

HISTORY 490: Historical Research and Writing Seminar
Special Topic: Women and Gender in Medieval Christianity

Spring 2014
Thursday 3:30-6:20
HLG 523

Professor Sara Ritchey
Office Hours: TR: 8-11; 12:15-2:15
Office: HLG 569
ritchey@louisiana.edu

Course Objective: As the culminating requirement necessary to earn a Bachelor's degree in History, the main goal of this course is to introduce students to the skills essential to the historian's craft. As I see it, these skills are, namely, the understanding of **historiography** and the standard set of **narratives** on which it rests, the ability to make an informed **argument** and to support that argument convincingly with **primary sources**. Your main objective in this course, then, is to demonstrate proficiency in these skills by producing your own piece of historical research and writing, a 20-page original paper.

In order to allow each student to pursue a topic of her or his own personal interest *and at the same time* to facilitate the community of a classroom cohort in which we can jointly discuss key topics, problems, and sources, I have chosen to design this course thematically around the subject of women's roles in the Christian Church in the western European Middle Ages, from roughly 1100 to 1450. To the uninitiated, this may seem to be an extraordinarily narrow field of investigation. It is not. Moreover, we must limit and define the content of our investigations so that we may ensure that we all share a basic understanding of the narratives, sources, arguments, and methodologies that we all seek to master. Only through shared skills and understanding can we help one another to produce the most accurate, well-argued, and eloquent research papers.

Although we will be exploring a great number of women it is important for you to understand at the very beginning of this course that your investigations should not be limited to "women." We both will have failed miserably if, at the end of the semester, I receive 15 biographical sketches of medieval women. Instead, what we will presume to do in this course is to use gender as a lens through which to assess and understand developments in the history of medieval Christianity. Therefore, when we discuss women, it will be in terms of their relationships with one another, with their communities, with men, with various sources of authority, as well as their choice of language and metaphor through which to communicate, and the choice of language that men used to describe them. That may seem obscure now, but through our methodological, theoretical, and historiographic readings, you will soon come to grasp the historian's craft.

The biggest piece of advice that I can give—in addition to urging you to stay on top of the readings and make meticulous research notes—is to begin thinking about possible

research topics as soon as you read the first book (Logan). Consider what period appeals to you, what historical questions you may have—are you interested in theology, in culture, in law, in liturgy? Narrow down a general set of interests, and let it be something that will sustain your engagement throughout the semester.

Course Policies: You absolutely must be prepared for every class meeting. The way to ensure your preparation is to read the assigned materials in an active fashion, think about the questions I pose about these materials in the previous class or on Moodle, have responses to those questions prepared before class or if, after having read the assignment, you still do not feel confident about answering those questions, come to see me before class during my office hours or if you cannot make office hours, set up an appointment to meet with me at another time. Every single time that the class meets there is an assignment due. For each 1-hour period that an assignment is turned in late, 5 additional points will be deducted from your grade. If you miss a quiz, it cannot be “made up.” If and only if you produce a written excuse that meets my approval, then the quiz grade can be dropped.

Most important, this course is a **seminar**. Your preparation and willingness to discuss the material will determine whether or not the course is a success on a week-to-week basis. I realize that this course involves a substantial amount of time and effort. It should be your priority course this semester. If you happen to have a number of other priorities placed before your schoolwork this semester (i.e. work, sports, uncertain childcare), then I would strongly suggest that you take the course another semester. The reward for your hard work during the semester is that you will be finished with your course work before the reading period even starts. As the course is designed, the first half of the semester your main job is to read and react to (either in quiz or in short response papers) your assignments in preparation for class discussion. For the second half of the semester, your primary responsibility will be researching, writing, and presenting on your chosen subject.

The Research Paper: Your final paper must be completely free of grammatical and spelling errors. It should be no less than 20-pages double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12-point font with one-inch margins on all sides. After a few weeks of introductory readings, you should begin to consult with me (the professor) about what special topic you would like to research.

Additionally, throughout the course of the semester you should be keeping track of your research investigations by making **notecards**. You must bring them with you to class every time we meet. I will periodically pick up the notecards in class to assess if and how you are keeping a record of your research. These random pick-ups will factor into your final grade. Each notecard must be numbered and annotated properly.

Notes on Intellectual Responsibility:

Any act of plagiarism that is submitted for grading-- whether in a draft, a review, the final research paper, or otherwise-- will result in your dismissal from the class and a grade of F

in the course. Plagiarism consists in the act of passing off another person's work—whether words, arguments, ideas or research—as your own.

The internet is a blessing and a curse when it comes to primary sources on the Catholic Church, particularly because this is a topic with enthusiastic and partisan commentators. Before using an internet source, *you must receive my approval*.

