

## English 402.01/803.3: Medieval Women



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contact hours: by arrangement

This class will be delivered remotely and largely asynchronously. However, synchronous (real-time) participation is required during the scheduled tutorial times. As well as participation in online sessions, engaging with course materials on a regular basis is essential to successful completion of the course. Expect to put in the same amount of time you would for an on-campus class.

Short seminars will be held on **Thursdays at 10.30am [SK]**, via WebEx.

**NB:** For brevity this document contains *hyperlinks*, indicated by *blue type*.



Alison Brie, Aubrey Plaza and Kate Micucci in *The Little Hours* (2017, dir. Jeff Baena)

## Course Description

‘A woman is an imperfect creature excited by a thousand foul passions, abominable even to remember, let alone to speak of.’ (Boccaccio, *Il Corbaccio*, c. 1355)

‘Grab ‘em by the p\*\*\*y.’ (Donald Trump, 2005)

As we proceed in our twenty-first century lives, still preoccupied with the behaviour and transgressions of women, it is ever pertinent to examine the roots of this fascination, and to interrogate it. This course casts its eye back into the medieval period, considering a variety of texts dated from the 13<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, both authored by, and written about, women. Pivotal works by Christine di Pizan, Birgitta of Sweden, Margery Kempe and Julian of Norwich will be studied through a lens of feminist and historicist criticism, alongside a plenitude of other texts offering a three-dimensional and human study of what it was to be a medieval woman. The inherent understanding of women only in their roles relative to men and marriage (as daughters, sisters, wives and widows) is a paradigm that will be addressed directly, alongside the way in which we characterise and understand victimhood, from the nebulous ideas about appropriate behaviour to the politics of a woman’s appearance. This course offers a new pathway into understanding changing roles of women, and the misogynist anxieties of the medieval era, in a literary context. Further contextual reading may include, but not be limited to, works by Joan Kelly, Lindy West, Sara Ahmed and Carissa M. Harris.

## Land Recognition

We acknowledge that the land on which we gather is Treaty Six territory and traditional Métis homeland, and we acknowledge the diverse Indigenous peoples whose footsteps have marked this territory for centuries. Our Department’s vision is to be a place where many peoples come together to engage in mutually respectful relations and dialogues.

## Content Warnings

Our remote learning community provides an open space for the critical and civil exchange of ideas. Some readings and other content in this course will include topics that some students may find offensive and/or upsetting. I will always aim to forewarn you about potentially disturbing content in our readings, and I ask each of you to help

to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and sensitivity. You are always welcome to approach me about any issues you may have with the texts we study.

The content of this course often deals with questions of sexual assault, consent, abuse and violence towards women. I encourage you to prepare yourself emotionally beforehand. If you believe that you will find a specific discussion to be unduly upsetting, you may choose to not participate in the discussion, but I ask that you contact me to indicate your wishes in advance. Your communication will be treated with respect and in confidence.

The following topics will be flagged up as and when they occur, via a short weekly announcement on Canvas. If there is another topic you wish to be informed about, please let me know. You may submit this anonymously via [SuggestionOx](#).

- Sexual Assault
- Abuse
- Violence
- Pregnancy
- Childbirth
- Miscarriages
- Abortion
- Blood
- Explicit sexual content
- Disordered eating

[Adapted from [Trigger Warnings. Centre for Teaching Excellence, University of Waterloo](#)]



## Learning Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to:

- List and discuss features of writing for, by and about women in the medieval period;
- Formulate and convey nuanced opinions and observations about the material covered in the course reading;
- Understand and exemplify the literary use of meaningful modern parallels in aiding understanding of historical writing;
- Appreciate the limitations and problems of established structures of power in medieval women's lives;

- Critically apply frameworks of feminist, historicist and intersectional theory to medieval texts;
- Foster empathetic and critical readings of an often problematic ‘canon’;
- Evaluate the utility of individual sources, reflecting a clear understanding of bias and cultural hegemony;
- Disseminate new research through the skilful writing of research papers and edited articles.

## Required Texts

We will be covering a wide range of reading on this course. As such, I wish to minimise your spending. Texts for each module, including secondary criticism, will be **freely available**, and **distributed digitally** on a module-by-module handout basis.

Texts requiring purchase are outlined in the Reading List below. If you would prefer to use a paper copy of any of the other excerpted texts, please see the list for details of preferred editions. These texts are most readily purchased through the University Bookstore, though in general, I encourage you to consider supporting a local bookstore such as Turning the Tide.

