HIST 491B/691B: WOMEN IN MEDIEVAL CULTURE AND SOCIETY

Office Hours: TuTh 1:00-3:00 and by appointment

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COURSE DESCRIPTION: In the Middle Ages, those with the authority to govern polities, enforce laws and legal judgements, control economic production, manipulate crowds, and incite religious devotion were by law and by custom frequently men; yet equally important to medieval culture and society were the roles occupied by women. This course explores the experiences of medieval women within this world, as religious leaders, workers, nobles, and queens, and as mothers, wives, and daughters, over a thousand years of history in Europe and the Mediterranean from the fourth century through the fifteenth century. To reach this often silent majority, special attention will be paid to female voices expressed in letters, autobiography, literature, and documentary sources, and well as those works focused on their actions and activities.

The course will be divided chronologically into three broad areas of periodization: the early Middle Ages (400-900), the Mediterranean experience (700-1300), and new opportunities of the late Middle Ages (1200-1500). Looking across the social spectrum, specific topics will include: women as saints and spiritual leaders, approaches to gender in the Abrahamic traditions, matriarchs and familial memory, medieval women’s medicine and gynecology, and gendered roles in litigation where issues of equity and inequity are most clearly defined.

CORE OBJECTIVES: Successful completion of this course will satisfy:

- Core Objective 10 - Diversity & Equity: Students will demonstrate an understanding of diversity through courses that focus on topics such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, physical ability, language, and/or social class with an emphasis on the analysis of equity. Students will apply and evaluate approaches or modes of inquiry used to analyze diversity and equity and the social barriers to these goals.

- Core Objective 13 - Integration and Synthesis: Students will be able to integrate and synthesize Core knowledge, enabling them to analyze open-ended problems or complex issues. Students examine and discuss the main issues of the course, research and write essays in which they synthesize information and pose and prove arguments.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES: Through an examination of contemporary medieval literature and material culture and its analysis in modern secondary sources, students will be able:

1. to demonstrate in writing and classroom participation a knowledge of the transformation in the political, social, and cultural status of women from the 4th to the 15th century in Europe and the Mediterranean basin in various Christian, Muslim, and Jewish societies.

2. to articulate in a written project and presentation the ways in which gender as a distinct aspect of identity intersects with those based on class, social status, religion, and culture.
in order to influence individual life experiences and perspectives in Middle Ages as evidenced by primary sources.

3. to interpret secondary sources and comprehend arguments that pertain to the contemporary historiography on medieval concepts of gender and on women and their experiences in the Middle Ages.

4. to integrate and synthesize Core knowledge, enabling them to analyze open-ended problems or complex issues through long-form written assignments.

**HISTORICAL METHOD:** This course will touch on texts and issues that may be important to you on a personal level for a variety of reasons. Still, you will need to bear in mind that this course adopts a historical approach to its subject matter. You should be prepared to subject *all* the materials we will be studying in this course (including religious texts from Muslim, Jewish and Christian traditions) to historical investigation using the full range of academic tools available. Special emphasis will be placed on the careful and critical use of medieval texts and artifacts (coins, statues, buildings, and images). But it will also be our job to assess *critically* the interpretations that the scholars we are reading have offered of these sources.

**FORMAT OF THE CLASS:** The format of the class is a seminar and as such it requires active engagement; questions should be raised and answered by the entire class. Reading and writing assignments are designed both to provide basic information about medieval history and culture *and to introduce problems of interpretation and analysis.* The questions guiding each week should be used as guides to open conversations further.

**COURSE WORK**

*Reading assignments:* There will be readings assignments every week that must be read before the first meeting of the week. Read actively, outline the material, prepare questions, and notice when the readings offer differing interpretations and emphases or when the lectures present a point of view that seems to disagree with the readings.

You will note that I distinguish on the syllabus between “**primary sources**” (*always in bold*) and “**secondary literature**” (*not in bold*).

- **Primary sources** are sources (texts, archaeological and artistic artifacts, etc.) from the time period that we are studying. These sources form the basis for empirical study of the past. When reading primary sources, be aware that despite their relative brevity, preparing them takes time. Understanding source material is a matter of *interpretation* and *contextualization*, and you must spend some time thinking about them before class. Your active participation in interpreting primary sources is a key component of this course, and will be a large component in both your exams and in your final paper.

