

FREN 5510/8510

Race/Gender/Class in Premodern France

Prof: Deborah McGrady (dlm4z)

Meeting time: Thursdays, 3:30 – 6

Location: French Conference Room

Office Hours on zoom: Weds, 2-3:30 (by appointment)

Description: This course will challenge the contemporary perception that medieval Europe was an all-white privileged masculine space by turning to creative works of the late medieval francophone world in which racialized, gendered and classed bodies take shape. Turning attention to medieval French works, ranging from romances, theatre, miracle texts to conquest literature, travel writing, and crusading propaganda from the 13-15th centuries, this class will pursue new avenues in Medieval Studies that engage with contemporary critical identity studies. We will investigate the role of power and privilege in the formation of premodern identity, the politics of othering, and the question of subaltern agency in late medieval society. Our investigation will lead us to take a new intersectional view of “othering” in medieval culture that will push beyond the categories of Muslims, Jews, peasants, women, etc. to consider the combined impact of religion, race, class, sex/gender, and disability.

Course materials

The following books can be purchased at UVA bookstore:

- *Silence: A Thirteenth Century Romance*. Sarah Roche-Mahdi, ed. & trans. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1999.
- *Aucassin and Nicolette: A Facing-Page Edition and Translation*. Robert S. Sturges, ed. & trans. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2015.
- *Le Devisement du monde*. Marco Polo. Louis Hambis, trans. Poche – La découverte, 2011

All remaining material are provided con collab. Students are strongly encouraged to print out at least primary texts as you will be expected to build your arguments in class and in writings on close readings. Students are to come to class with reading materials readily available.

Assessment

Class participation – 25%

Weekly responses – 25%

Final paper – 50%

Class participation: Students are expected to come to class having read all assigned materials and ready to engage in higher level analysis that pushes beyond the readings. If you have issues with understanding the readings, you are strongly encouraged to contact me for a zoom meeting on Wednesdays (normally to be held between 2-3pm). Please remember that every meeting will begin with students sharing ideas for research papers on the material from the previous class.

Participation will include one 15 min. presentation during the semester that will involve leading the class in either an engagement with one of the assigned articles or a theme introduced over the assigned articles (required of students registered in 8510) or a close reading of a passage from the primary text that elucidates questions discussed in the secondary literature and that will initiate a class conversation about the work (required of students registered in 5510).

Weekly responses: Responses due by Wednesday, 12 pm. Your responses are NOT to summarize the material but to engage with the reading. You are encouraged to pick up a line of thinking present in the critical reading that you use to share the first stage of analysis of the primary text. Each week, one – two responses will be selected to launch class discussion and at that time, the authors will be expected to share their ideas. Please approach these responses as a place for you to reflect on possible research topics for your final paper (500-700 words).

***5510 students** will be required to turn one of their responses into a 4-5 page paper that is anchored in a close reading of the text. This paper will be due on **MONDAY, 10/4 by 5pm.**

Final paper: The final paper is expected to engage with the questions explored in class and to push well beyond our classroom discussions. 5510 will be expected to write a paper of 12-15 pages **in French if not your native language**; 8510 will write a paper of 18-20 pages in the language of the intended dissertation. An annotated bibliography of at least 10 critical works is required in addition to the above pagination. You will be asked to hand in an abstract and a preliminary bibliography before Thanksgiving. This abstract will be the basis of a follow-up one-on-one meeting. Paper is due on 12/14/21 by 5pm.

Lessons:

8/26 – The Perceived Whiteness of the Medieval World

In advance of class, read the three documents contained in this [file](#). They include: 1) Afrodesia McCannon's "Emile Mâle and Premodern Pleasures: Beauty, Colonial Discourse and the Middle Ages," which will give you a sense of the long modern history of misrepresenting the medieval period. 2) Thereafter, read the 13th century version of a conquest romance (provided herewith in modern French), *La fille du conte de Ponthieu*. 3) Finally, read Sharon Kinoshita's analysis of this romance through a postcolonial lense, "The Romance of MiscegeNation: Negotiating Identities in *La Fille du comte de Pontieu*." Come to class prepared to discuss how this work challenges assumptions about the medieval world and begin the critical work of think about how it addresses issues of race, gender, and class. All of this material is available on Collab in this file.

9/2 – Was Race a Concept in Medieval Society?

In advance of class, read texts in this [file](#), which included 1) read at least the first 20 pp of Thomas Hahn, "The Difference the Middle Ages Makes: Color and Race before the Modern World" and 2) Robert Sturges' "Race, Sex, Slavery: Reading Fanon with Aucassin et Nicolette." Finally, read 3) also the introduction to *Aucassin & Nicolette* and the entire romance (book available at UVA bookstore).

9/9 – Gender & Sex in a Medieval Context

In advance of class, read the following three articles contained in this [file](#): 1) Joyce E. Salisbury, "Gendered Sexuality" and 2) James A. Schultz, "Heterosexuality as a Threat to Medieval Studies," 3) Peggy McCracken, "The Boy who was a Girl: Reading Gender in the *Roman de Silence*." Finally, 4) read first half of the *Romance of Silence* (book available at UVA bookstore).

