Friday, February 6**

Monday, February 9 Carolingian Marriage and Family – Lothar and Theutberga

Wednesday, February 11 Anglo-Saxon Queenship: *Encomium Emmae Reginae*

Friday, February 13 **First Midterm**

Readings: Bitel: 95-153; Handouts: texts concerning Lothar and Theuberga;  
Excerpts from the *Encomium*

Monday, February 16 Henry I's Women – wives, mistresses, daughter  
Wednesday, February 18 Eleanor of Aquitaine  
Friday, February 20 Hildegard of Bingen

Readings: Bitel: 154-199 and 266-296; Barbara Newman on Hildegard of Bingen;  
Amt: 53-60, 52-157 and 233-235; Handout: Excerpts from the writings of  
Hildegard of Bingen

Monday, February 23 Hildegard of Bingen  
Wednesday, February 25 Female Spirituality: *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*  
Friday, February 27 Christina of Markyate

Readings: Ward: 191-208; Bynum *Representations* article; 136-142; Amt: 136-  
142

Monday, March 1 *The Sorceress* – part 1  
Wednesday, March 3 *The Sorceress* – part 2  
Friday, March 5 Lais of Marie de France & The Arthurian Romances

Excerpts from the *Lais* of Marie de France

### **Second Source Analysis Due: Friday, March 5**

Monday, March 8 – no class – Spring Break  
Wednesday, March 10 – no class – Spring Break  
Friday, March 12 – no class – Spring Break

Monday, March 15 Abelard and Heloise  
Wednesday, March 17 12<sup>th</sup> century canon law: Gratian on women & gender  
Friday, March 19 Working Women: Alewives, Spinsters, Healers etc

Readings: Ward: 26-62, 74-93; Amt - 79-94, 97-114, and 194-215; Handout:  
Letters of Abelard and Heloise

Monday, March 22 Working Women: Peasants  
Wednesday, March 24 Working Women: Prostitutes  
Friday, March 26 **Second Midterm**

Readings: Ward: 94-109; Amt: pp. 179-193

Monday, March 29 Late Medieval Spirituality – Waldensians & Cathars  
Wednesday, March 31 St. Clare and the Poor Clares

Friday, April 2 Late Medieval Spirituality: Beguines

Readings: Ward: 154-175 and 238-249; Amt: 235-245, 263-267, and 305-313

Monday, April 5 Late Medieval Spirituality: Julian of Norwich

Wednesday, April 7 Late Medieval Spirituality: Catherine of Siena

Friday, April 9 – no class – Spring Holiday

Monday, April 12 Late Medieval Spirituality: Margery Kempe

Wednesday, April 14 Late Medieval Spirituality: Margery Kempe

Friday, April 16 Margaret of Anjou – Queen of England

Readings: Ward: 176-190; *The Book of Margery Kempe*;

Monday, April 19 *The Householder of Paris*

Wednesday, April 21 Christine de Pisan

Friday, April 23 Christine de Pisan

Readings: Amt: 317-330; Christine de Pisan *The Book of the City of Ladies*

Monday, April 26 Warrior Saint: Joan of Arc

Wednesday, April 28 Sumptuary Laws: England & Italy

Friday, April 30 Gossips & Scolds: *Wife of Bath* and others

**Term Paper Due: Monday, April 26**

Readings: Diane Owen Hughes on Sumptuary Law; Amt: 74-78 and 157-158

Monday, May 3 Women and Work: Italy and the North

Tuesday, May 4 Conclusions – What was women's history in the Middle Ages?

Friday, May 7 at 3:30 p.m. Final Exam due in my office (25 Foust)