



WISCONSIN
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Department of History

**History 223:
Women, Spirituality, Law, and Medicine (1100-1500)**



Instructor: Sara Paris
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Office hours: by appointment (Zoom)
Office: Mosse Humanities 5265

Class meetings: TR 9:30AM - 10:45AM
Location: Engineering Hall, #3349
in-person only
<https://canvas.wisc.edu/courses/395115>

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course aims to give you an overview of the medieval and renaissance period, focusing on women. Beginning with the late-medieval spirituality, we will analyze the relationship between female saints with food and fasting, as well as divine and demonic possessions.

We will then move on to the topic of medicine. We will see how medical practices are embedded in the socio-cultural context of their historical moment. We will address questions such as were women allowed to practice medicine during this period? What were the perceptions of the female body?

In the last part of the course, we will focus on law, crimes, and punishments. After having analyzed the evolution of legal practices, we will address questions such as what types of crimes are committed by women in this period? Are women and men punished in the same way for the same crime? What is the relationship between religion, law, and medicine? We will be able to answer those and other questions by reading and analyzing primary and secondary historical sources in light of materials presented in lecture.

This 3-credit course meets as a group for 2.5 hours per week (according to UW-Madison's credit hour policy). This course also carries the expectation that students will work on course learning activities (reading, writing, problem sets, studying, etc.) for about 3 hours out of the classroom for every class period. In other words, in addition to class time, plan to allot an average of at least 6 hours per week for reading, writing, preparing for lectures, and/or studying for quizzes and exams for this course. The syllabus includes more information about meeting times and expectations for student work.

REQUISITES

History 223 is intermediate-level, counts towards Humanities breadth and Liberal Arts and Sciences Credit in L&S. It carries the requisite of sophomore standing.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- To acquire an in-depth understanding of the role of women in the society (with a focus on spirituality, law and medicine), from the medieval period to the Renaissance.
- To learn to engage critically with a wide variety of primary and secondary sources that we will read and analyze both together and individually.
- To strengthen students' speaking skills and to encourage active listening during in-class discussions.
- To improve students' writing skills with written assignments.

COURSE TEXTS

All course readings will be made available to you in the forms of PDFs which you can download from Canvas.

READING ASSIGNMENTS:

They are due on the week when they are assigned. All the readings are mandatory and will help you succeed on the essay and midterm/final exams. Please come prepared to discuss the readings. As you read, identify the main themes of the piece and consider connections with the previous readings and the lecture. Some weeks have heavy reading loads, so look carefully at the page numbers and plan ahead.

GRADING:

| | |
|------------------------------|-----|
| Attendance and Participation | 20% |
| Midterm: | 20% |
| Final Exam: | 20% |
| Short essay: | 25% |
| Pop-up quizzes: | 15% |

Grading scale: A 94-100 AB 88-93 B 84-87 BC 78-83 C 70-77 D 60-69 F 0-59

ATTENDANCE:

Attendance is required in this class. You may miss **two class meetings** during the semester without an excuse and without it directly affecting your grade. Beyond these two absences, you must provide documentation for missed class, whether for illness or emergency.

PARTICIPATION:

Your participation grade is based on your contributions to our discussions in class. Please come to class having done the readings and prepared to discuss your ideas.

FINAL AND MIDTERM EXAMS:

Both midterm and final exam will take place in class and will consist of:

- (1) quotations from primary sources that you will have to identify and discuss
- (2) short essays

ESSAY:

- should be 5-7 pages long (double-spaced and set in a standard 12-point font).
- should have an introduction and a conclusion
- should be proof-read before submitting
- should have a clear, but sufficiently complex argument
- should demonstrate an in-depth engagement with the primary source (make sure to back each of your ideas with quotations or paraphrases from the text)

You are welcome to make an appointment to speak with me about how you plan to construct and execute your essay.

LATE ESSAY:

For each day that the essay is late, your grade will go down by one-third of a grade, starting with the first due date and continuing until you submit the essay. Thus an A-level essay will receive an A- if received after the agreed-upon time that the essay is due. If you submit that same essay the following day, it will receive a B+. The day after that, it will receive a B, and so on. No paper can be submitted more than one week after the date on which it is due.

