

## Writing Women in the Middle Ages, Hilary Term 2021

### Description

It is strongly recommended that students choosing this option have a knowledge of French and that they let the course convenor know as early as possible of their intention to choose the topic in order to access background resources in Medieval French Literature.

Whether as patrons, addressees, characters, or even authors, women were absolutely central to Medieval French Literature. The main focus of this course is twofold, considering women as objects of writing, typically in male-authored texts (including writings with a fairly misogynistic bias such as *Le Roman de la rose*), and women as writing subjects (such as Marie de France and Christine de Pizan). It also considers the issue of gender fluidity in comic and courtly narratives such as *Trubert* and *Le Roman de Silence*.

### 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. In consultation with the tutor, students will determine the topics that most interest them from the options listed below. More detailed bibliographies for each topic are available from the tutor.

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

- Marie de France
- Christine de Pizan
- Writing about women
- The *fabliaux*
- Late-medieval reception of *Le Roman de la rose*
- Gender fluidity
- Women in romances and 'dits'
- Courtly love and lyric poetry
- Women and their patrons and female patronage

Your tutor will be able to suggest primary texts for each topic, but you are equally encouraged to select your own material. Certain topics fit into more than one categories, should you wish to explore them from more than one angle (e.g. you could study Christine's

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reception of *Le Roman de la rose* separately from her relationship with her patrons, and focus on her autobiographical writings in another session).

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### Useful websites

- Feminae: Medieval Women and Gender – <http://inpress.lib.uiowa.edu/Feminae/Default.aspx> (useful for bibliography)
- Les Archives de Littérature du Moyen Âge (ARLIMA) – <https://www.arlima.net> (another essential bibliography tool)
- International Medieval Bibliography – access through the database pages on [SOLO](#)
- Internet Medieval Sourcebook – <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/sbook.html> (useful for links to "secondary" medieval material such as contemporary theological writings, etc.)
- Also see some of the undergraduate resources on WebLearn (Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages > French > French FHS – the reading lists for Paper VI are especially useful)

### Preparatory reading

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

Burns, Jane E., *Bodytalk: When Women Speak in Old French Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993)

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), pp. 23-57.

[available for download on WebLearn – 'Online article collection']

Burns, Jane, and Krueger, Roberta L. (eds.) 1985. *Courtly Ideology and Woman's Place in Medieval French Literature*, Special issue of *Romance-Notes*, 25(3) [see especially Norris J. Lacy's article, 'Fabliau Women']

Dinshaw, Carolyn, and Wallace, David (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Women's Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) [chapters on women and authorship, Marie de France, the *querelle des femmes*, lyrics and romances]

Findley, Brooke H, *Poet Heroines in Medieval French Narrative: Gender and Fictions of Literary Creation* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012)

Gaunt, Simon, *Gender and Genre in Medieval French Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995)

Gaunt, Simon, *Retelling the Tale: An Introduction to Medieval French Literature* (London: Duckworth, 2001) [chapter on Marie de France]

Krueger, Roberta L., *Women Readers and the Ideology of Gender in Old French Verse Romance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993)

Krueger, Roberta L., and Burns, E. J., *A Selective Bibliography of Criticism: Women in Medieval French Literature*, *Romance Notes* 25(3) (1985)

Margolis, Nadia, *An Introduction to Christine de Pizan* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012)

McGrady, Deborah, *The Writer's Gift or the Patron's Pleasure? The Literary Economy in Late Medieval France* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019) [couple of chapters on Christine]

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Pratt, Karen, 'Analogy or Logic; Authority or Experience: Rhetorical strategies for and against women', in *Literary Aspects of Courtly Culture*, eds. Donald Maddox and Sara Sturm-Maddox (Cambridge: Brewer, 1994), pp. 57-66

Robertson, Elizabeth, 'Feminism and Medieval Studies: Where Have We Been, Where Are We Now, and Where Are We Going? Or, What Has Happened to Women in Feminist Studies of the Middle Ages?', in *Founding Feminisms in Medieval Studies: Essays in Honor of E. Jane Burns*, eds. Laine E. Doggett and Daniel E. O'Sullivan (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2016), pp. 237-46

Solterer, Helen, *The Master and Minerva: Disputing Women in French Medieval Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995)

Swift, Helen J., *Gender, Writing and Performance: Men Defending Women in Late Medieval France (1440-1538)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)