- **Secondary scholarship,** by contrast, refers to the writings of modern scholars about the past. This distinction is quite clear when we are studying antiquity: for example, you won’t mistake the writing of Perpetua for a scholarly book written in the year 1993. However, keep in mind that modern scholars themselves live “in history”; their ideas and words are themselves shaped by history. Just as we need to study Gregory through a critical lens, so, too, we need to read modern
scholarship with great attention to its assumptions, tendencies, and even prejudices. In addition to the required secondary literature, additional sources (marked with *) are suggested for further reading and investigation.

**GRADED WORK [491B/UNDERGRADUATE]**

The total grade from the course is based on the following percentages:

- **50%** - Primary source project and in-class presentation. Missing your presentation will trigger an automatic F.
- **30%** - Three short response papers over the course of the semester
- **20%** - Attendance and participation. 3 absences will trigger an automatic F.

Final course grades will be assigned according to the following scale: 100–93=A, 92.9–90=A-, 89.9–87=B+, 86.9–83=B, 82.9–80=B-, 79.9–77=C+, 76.9–73=C, 72.9–70=C-, 69.9–60=D, 59.9–0=F. Passed/Not passed: Passed = 70% or above

**GRADED WORK [691B/GRADUATE]**

The total grade from the course is based on the following percentages:

- **60%** - 30-page historiography paper
- **20%** - In-class presentation. Missing your presentation will trigger an automatic F.
- **20%** - Attendance and participation. 3 absences will trigger an automatic F.

In addition, Graduate students will be expected to meet with the instructor four times during the course of the semester to review progress on the historiographic essay (weeks 3, 6, 9, 12)

Final course grades will be assigned according to the following scale: 100–93=A, 92–90=A-, 89–87=B+, 86–83=B, 82–80=B-, 79–77=C+, 76–73=C, 72–70=C-, 69–60=D, 59–0=F.
Passed/Not passed: Passed = 70% or above

**THE NUTS AND BOLTS**

**COURSE POLICIES ON GRADING**

Class attendance is essential to success in this course and attendance will be taken during seminar (at some point during each class meeting, a piece of paper will be passed around for you to sign). Because we will be covering a specific period at great depth, absences will seriously impede your understanding of the material, and will be clearly reflected in your work on your project and presentation.

The grade on any item turned in late will be reduced by one-third of a letter grade for every day it is late.

Finally, to get the most out of the course, you should participate in it actively. Your observations and questions will often help clarify difficult points for the rest of the class, and are essential to your grade in attendance and participation.
STATEMENT CONCERNING ACADEMIC STANDARDS
Academic dishonesty will be dealt with as severely as possible. Cheating will not be tolerated: Cheating, plagiarism or otherwise obtaining grades under false pretenses constitute academic dishonesty according to the code of this university. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and penalties can include canceling a student’s enrollment without a grade, giving an F for the course or for the assignment. For more details, see the University of Nevada, Reno General Catalog.

You are responsible for doing your own work, and for knowing all University policies concerning cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty. In accordance with the policies of UNR, I will report violations to the Office of the Dean of Students, which is charged with responding when students are accused of committing a violation of the academic dishonesty policy. At the very least, students found guilty of academic dishonesty will fail this course.

Definition of scholastic dishonesty:
Scholastic dishonesty is any act that violates the rights of another student with respect to academic work or that involves misrepresentation of a student’s own work. Scholastic dishonesty includes (but is not limited to) cheating on assignments or examinations; plagiarizing (misrepresenting as one’s own anything done by another); engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting the same or substantially similar papers (or creative work) for more than one course without consent of all instructors concerned; obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering, forging, or misusing records of academic achievement; depriving another of necessary course materials or sabotaging another’s work.

If you have any questions or doubts about specific cases of documentation or citation, please ask me.

If you have general questions about what constitutes scholastic dishonesty or wish to review the University policy, see the UNR guidelines at: http://www.unr.edu/student-conduct/policies/university-policies-and-guidelines/academic-standards/policy

491B ASSIGNMENTS
Primary source project: With the consultation of the instructor, students will be tasked with exploring the perspectives of and on medieval women through primary sources in translation. After selecting a single source, students will evaluate its context and the contemporary historiography, and prepare the following material:

1. A handout of no more than 5 pages which includes both a summary of the background and historical position of the source and samples of its content, and questions for class discussion (10%)

2. A 10-min PowerPoint presentation based on the student’s research the source (10%)

3. A final research paper of approximately 12 pages; the focus should be on the source’s perspectives on gender and specifically the roles that women played in medieval societies, and include a discussion of its position in modern scholarship. (30%)
Sources will be assigned the first week, and presentations will begin on Week 7; It warrants and second reminder that missing your presentation will trigger an automatic F. The final paper will be assessed for Core Objective 10 and Core Objective 14.