## Reading List

### Required Purchase

Cadwallader, Robyn, *The Anchoress* (London: Faber, 2016)

de Pizan, Christine, *The Selected Writings of Christine de Pizan*, ed. by Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, trans. by Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Kevin Brownlee (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997)

Waters, Claire M. ed. *The Lais of Marie de France* (Peterborough: Broadview, 2018)

### Available via Netflix and Other Digital Platforms

*The Little Hours*. dir. Jeff Baena (Universal: 2017)

### Available Freely Online

Crampton, Georgia Ronan, ed., *The Shewings of Julian of Norwich*, TEAMS Middle English Texts (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1994). [Online](#)

Hasenfratz, Robert, ed., *Ancrene Wisse*, TEAMS Middle English Texts (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000). [Online](#)

Reames, Sherry L. *Middle English Legends of Woman Saints*. TEAMS Middle English Texts (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2003). [Online](#).

Staley, Lynn, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, TEAMS Middle English Texts (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 1996). [Online](#)

### **To Be Provided Via Handout**

Boccaccio, Giovanni. *Decameron*. trans. by J. G. Nichols, (Reading: Oneworld Classics, 2008).

Dunbar, William, *The Tretis of the Tua Mariit Wemen and the Wedo* ed. Lucy Hinnie and David Parkinson (2020)

Searby, Denis. *The Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden*. Ed. Morris, Bridget. : Oxford University Press, September 01, 2006. [Oxford Scholarship Online](#).

Kelly, Joan, 'Early Feminist Theory and the *Querelle Des Femmes*', in *Women, History and Theory: The Essays of Joan Kelly* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984)

Ritchie, W. Tod, ed., *The Bannatyne Manuscript Writtin in Tyme of Pest 1568* (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1928)

Warner, Marina, *Alone Of All Her Sex: The Myth And The Cult Of The Virgin Mary* (London: Picador, 1990)

## **A Note On Copyright**

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Other copyright-protected materials created by textbook publishers and authors may be provided to you based on license terms and educational exceptions in the [Canadian Copyright Act](#).

For more information about copyright, please visit this [website](#). There is further information for students available [here](#), or you can contact the University's Copyright Coordinator at [copyright.coordinator@usask.ca](mailto:copyright.coordinator@usask.ca) or 306-966-8817.

## Communication

You should check Canvas regularly for class-related announcements and reminders. I will be available by appointment to discuss work and any course-related concerns. I will endeavour to respond to queries within 48 hours (not including weekends). Please note that I will not respond to questions about an assignment within the 24 hours before it is due.

## Course Requirements

This class is asynchronous and delivered remotely. See “Modules” on the Canvas Learning Management System for all course materials. Check your USask email account and Canvas regularly for class-related announcements and reminders. I am available by email, or Webex (by appointment). We will go over guidelines for online conduct in our first meeting.

You are expected to complete the course readings, listen to the posted lectures, work through the modules and quizzes, watch the posted videos, and complete all written and online assignments, quizzes, and examinations on the dates specified in this Syllabus. Engaging with course materials on a regular basis is essential to successful completion of the course; expect to put in the same amount of time you would for an on-campus class. University regulations about courses and examinations are [here](#); while grading descriptors can be found [here](#).

**All assignments listed below must be completed in order to pass the course.**

# Assignments

	% of grade
<b>Research Essay</b>	25
<b>Research Plan</b>	5
<b>Research Essay Draft</b>	10
<b>Blog Entry</b>	15
<b>Module Quizzes</b>	10
<b>Editing Exercise</b>	25
<b>Participation</b>	10
<b>TOTAL</b>	100

What follows below is a table outlining the general expectations for these assignments. Please note that detailed rubrics and percentage breakdowns will be provided via Canvas and we will discuss each assignment in depth prior to submission.

<b>Research Essay</b>	This will consist of 6,500 words (400-level) 8,000 words (800-level); to be written on a mutually-agreed topic; showing meaningful, accurate and insightful engagement with a well-considered cross-section of primary and secondary materials. This will be original, robust scholarship which is well written and stylistically strong, per departmental guidelines.
<b>Research Proposal</b>	Prior to the Research Essay, you will be asked to produce 1-2 sides of paper outlining proposed question, texts and a paragraph summary of the envisaged argument.
<b>Research Essay Draft</b>	You will hand in 5 pages of what you have completed so far, with a view to assessing potential issues arising and areas for clarification. This is a formative exercise (ungraded) which aims to strengthen your final essay and provide useful and detailed feedback.
<b>Blog Entry</b>	You will compose one reflective blog entry for the course website: this can be related to any text or aspect of the course so far. We will meet to discuss your idea, and you will develop this into a blog entry of between 1000-1500 words. This is a pass/fail assignment, encouraging scholarly outreach and a reflective academic practice.

<b>Module Quizzes</b>	There will be a quiz at the end of each module. These will consist of 10 questions. 6 of these questions will be factual, and the remainder will ask your brief reflection, insight and opinion of the texts covered.
<b>Editing Exercise</b>	You will select a topic from a list given to you in Week Twelve. You will have two weeks to gather information and further reading on this topic, with input and support from your professor, and in the first week of December you will participate in a Wiki Edit-A-Thon, providing a meaningful contribution to understudied and underrepresented areas in the field.
<b>Participation</b>	You will participate in one short individual meeting with your lecturer per week, and compose at least two discussion board posts per class (one individual observation, one response of weight and substance) as well as attending seminars.