9/16 – Performing Masculinity/Femininity

In advance of class, read the following three articles contained in this [file](#): 1) E. Jane Burns, "Performing Courtliness" and 2) Vern L. Bullough, "On Being Male in the Middle Ages," 3) Robert Clark, "Queering and Naturalizing Class in the *Roman de Silence*," and 4) Finish *Silence*.

9/23 – The Global Medieval

In advance of class, read the following two articles contained in this [file](#): 1) Suzanne Conklin Akbari, "The Shape of the World," in *Idols in the East: European Representations of Islam and the Orient, 1100-1450*, 2) Simon Gaunt, "Translating the Diversity of the Middle Ages: Marco Polo and John Mandeville as 'French' Writers," and 3) then read introduction and first half of Marco Polo (1-218) (book available at the UVA bookstore). For an appreciation of the Mongol Empire, consult [this progressive map](#) that tracks their conquests over the 13th c. A listing of the manuscripts and different titles of Marco Polo's work provided [here](#).

9/30 – Monsters and Marvels

In advance of class, read the articles contained in this [file](#): 1) Linda Loomeris, "Medieval Travel Writing and the Question of Race," 2) Debra Higgs Strickland, "Artist, Audience, and Ambivalence in Marco Polo's *Divisament dou monde*" and 3) finish Marco Polo. For access to the digitized BnF, MS fr. 2810, see [here](#).

For students registered in 5510, expanded response paper is due on Monday, 10/4 by 5pm.

10/7 – Gender, Class and Ability

Guest lecture by Professor J. Singer, Washington University on Guillaume de Saint-Pathus, *Miracles de st Louis* (early 14th c).

Read in advance of class the material in this [file](#), which includes 1) Sharon Farmer, *Surviving Poverty in Medieval Paris: Gender, Ideology, and the Daily Lives of the Poor* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 2002), chapter 5, 2) M. Cecilia Gaposchkin, "Place, Status, and Experience in the Miracles of Saint Louis," *Cahiers de recherches médiévales et humanistes* 19 (2010): 249-66, and 3) original and translation by J. Singer of selections from Guillaume de Saint-Pathus, *Les miracles de saint Louis*, ed. Percival B. Fay (Paris: Champion, 1932). Pdf of original and Word doc of my translation attached to this message.

10/14 – Exile and Exclusion of Jews

In advance of class, read material found in this [file](#): 1+2) Steven F. Kruger, "The Spectral Jew" and Jessica Marin Elliot, "Jews 'Feigning devotion': Christian Representations of Converted Jews in French Chronicles before and after the Expulsion of 1306," and 3) Miri Rubin, "From Jewish Boy to Bleeding Host," and 4) the play, "Un Marchand et un juif." An edition of the Old French version available [here](#) and the digitized microfilm of the manuscript is [here](#).

10/21 – An Early Feminist Voice & the Long History of Feminism

In advance of class, read material found in this [file](#): 1) Margaret Ferguson, "Feminism in Time," 2) Marilyn Desmond, "Transnational Feminism and Medieval Futures: The Cartographic Imaginary in Christine de Pizan's *Chemin de long estude*," and 3) excerpts of Christine's writings, including passages from the *Chemin de long estude* and *Le livre de la cite des dames*. To view digitized copies of Christine's complete works manuscripts, see the copy she offered Queen Isabeau de Bavière, queen of France, British Library, [MS Harley 4431](#) and a copy of the *City of Ladies* owned by the duke of Berry ([BnF, MS fr. 607](#)) and his copy of the *Chemin de longue estude* ([BnF, MS fr. 1188](#))

10/28 – Imagining Women Otherwise

In advance of class, read material found in this [file](#): 1) Louise D'Arcens, "Nee en Ytalye': Christine de Pizan's Migrant Didactic Voice," 2) Rosalind Brown-Grant, "The *Livre des trois vertus*: A Betrayal of the *Cité*?" 3) excerpts from the *Livre des trois vertus*.

11/4 – Late-Medieval Fantasies of Miscegenation and Origin Narratives

In advance of class, read material found in this [file](#): 1) Patricia Claire Ingham, "Contrapuntal Histories," 2) Catherine Gaullier-Bougassas, "Temps historique et temps romanesque: *Saladin* et *Baudouin de Flandre*," 3) *Livre de Baudouin, Comte de Flandre*

11/11 – Fantasy Conversions: The Case of the *Saladin* Romance

In advance of class, read first article and text found in this [file](#): 1) Zrinka Stahuljak, "Connected Literature: *Chansons de geste*, Burgundian *livres de gestes*, and the Writing of Literary Theory Today" 2) Danielle Quérue, "[Le 'Vaillant turc et courtois Saladin': Un oriental à la cour de Bourgogne](#)," 3) *Saladin*. To view manuscripts, see: Arsenal, MS 5208 – Jehan d'Avennes, Fille, Saladin – a few miniatures: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b52501151k/f285.planchecontact>; BnF, f.fr. 12572 - Jehan, filles, Saladin – miniatures: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b90609462/f208.planchecontact>

11/18 – 12/2 Individual meetings