**Short Response Papers:** Over the course of the semester, students will complete 3 3-page response paper, comparing the genres and subjects of the primary sources over a four week period. They are intended to explore initial responses to the historical material rather than specifics about context or historiography. A model response paper will be available the first week on the course website.

**Attendance and participation:** Attendance will be kept and recorded through a sign-in sheet passed around at each meeting. In week 4 and week 7, participation will be evaluated and posted on the course website following the rubric below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unsatisfactory</th>
<th>Passing</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No participation (F)</td>
<td>One comment or question every other week (C)</td>
<td>Comments and questions raised every week (B)</td>
<td>Comments and question raised every week; demonstrated leadership in classroom discussion (A)</td>
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The evaluations on week 4 and week 7 will not be included in the final course grade, but are intended to provide students with feedback and the opportunities to improve participation in the course.

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**691B ASSIGNMENTS**

**Historiography paper:** With the consultation of the instructor, students will be tasked with writing a 30-page essay exploring the perspectives of and on medieval women through close readings of contemporary scholarship. The focus may be on a specific topic, centered on a single text, period, attitude, or event. Students will be required to meet four times out of class and report on the progress of their paper (weeks 3, 6, 9, 12)

**In-class presentation:** Based on a primary source associated with the historiography paper, students will prepare:

1. A handout of no more than 5 pages which includes both a summary of the background and historical position of the source and samples of its content, and questions for class discussion (10%)
2. A 10-min PowerPoint presentation based on the student’s research the source (10%)

It warrants and second reminder that missing your presentation will trigger an automatic F.

**Attendance and participation:** Attendance will be kept and recorded through a sign-in sheet passed around at each meeting. In week 4 and week 7, participation will be evaluated and posted on the course website following the rubric below:

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OTHER INFORMATION, RULES AND GUIDELINES

1. IN-CLASS BEHAVIOR: Please respect your peers; respect their questions and concerns.

2. IN-CLASS PHONE USE: Please turn off your phone for the duration of lecture. Being able to instantly respond to tweets, texts, Yaks, and Facebook updates is a luxury. It was not possible in the medieval world, and will not be possible during seminar. It is a distraction to all, and you will be asked to leave the class if you violate this rule. If your phone rings during class, I reserve the right to answer it. If you are surfing the web during class, you distract you classmates, and you will be asked to close your computer.

3. E-MAIL CORRESPONDENCE: Please make sure you identify yourself and the course you are in when you send an email to any instructor, as well as the proper salutations. For example, “Dear Dr./Prof. Schoolman: this is Dhuoda from HIST 491B. I was wondering why medieval history is so wonderful?”

4. OFFICE HOURS: My office hours exist for your benefit. If you cannot make the scheduled time, please contact me to arrange a time to meet convenient for both of us.

5. THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY WRITING CENTER: The History Writing Center helps students address all issues related to historical writing. Come prepared to discuss organization, argument, style, evidence, analysis, citations or any other concern connected to your class papers and theses. Sessions run between 45-60 minutes.

6. STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: The University of Nevada, Reno is committed to equal opportunity in education for all students, including those with documented physical disabilities or documented learning disabilities. If you have a documented disability and will be requiring assistance, please contact the instructor and the Disability Resource Center (Pennington Student Achievement Center, Suite 230) as soon as possible to arrange for appropriate accommodations.

7. READING ASSIGNMENTS: Do you have to do all the reading? You bet! (But some of it at least is fun... I hope) We have a lot to cover, and it would be prudent to stay ahead and on top of the work. I will often ask questions about or discuss the primary sources. If you have not read them, the discussion ceases to have meaning.

8. ON-LINE SOURCES: “I didn’t do the readings, but I looked up ____________ on Wikipedia. Will I be ok for class?” While the web is a wonderful mystery stew, it is exactly that. A stew. With mystery ‘ingredients.’ If you have a particular interest, or want to follow up on a primary source, either contact me or a librarian in the knowledge center. This is especially true for the papers. Please use ONLY scholarly sources for this assignment in particular. If you have a question on something, please let me know.

9. STATEMENT ON AUDIO AND VIDEO RECORDING: Surreptitious or covert video-taping of class or unauthorized audio recording of class is prohibited by law and by Board of Regents policy. This class may be videotaped or audio recorded only with the written permission of the instructor. In order to accommodate students with disabilities, some students may be given permission to record class lectures and discussions. Therefore, students should understand that their comments during class may be recorded.
COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1: Benchmarks and Foundations
- Leviticus, 1-2, 9-21, 26-27; Romans; 1 Corinthians 7
- 12 Tables
- Codex Justinianus, Book 5
- Joan Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis” American Historical Review 91 (1986), 1053-1075

Questions:
- How are gender roles expressed in the Old Testament and the New Testament?
- How are gender roles expressed in Roman law?
- Compare the viewpoints of Scott and Power? What are the positions they are arguing against?