POP-UP QUIZZES:

Throughout the semester, there will be occasional pop-up quizzes to assess your understanding of the material. These quizzes will be conducted on paper and pencil. The format will consist of short-answer questions. Pop-up quizzes will be based on lectures and/or reading assignments. If you attended lecture, it should be easy. If you didn't attend the lecture, you would just write "I was not there last week."

TECHNOLOGY IN THE CLASSROOM:

Electronic devices: Please **put away all electronic devices** during lectures. Evidence shows that students learn more when they write notes by hand, even if you feel that you're able to write down less. Also, laptops are distracting to you and to others around you. You can use the laptop for referencing the readings – but know that if you are distracted and not engaged in discussion, this will negatively impact your participation grade.

HISTORY LAB and WRITING CENTER:

The History Lab and Writing Center are both very useful resource if you want help with your papers. Information can be found here:

<https://history.wisc.edu/thehistorylab.htm>

<http://www.writing.wisc.edu/>

ACADEMIC HONESTY

The University of Wisconsin considers academic honesty (taking the work of another without proper attribution) to be a very serious issue. *This includes the use of AI resources, such as ChatGPT, to complete assignments.*

I will always enforce the university policies on academic honesty. I suggest that you read carefully the following website dealing with the rules about plagiarism: http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QPA_plagiarism.html

While it may be tempting in a world of online education to take shortcuts in giving credit to other authors, it is still both a matter of fairness to others and a crucial element in your own academic development to turn in only your own original work.

What constitutes plagiarism may not always feel clear. If you are ever in doubt, please contact me.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The University of Wisconsin-Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. Accommodations are a shared responsibility between the student and the instructor. It is the responsibility of the student to initiate communication with

their instructor about accommodations during the beginning of the semester, or as soon as possible after being approved for accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA. Disability guidelines for course accommodations are found at the UW McBurney Disability Resource Center site: <http://www.mcburney.wisc.edu>

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION STATEMENT

Diversity is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for UW–Madison. We value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich the university community. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity as inextricably linked goals.

The University of Wisconsin–Madison fulfills its public mission by creating a welcoming and inclusive community for people from every background — people who as students, faculty, and staff serve Wisconsin and the world. <https://diversity.wisc.edu/>

SCHEDULE*

SPIRITUALITY



WEEK 1

January 23 (TU): **Introduction to the Course, Expectations, Syllabus Discussion**

January 25 (TH): **Joan of Arc: the Vanguard Rebel**

WEEK 2

January 30 (TU): **Discussion about the movie: *Passion of Joan of Arc* (1928)**

-Watch: *Passion of Joan of Arc* (1928) [Passion of Joan of Arc | Kanopy \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

February 1 (TH): **Spirituality and Food: Saint Catherine of Siena**

Reading Assignments:

- St. Catherine of Siena, *Letters* <http://www.domcentral.org/trad/cathletters.htm> (selected).
- R. Bell, “I, Catherine” in *Holy Anorexia*.
- C. Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast, Holy Fast*.

WEEK 3

February 6 (TU): **Christian Women Writers: Hrotswitha of Gandersheim**

February 8 (TH): **Christian Women Writers: Hildegard of Bingen**

Reading Assignments:

- Hrotswitha of Gandersheim.
- (M. Zampelli, *Playing with Hrotsvit: Adventures in Contemporary Performance*).
- Hildegard of Bingen, *Causes and Cures*.

WEEK 4

February 13 (TU): **Elisabeth of Schönau's Mystical Visions**

February 15 (TH): **Divine and Demonic Possession**

Reading Assignments:

- Elisabeth of Schönau's Vision of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary.
- N. Caciola, "Possessed Behaviors" and " Exorcizing Demonic Disorder" in *Discerning spirits*.

