

# History/Women's Studies 238: Women in Europe, 500-1700

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Moravian College  
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Office Hours – Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:30-11:30am & 2:30-3:30pm  
plus other times by appointment

Welcome to History/Women's Studies 238: Women in Europe, 500-1700! This course will introduce you to experiences of women and attitudes toward women in medieval and early modern Europe. It will also give you an opportunity to participate in historiographical analysis through the study of debates and controversies related to the study of medieval and early modern women. Here are the main topics we'll examine:



First we'll cover a bit of *background on medieval and early modern Europe* and the position of medieval and early modern women. I'll lecture for most of the first few classes, but after that you have to do the talking.



Then we'll focus especially on the ways in which women's experiences differed according to their *social class*. Did a noble woman, for example, have more in common with a noble man or with a peasant woman? To what extent were women of various social classes aware of their gender as a common bond? We'll read articles that deal with the experiences of peasant women, townswomen, elite women, and queens.



Next, we will consider another way in which women's experiences were diverse: that of *marital status*. Why, we'll ask, was virginity valued so highly in the middle ages and early modern period? How were the lives of single women different from the lives of married women? Why was prostitution a big issue? Why did medieval & early modern widows (like Chaucer's crude and lustful Wife of Bath) sometimes have such a bad rep?



We'll then return in more depth to the topic of *religion and women's experiences in the church*. We will consider the changing status of nuns in the early and high Middle Ages and the ways in which female mystics manifested their spirituality in the late Middle Ages (some of these were quite bizarre – like drinking pus from lepers or going into trances and floating above the ground). We will also consider women's association with heretical movements and with witchcraft. One issue that has really interested historians is whether the Protestant and Catholic Reformations ultimately helped or hindered the status of women, and we'll spend one class discussing this question.



In the last part of the course, we will take a step backward and put what we've studied into a **wider perspective**. We will examine how some of these ideas about medieval and early modern women might be applied to the study of men and masculinity in the same period. We'll also debate how much the status and position of women has changed over time, an important issue in women's history.

As well as examining the lives of medieval and early modern women, this course will also help you fine-tune four important skills of historical analysis and critical thinking:

- ❖ **Historiographical analysis.** Those of you who have taken History 270 will know what this means: it involves examining and analyzing the approaches of different historians. Historians interpret evidence and make arguments in different ways. No single approach or answer is necessarily correct, but some may be more convincing than others. In this course, we'll examine a number of controversial issues among historians and argue about whose perspective is most convincing. After the first two weeks, we'll not be reading from textbooks but from articles written by historians and published in academic journals or as part of scholarly essay collections. As well as taking note of the data in these articles, we'll assess and discuss the authors' main arguments, the ways in which they use evidence, the ways they differ from one another, and the strengths and weaknesses of their work. By the end of this course, you should be efficient at picking up a piece of writing, locating the author's thesis, assessing his/her use of evidence, and forming a balanced opinion of its merits and deficiencies. Readings journals will give you the opportunity to practice these skills! You will also write an historiographical essay in which you will compare and contrast different approaches to a topic on medieval or early modern gender. If you are yet to take History 270, or if you struggled with your historiographical essay in that course, please plan to check in with me several times as you write your essay.
- ❖ **Interpretation of primary sources.** In previous history classes, you've doubtless been asked to read and interpret primary sources (sources written or constructed during the time period you were studying). This course will further develop your skills of primary source interpretation, examining such sources as court records, writings by and about women, and paintings and sculptures depicting women. In addition to scholarly articles, we'll read and discuss one primary source for each class.
- ❖ **Research skills.** This course will introduce you to some new databases, as well as reminding you about some you may already know (e.g., WorldCat, Historical Abstracts, and Academic Search Elite). You will apply research skills in finding materials for oral presentations (see below) and your historiographical essay.
- ❖ **Oral presentation skills.** This course will be based around a discussion format, and you should come to class each day prepared to share your opinions on the reading. In addition, you will be responsible for leading one discussion.

## Required Readings

After the first two weeks, all readings for this class come from a coursepack (listed in the schedule below with the abbreviation 'CP.' We will talk in class about how to get hold of this. Note that the pagination begins at page 52! Please be sure to bring with you to class a copy of the readings assigned for that day.

## Evaluation

|                         |       |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Readings Journal        | 28.5% |
| Library Assignment      | 1.5%  |
| Discussion Facilitation | 15%   |
| Final Exam              | 15%   |
| Participation           | 10%   |
| Historiographical Essay | 30%   |

### Readings Journal (28.5%)

Our reading load in this course is not particularly heavy – on most weeks, our readings will total less than 80 pages – but I *really do* expect that you will read the articles and sources carefully and critically and think about them before coming to class. Instead of having quizzes on readings, each of you will keep a journal in which you will summarize and discuss the readings for each day, ahead of time. Your journal entries are due at the beginning of class on the day for which a reading is assigned. Please write a separate journal entry for each reading (e.g., if an article and a primary source are assigned, write two entries – one for each). I will subtract 10% of the journal grade for each day that the journals are late, beginning at the start of class on the day they are due. For more details on the journal, including the format I want you to follow, please see the handout on readings journals, which I will distribute during the second week of class (ask me if you don't get one). The first class for which you need to write journal entries is on Tuesday September 10.

### Library Assignment (1.5%)

This will be distributed at the library session on Tuesday August 27 and will be due the following week.

### Discussion Facilitation (15%)

On one occasion during the semester, you will be responsible for leading our class discussion. For more details, please see the handout on discussion facilitation (ask me if you don't get one). Note especially that you must meet with me at least a week prior to your scheduled discussion – those who do not will have their facilitation grade lowered by 20%!