The Early Middle Ages (400-900)

Week 2 – Women as Martyrs and Saints
- The Life of Perpetua and Felicitas
- Life of Marina/Marinosq
- Lynda Coon, Sacred Fictions: Holy Women and Hagiography in Late Antiquity (1997) [Select pages]

Questions:
- Can women be saints in the same way as men?
- What are the unique experiences of female saints?
- How does hagiography offer models of sanctity?

Week 3 – The Model of the Empress and Queen
- Letters of Galla Placidia
- Procopius of Caesarea, Anecdota and Wars
- Kenneth Holum, Theodosian empresses: women and imperial dominion in late antiquity (1982) [Select pages]

Questions:
- How does an empress gain or exercise authority?
- Are Galla Placidia and Theodora treated in the same manner as their contemporary male counterparts?

Week 4 – The Liber Manualis of Dhouda
- Dhouda, Liber Manualis


Questions:
- What Dhouda’s main concerns?
- What does the authorship of the *Liber Manualis* suggest about the changing roles of elite women in Carolingian society?

**Week 5 – Staking Claims: Women, Property and the Law**

• **Charters of Ingelrada of Ravenna**

• Barbara Rosenwein, “Property Transfers and the Church, Eighth to Eleventh Centuries: An Overview” *Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome: Moyen-Age* 111 (1999), 563-575

• Barbara Rosenwein, “The Family Politics of Berengar I, King of Italy” *Speculum* 71 (1996), 247-289


Questions:
- How does the difference between Roman Law and Germanic traditions effect the equitable treatment of women in terms of property ownership?
- Over the course of 40 years, how does Ingelrada’s status change in the charters?
- What are her relationships to those who take part in her charters?
- How can lending land confirm family identity?

**Week 6 – Divorce and Incent in the Carolingian World**

• **Hincmar of Reims, De divortio Lotharii regis et Theutberga reginae**

• **Council of Aachen, 862**

• Stuart Airlie, “Private Bodies and the Body Politic in the Divorce Case of Lothar II” *Past and Present* 161 (1988), 3-38


• Karl Josef Heidecker, *The divorce of Lothar II: Christian marriage and political power in the Carolingian world* (2010) [Selected pages]

Questions:
- How does the attempted divorce of Lother from Theutberga cast late Carolingian gender roles?
- How do these roles create inherently fair/unfair differences in the value of testimony between men and women, and between elites and subalterns?
- What is the underlying claim for the case and what does it suggest about attitudes towards women’s bodies and male lust?
- What are the attributes accorded to Theutberga (Lother’s wife) and Waldrada (his concubine)?
The Mediterranean Experience (1000-1300)

Week 7 – New Horizons

- **The Lays of Marie de France**
  - Jennifer Brown and Donna Bussell (eds), Barking Abbey and Medieval Literary Culture [Selected contributions]
- Sharon Kinoshita and Peggy McCracken, Marie de France: A Critical Companion [Selected pages]
- Questions:
  - Why has Clemence’s Life of Saint Catherine been described by contemporary scholars as “feminist”? 
  - What is distinctly “female” about the Lays of Marie?
  - Although from different genres, in what ways are the coeval Lays and the Life similar?

Week 8 – Byzantine Women as Historians

- **Anna Komnene’s Alexiad**
- Lenora Neville, Lamentation, History, and Female Authorship in Anna Komnene’s Alexiad GRBS 53
- Susan Edgington and Sarah Lamabert (eds), Gendering the Crusades (2002)*
- Penelope Buckley, The Alexiad of Anna Komnene: Artistic Strategy in the Making of a Myth (2014)*
- Questions:
  - How does Anna interject her own agency in her history?
  - As the daughter of one emperor and sister to another, in what ways does her familial relationship shape her writing?
  - How does she defend her authorship against male bias?