MEDICINE



WEEK 5

February 20 (TU): **Medical and Anatomical Ideas in the Greek World.**

February 22 (TH): **Medicine During the Renaissance**

Reading Assignments:

- Plato, *Timaeus* (selected).
 - Hippocrates, *On Virgins and Diseases of Women*.
 - Galen, *On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body*.
 - Vesalius, "Preface" in *De Humani Corporis Fabrica Libri Septem*.
- https://faculty.washington.edu/jwoiak/downloads/copy_of_Vesalius-preface.pdf

WEEK 6:

February 27 (TU): **University of Paris Case Against a Female Doctor: Jacoba Felicie**

February 29 (TH): **Women's Anatomy: Secrets of Women**

Reading Assignments:

- University of Paris Case Against a Female Doctor Jacoba Felicie.
- K. Park, "Introduction", " Secrets of Women" in *Secrets of Women*.

WEEK 7:

March 5 (TU): **Dissection of Some Holy Nuns**

March 7 (TH): **Women's Anatomy: the Uterus**

Reading Assignments:

- K. Park, “Holy Anatomies” in *Secrets of Women*.
- M. Fissell, “The Womb Goes Bad” in *Vernacular Bodies. The Politics of Reproduction in Early Modern England*.

WEEK 8:

March 12 (TU): **A Medieval Compendium of Women’s Medicine: *The Trotula*; Primary Sources from the Archive of Siena, Italy.**

March 14 (TH): **MIDTERM EXAM (in class)**

Reading Assignments:

- The Trotula* (selected).

LAW



WEEK 9:

March 19 (TU): **Judgment by Divine Ordeal. Its Origins, Functions and Demise**

March 21 (TH): **New type of trial: IV Lateran Council; Documents from the State Archive of Siena, Italy (in translation)**

Reading Assignments:

- R. Bartlett, *Trial by Fire and Water: The Medieval Judicial Ordeal*.
- R. Coleman, “Reason and Unreason in Early Medieval Law”.
- J. Baldwin, “The Intellectual Preparation for the Canon of 1215 against Ordeals”.
- Canons from Lateran IV (Selected) <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/source/lat4-select.asp>

SPRING BREAK! March 25th -29th. No classes ☺

WEEK 10:

April 2 (TU): **Heretical Women: the Case of Béatrice de Planissoles**

April 4 (TH): **Witches in Early Modern Europe**

Reading Assignment:

- Inquisition Trial of Béatrice de Planissoles.
- H. Krämer, J. Sprenger, *Malleus Maleficarum*.
- Trial of Suzanne Gaudry for Witchcraft.
- Witch Pamphlets: Strasbourg and Scotland.
- A. Barstow, “Why Women?”.
- R. Briggs, “Men against women: the gendering of witchcraft”.

WEEK 11:

April 9 (TU): **Women's Nature and Education in the Renaissance: Christine de Pizan and Moderata Fonte**

April 11 (TH): **Love and Marriage**

Reading Assignments:

- Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies* (selected).
- Moderata Fonte, *Women's Worth*.
- Bloch, R. Howard, "Medieval misogyny and the invention of the Western Romantic Love".

WEEK 12:

April 16 (TU): **Abelard and Heloise**

April 18 (TH): **Abelard and Heloise**

Reading Assignment: Abelard and Heloise, *The Letters and Other Writings* (Abelard, *The Calamities of Peter Abelard*, pages 1-46).

Abelard and Heloise, *The Letters and Other Writings* (Heloise to Abelard, First Letter, pages 49-62, and Third Letter, pages 71-84).

WEEK 13:

April 23 (TU): **Fiction and Law: the Novella**

April 25 (TH): **Fiction and Law: *The Canterbury Tales***

Reading Assignments:

- M. Bandello, "Novella VIII" in *Novelle*.
- G. Boccaccio, *Decameron* (selected).
- C. Geoffrey, "The Wife of Bath's Tale" In *The Canterbury Tales* (prologue).
<https://chaucer.fas.harvard.edu/pages/wife-baths-prologue-and-tale-0>

WEEK 14:

April 30 (TU): **Control of Women's Bodies**

ESSAY DUE AT 11:59pm (submit on Canvas)

May 2 (TH): **REVIEW & CONCLUSIONS**

Reading Assignments:

- Regulation of city brothels (Florence and Nuremberg).
- Law requiring declaration of pregnancy.
- Trials from the State Archive of Siena (in translation).

FINAL EXAM: 05/06/2024 from 5:05-7:05pm (in class, room TBD).

*(I reserve the rights to change some of the readings during the semester, if necessary).