Assignments will be posted in the “Assignments” index page on Canvas two to three weeks before the due dates. All essays must be double-spaced, be typed in standard 12-point font with one-inch margins, and follow MLA format (see the [Dept. of English Requirements for Essays](#)). Submit assignments by the due date, as a .pdf, through Canvas. If you need to request an extension to any assignment deadline because of illness or family emergencies, speak directly to your professor. If you request more than one extension per term, the professor may require a signed letter from a medical, spiritual, or counselling professional. Unless by prior arrangement, essays will not be accepted for grading more than two weeks after the due date or at any time after the final exam.

## Deadlines

<b>Blog Entry</b>	To be agreed with course leader
<b>Module Quizzes</b>	Module 1: Friday 25th September Module 2: Friday 23rd October Module 3: Friday 27th November
<b>Research Proposal</b>	Thursday 1st October
<b>Research Essay Draft</b>	Thursday 29th October
<b>Editing Exercise</b>	Week beginning November 30th, exact date TBC
<b>Research Essay</b>	Thursday 10th December



## Feedback and Grading

All work will be graded according to the [University of Saskatchewan Grading System](#).

I aim to give constructive and informed feedback **within two weeks** of receiving your written assignments. This will be returned to you online; however, I am also happy to meet to go through feedback verbally.

## Academic Honesty

You will be held to the standards of academic honesty outlined in Section Five of the [Departmental Guidelines](#). For more information on Academic Integrity, see [here](#). Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University. You should read and be familiar with the [Regulations on Academic Student Misconduct](#) as well as the [Standard of Student Conduct in Non-Academic Matters and Procedures for Resolution of Complaints and Appeals](#).

## Support Services

### [Student Learning Services](#)

Assistance to U of S undergrad and graduate students.

### [Student and Enrolment Services Division](#)

Developmental and support services.

### [Financial Support](#)

Available through Student Central.

### [Aboriginal Students' Centre](#)

ASC offers personal, social, cultural and some academic supports to Métis, First Nations, and Inuit students.

### [International Student and Study Abroad Centre](#)

ISSAC supports student success in their international education experiences.

### [College Supports](#)

## Access and Equity Services

Students who have disabilities (learning, medical, physical, or mental health) are strongly encouraged to register with Access and Equity Services (AES) if they have not already done so. Students who suspect they may have disabilities should contact AES for advice and referrals at any time. Students who are registered with AES with mental health disabilities and who anticipate that they may have responses to certain course materials or topics, should discuss course content with their instructors prior to course add / drop dates. In order to access AES programs and supports, students must follow AES policy and procedures. For more information or advice, visit this [page](#), or contact AES at 306-966-7273 or [aes@usask.ca](mailto:aes@usask.ca).

Students registered with AES may request alternative arrangements for mid-term and final examinations. Students must arrange such accommodations through AES by the stated deadlines. Instructors shall provide the examinations for students who are being accommodated by the deadlines established by AES.

# Class Schedule

**Module 1 - Conceptualising Medieval Women**

**Module 2 - Devotional Lives and Religious Autobiography**

**Module 3 - Secular Lives and Women's Roles**

**NB: [\*] indicates that only excerpts will be studied, not the text in its entirety**

Date	Module	Key Texts
3rd September	1	<i>The Decameron</i> * by Giovanni Boccaccio; <i>The Little Hours</i> , dir. Jeff Baena, 2017
10th September	1	'The Book of the City of Ladies' and 'The God of Love's Letter' by Christine di Pisan
17th September	1	<i>The Lais of Marie de France</i> ed. Claire M. Waters: 'Bisclavret', 'The Ash Tree'
24th September	1	<i>The Lais of Marie de France</i> , ed. Claire M. Waters: 'The Two Lovers', 'Lanval'
1st October	2	<i>The anchoress</i> by Robyn Cadwallader; 'The Stanzaic Life of St Margaret' ed. Sherry L. Reames
8th October	2	<i>Ancrene Wisse</i> ed. Robert Hasenfratz
15th October	2	<i>The Revelations of Bridget of Sweden</i> *, ed. by Bridget Morris
22nd October	2	<i>The Shewings of Julian of Norwich</i> * ed. Georgia R. Crampton, <i>The Book of Margery Kemp</i> * ed. Lynn Stanley
29th October	3	<i>The Tretis of the Tua Mariit Wemen and the Wedo</i> by William Dunbar
5th November	3	Selected pastourelles (handout)
12th November	<b>Reading Week</b>	
19th November	3	'Schort epigrammis agains evill wemen' and poems in praise of women, ed. W. Tod Ritchie
26th November	3	'Chrystis Kirk on the Grene' and 'The Wyf of Auchtermuchty' ed. W. Tod Ritchie
3rd December	<b>Edit-a-thon</b>	

*(Any future changes will be reflected on Canvas)*