Week 9 - “Other Women” – Women in Medieval Jewish and Islamic Contexts

- **Legal records from the Jewish Court of Barcelona** from Medieval Iberia: Readings from Christian, Muslim, and Jewish Sources [trans. Elka Klein]
- Elka Klein, Power and Patrimony: The Jewish Community of Barcelona, 1050–1250
- Jacob Lassner. Demonizing the Queen of Sheba: boundaries of gender and culture in postbiblical Judaism and medieval Islam (1993) [Select pages]
• Maria Mavroudi, “Ta'bīr al-ru’yā and aḥkām al-nujūm: References to Women in Dream Interpretation and Astrology Transferred from Graeco-Roman Antiquity and Medieval Islam to Byzantium: Some Problems and Considerations” in Classical Arabic humanities in Their Own Terms (2008), 447-467

• Arezou Azad, “Female Mystics in Medieval Islam: The Quiet Legacy” Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient 56 (2013)*

Questions:
  o What are the fundamental differences between the experiences of Jewish and Muslim women living in the Mediterranean and those of contemporary Christian women?
  o In what ways are Jewish women able to access law in Barcelona? How does that differ from the other medieval examples?

Week 10 – Trotula and Women’s Medicine

• *Trotula* from The Trotula: A Medieval Compendium of Women’s Medicine, ed. and trans. Monica Green (Philadelphia, 2001)

• *Herbarium* from Medieval herbal remedies: the Old English herbarium and Anglo-Saxon medicine, trans Anne Van Arsdall (New York 2002)

• Nancy G. Siraisi, Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine: An Introduction to Knowledge and Practice (Chicago, 1990) [Selected pages]

• Monica Green, Women’s Healthcare in the Medieval West: Texts and Contexts (Aldershot, 2000)*

Questions:
  o Who practiced women’s medicine in the Middle Ages?
  o What were the primary aims of women’s medicine? What conditions were being treated?
  o How were women’s bodies treaded differently than men’s bodies?

New Opportunities of the Late Middle Ages (1100-1500)

Week 11 – Mystical Leader

• *Letters of Hildegard of Bingen* from The Letters of Hildgard of Bingen, trans. Joseph Baird and Radd Ehrman [Selected Letters]

• *Hildegard of Bingen, Scivias* trans. Bruce Hozeski (1986)

• Barbara Newman, Voice of the Living Light: Hildegard of Bingen and Her World (Berkeley, 1998)

Questions:
  o What kind of respect is offered to Hildegard by her male peers in her letters?
  o What are her concerns for her community?
  o What elements of her visions are distinctly female?

Week 12 – Holy Recluse and Holy Pretender


• **NOTE** – Both text are also available in Diane Watt’s *Medieval Women’s Writing: Works by and for Women in England, 1100-1500*

• Wolfgang Riehle, *Hermits, Reculuses and Spiritual Outsiders in Medieval England* (Ithaca, 2010) [Selected chapter]


Questions:
- What are the aims of the narratives of the lives of Christina and Margery?
- How do both women obtain (or attempt to obtain) sanctity?
- What elements of these “auto-hagiographies” are distinctly female?

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**Week 13 – Workers and Families in Late Medieval England**

• Barbara Hanawalt, *The The ties that bound: peasant families in medieval England* (1986) [Select pages]


• Judith Bennett, *Women in the medieval English countryside: gender and household in Brigstock before the plague* (1987) [Select pages]

• Ruth M Karras, *Common women: prostitution and sexuality in Medieval England* (1959) [Select pages]


Questions:
- What are the main causes of social inequity in the late middle ages?
- How does the institutionalization of these social categories affect women (and the inequity between men and women)?
- Historians of Late Medieval England have often sought to give voices to female peasants; what are the key differences from other situations which make this possible?

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**Week 14 – Joan of Arc, La Pucelle**

• **Life of Joan of Arc, The Trail of Condemnation, and the Memory of Joan of Arc** from *Joan of Arc: La Pucelle*, trans. Craig Taylor (Manchester, 2013)


• Maud McInerney, *Eloquent Virgins from Thecla to Joan of Arc* (New York, 2003) [Select pages]


• Please choose one of the following films:
  - *Joan of Arc* (1948), Dir. Victor Fleming
-  *Joan of Arc* (1999), Dir. Christian Duguay
-  *The Messenger: The Story of Joan of Arc* (1999), Dir. Luc Besson

Questions:
- In what ways does the *Life of Joan of Arc* resemble hagiography?
- How does the perspective on Joan differ from other recognized female saints?
- In comparing a film adaptation to the 15th century vita, what have modern directors stressed about Joan? What about her life is distorted?

**Week 15 – Putting it all together**
- *Medieval Feminist Forum* (Journal)

Questions:
- How has the legacy of Eileen Power shaped the study of medieval women and the issues of gender in the Middle Ages?
- Using the contributions to the *Medieval Feminist Forum*, how has the discipline evolved in the last 20 years? What are the main foci?