

**WOMEN AND MEDIEVAL FRENCH LITERATURE, HILARY TERM 2019**

**Description**

Although most medieval texts were seemingly written by men and some of them with a fairly misogynistic bias, women were absolutely central to Medieval French Literature. The focus of this course will be twofold. In the first place, it will examine gender issues and women's status in the work of French medieval women writers (such as Marie de France and Christine de Pizan). In the second place, it will envisage the place of women in male-authored texts, whether as characters, patrons or addressees.

**Organisation**

5 seminars 1h (with some time to discuss previous essays before or after)  
4 essays (2000-3000 words each)

The course offers the opportunity to examine a range of genres and authors from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries. Prof Marnette will convene the seminars on earlier material, and Dr Swift on the later topics. In consultation with the tutors, students will determine the topics that most interest them from the options listed below. More detailed bibliographies for each topic are available from the tutors.

The Special Subjects are taught in the first two terms of the course. You will normally meet your Special Subject Tutor four times during the term and will write a number of essays which your Tutor will read, mark, and discuss with you. You will then select what you and your Tutor think are the best essays, and submit clean copies of the final versions as a portfolio for examination. Special Subject submissions may comprise one or two essays to a total maximum word length of between 5,000 and 7,000 words (the word count includes footnotes, but excludes bibliography). You are required to submit the final version of the portfolio according to the instructions set out in the MSt course handbook by noon on Thursday week 10 of the term in which the Special Subject was taken

**Topics**

- Women and lyric poetry
- Women and chansons de geste
- Women and romances
- Marie de France
- Fabliaux
- Late-medieval reception of the *Roman de la rose*
- Christine de Pizan

Email: [sophie.marnette@balliol.ox.ac.uk](mailto:sophie.marnette@balliol.ox.ac.uk) and [helen.swift@st-hildas.ox.ac.uk](mailto:helen.swift@st-hildas.ox.ac.uk)

Website: <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~fmml0059>

### Useful Websites

- Studying medieval French at Oxford, <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~fmml0059/OFOx1.htm>
- Feminae: Medieval Women and Gender, <http://inpress.lib.uiowa.edu/Feminae/Default.aspx>
- Internet Medieval Sourcebook, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/sbook.html>
- The Labyrinth, <http://labyrinth.georgetown.edu>
- Ménestrel Un portail pour les médiévistes, <http://www.menestrel.fr>
- Netserf, <http://www.netserf.org>
- ORB, <https://the-orb.arlima.net>
- Les Archives de Littérature du Moyen Âge (ARLIMA), <https://www.arlima.net>
- Also see Prof Marnette's & Dr Swift's resources on WebLearn (undergraduate site, Paper VI)

### Preparatory reading

**Brown-Grant, Rosalind. 1999. *Christine de Pizan and the Moral Defence of Women: Reading Beyond Gender*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.**

- Bruckner, Matilda. 1995. "The Trobairitz." In F.R.P. Akehurst & Judith Davis (eds). *A Handbook of the Troubadours*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 201-233.
- Burns, E. Jane. 1993. *Bodytalk: When Women Speak in Old French Literature*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Burns, E. Jane. 2001. "Courtly Love: Who Needs It? Recent Feminist Work in the Medieval French Tradition", *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*. 27(1):23-57. (available for download on Prof Marnette's WebLearn site)
- Burns, Jane & Roberta L. Krueger (eds.). 1985. "Courtly Ideology and Woman's Place in Medieval French Literature." Special issue of *Romance-Notes*, Chapel Hill, NC. 25:3.
- Findley, Brooke H. 2012. *Poet Heroines in Medieval French Narrative: Gender and Fictions of Literary Creation*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gaunt, Simon. 1995. *Gender and Genre in Medieval French Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gaunt, Simon. 2001. *Retelling the Tale: An Introduction to Medieval French Literature*. London: Duckworth. Chapter on Marie de France.
- Kay, Sarah. 1995. *The "Chansons de Geste" in the Age of Romance: Political Fictions*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Krueger, Roberta L. 1993. *Women Readers and the Ideology of Gender in Old French Verse Romance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Krueger, Roberta L. and E. J. Burns. 1985. "A Selective Bibliography of Criticism: Women in Medieval French Literature." *Romance Notes*. 25.3: 379-85.
- Lacy, Norris J. 1985. "Fabliau Women." in Roberta Krueger and E. J. Burns (eds.). "Courtly Ideology and Woman's Place in Medieval French Literature." Special Issue of *Romance Notes*. 25.3:318-27.
- Lejeune, Rita. 1977. "La femme dans les littératures française et occitane du XIe au XIIIe siècles." *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale*. 20:201-17.
- Margolis, Nadia. 2012. *An Introduction to Christine de Pizan*. University Press of Florida.
- Swift, Helen J. 2008. *Gender, Writing and Performance: Men Defending Women in Late-Medieval France (1440-1538)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.