Familiarize yourself with the writing center, on the first floor of Griffin Hall, near the elevators. Their hours are: Mon-Thurs 9 AM-3PM; Fri 9-12

They specialize in:

- *Helping students enhance their writing skills
- *Helping students move from writer-based to reader-based prose
- *Focusing on writing processes and the value of creating multiple drafts
- *Helping students see strengths and problems in their writing
- *Helping students learn to proofread their writing
- *Empowering students to own their writing
- *Nurturing creative ideas

Your success in this course will be aided immensely by regularly visiting the writing center and submitting to me your writing evaluations from the center. Begin making appointments with the center today.

Required Texts:

- F. Donald Logan, *A History of the Church in the Middle Ages* (New York: Routledge, 2012).
- Elizabeth Petroff, *Medieval Women's Visionary Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).
- *Chicago Manual of Style* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

Accessibility:

I am more than willing to work with individual students in order to make reasonable accommodations for the differently abled. Please register your needs with the Office of Disability Services, and we can begin to work on a plan for accommodation.

Grading:

Weekly quizzes (Jan. 24, Jan. 31, Feb 7 and Feb. 14): 10%

Historiography Paper #1: (Feb. 21): 5%

Bibliography #1 (Feb. 27): 5%

Historiography #2 (March 6): 10%

Primary Source Analysis (March 13): 10%

Draft One (March 20): 5%

Peer Review #1 (March 27): 5%

Draft Two (April 3): 5%

Peer Review #2 (April 10): 5%

Final Research Paper (May 1): 40%

Schedule of Class Meetings and Assignments:

January 17: Introduction

January 24: What is Historical Narrative?

Reading Assignment:

- Logan, *A History of the Church*.

January 31: Introduction to the Use of Sources.

Reading Assignment:

- Elizabeth Petroff, *Medieval Women's Visionary Literature*

February 7: Gendering Narratives

Reading Assignment:

- Ruth Mazo Karras and Judith Bennett, "Women, Gender, and Medieval Historians" in *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe*, eds. Ruth Mazo Karras and Judith Bennett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). **ON MOODLE**
- Lisa Bitel, "Convent Ruins and Christian Oppression: Toward a Methodology for a History of Women and Gender" in *Gender & Christianity in Medieval Europe: New Perspectives*, eds. Lisa Bitel and Felice Lifshitz (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008). **ON MOODLE**
- Megan McLaughlin, "Women and Men," in *Christianity in Western Europe, 1100-1500*, eds. Miri Rubin and Walter Simons (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). **ON MOODLE**

February 14: Text and Context

- Fiona Griffiths, "Women and Reform in the Central Middle Ages," in *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe*, eds. Ruth Mazo Karras and Judith Bennett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). **ON MOODLE**
- Walter Simons, "On the margins of religious life: hermits and recluses, penitents and tertiaries, beguines and beghards" in *Christianity in Western Europe, 1100-1500*, eds. Miri Rubin and Walter Simons (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). **ON MOODLE**

February 21: Argumentation and Historiography

Reading Assignment:

- Caroline Bynum, "The Female Body and Religious Practice in the Later Middle Ages" in *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1991) **ON MOODLE**
- Amy Hollywood, "Inside Out: Beatrice of Nazareth and Her Hagiographer" in *Gendered Voices: Medieval Saints and Their Interpreters*, ed. Catherine Moody (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999). **ON MOODLE**

- John Coakley, “Women’s Textual Authority and the Collaboration of Clerics” in *Medieval Holy Women in the Christian Tradition, 1100-1500*, eds. Alistair Minnis and Rosalyn Voaden (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010) **ON MOODLE**
- **3-page historiography paper due**

February 27: Individual Consultations by Appointment; confirm appointments to approve and finalize your research topics

- **Primary and Secondary Source Bibliographies Due at this time, 6 primary sources, 15 secondary. Proper bibliographic form.**

March 6: Historiography discussion

- **Revised Primary Source and Secondary Source Bibliographies Due.**
- **Present your research topics**, specifically addressing problems of historiography, to class.
- **5 page historiographic paper Due**

March 13: Primary Source discussion.

- **Turn in finalized primary source bibliography and present your sources** to the class, addressing how you will use these sources and how other historians have used these sources (i.e. what arguments they have made with them).
- **Five page primary source analysis due.**

March 20: Draft One Due. 10 pages. No class.

March 27: Peer review. Bring your revised draft to class with you.

April 3: Draft Two due. No class.

April 10: Peer review. Bring your updated draft to class with you.

April 17: Individual consultations by appointment.

May 1: Final papers due.

As the professor, I reserve the right to make changes to this syllabus as I see fit throughout the semester.