### Final Exam (15%)

This will take the form of two essay questions. I will give you the first question ahead of time, while the second question will be new to you. You may bring your readings journal (but not the readings themselves) into the exam. The final will be on Tuesday December 10.

### Participation (10%)

The quality of this course will depend on the quality of our class discussions. Good participation involves careful listening to the views of others, as well as a willingness to venture your own views, interpretations, and analyses. Please note that participation in this course is not the same as class attendance: it is possible to attend every class and still receive a low participation grade if you do not listen carefully to others or add to our conversations. I'd be happy to talk with you at any time about the quality of your class participation.

## Historiographical Essay (30%)

During the semester, you'll write an historiographical essay on a topic in medieval and/or early modern women's history. It will require three main components, and you'll receive feedback at each stage. Please see the handout for more detailed information on what each should involve. Here are the due dates of each main component:

1. Proposal and Source Lists (5%), due Tuesday October 1 in hard copy.
2. Abstracts (10%), due Tuesday October 22 in hard copy.
3. Final paper – at least 8 pages long (I'm looking for quality more than quantity) (15%), due Tuesday December 3 via email.

If you choose to present your historiographical papers at the Undergraduate Conference in Medieval and Early Modern Studies on December 7, you may earn up to 2% extra credit on your final grade.

## Course Policies

### Attendance Policy

I expect everyone to attend each class. Attendance is not required, but it is very highly recommended. Much of what we discuss will build on previous classes, and those who are absent will find it hard to understand the patterns and themes we are discussing. Those who miss class will also miss collection of readings journals (see below, under 'Evaluation'), and I will subtract 10% of the journal collection grade for each day that the journals are late.

### Academic Honesty Policy

I expect that you will complete all readings journals, papers, and exams in this course individually and independently, and I will refer any cases of suspected cheating or plagiarism to the Academic Affairs Office. I strongly encourage you to ensure that you are familiar with Moravian's Academic Honesty Policy, found in the Student Handbook. As this policy explains, it is possible to commit plagiarism without intending to be dishonest, but serious consequences result regardless of intent.

Let me clarify two particular occasions in which it is legitimate (and even desirable) to use the help of others. First, while I expect that you will write all readings journals, papers, and exams on your own, I *do* encourage you to discuss with each other the ideas and arguments contained in our course, both within class and outside of it. For example, you might run into a friend in the library and start talking about the reading. Perhaps, for instance, you find you disagree with the author of a particular article and want to check that you've understood his/her argument properly. Your friend, after listening to you, might make an observation or suggestion. As you write your readings journal entry or your paper, it is legitimate to explain and respond to that comment, *as long as you do not claim the idea as your own*. You might, for example, write something like, "In talking about this reading with [your friend's name], he/she suggested that [author x] might really have been saying that [your friend's suggestion]. This makes good sense to me because..." In other words, signal clearly which things are someone else's opinion and which things are your own. Second, I encourage you to seek help with writing. It is perfectly legitimate to ask others to read over your written work and look for errors of spelling, grammar, and expression. You might also ask others to look over your paper and help you with organization and structure. I am happy to read drafts of papers, especially if you give me advance warning. I also encourage you to use the Writing Center.

It is good practice to insert a footnote in your paper in which you thank anyone who has read and commented on a draft. Here's an example.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Marianne Cutler, of East Stroudsburg University, for proofreading this syllabus for me.

## Inclusive Language Policy

Moravian College policy strongly encourages the use of inclusive, non-discriminatory language in all academic writing and communication. For instance, rather than writing about “mankind,” write about “people” or “humankind.” Rather than use the term “he” when referring to a person in the abstract (as opposed to a specific individual), replace it with “they” or “he/she.” This mindfulness about language reflects Moravian’s commitment to a tolerant and inclusive campus community. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have about inclusive language or to work with you to find ways to make your language more inclusive.

## Policy on the Format of Written Work

I do not accept electronic submissions in place of hard copies for journal entries (see below). If you miss class and need to turn in an assignment, please send me the attachment but *also* bring a printed copy by my office (Comenius 303). If I am not in my office when you come by, please pin it to my notice board or slide it under my door, then send me an email to ensure that I received it. I am happy to accept work printed in duplex – i.e., on both sides of the page – and would encourage you to print in duplex for environmental reasons. Your final paper, however, should be sent to me as an email attachment (I’ll remind you about this nearer the time).

## Expectations about Workload

Since this is a 4-credit hour course, Moravian College expects that you should work at least 174 hours on class work throughout the semester. Here’s how my estimates of the time required break down:

In-class hours: 37.75

(15 weeks of 165 minutes, minus fall break & Thanksgiving break but including final exam)

Out-of-class preparation (reading, writing of journals, completion of library assignment, etc.): 84

(14 weeks of 6 hours a week)

Preparation of discussion facilitation: 13

Study for final exam: 15

Paper: 25

Total: 174.75 hours

Of course, these hourly totals may vary from person to person. One student may read more efficiently but take longer to study for exams, for instance. I hope they are helpful to you, however, as my best estimate of the amount of time you should be working for the course.

It is within my purview as an instructor to apply qualitative judgment in determining grades. I will do my utmost to be fair and consistent in applying this judgment. Students can expect to work, on average, 6-7 hours per week outside of class preparing for this course. Some weeks will require less; others will require more.

Students with disabilities who need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact the Learning Services Office as soon as possible to enhance the likelihood that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion.

## Class and Readings Schedule

Please note: this schedule is subject to change. In the event that a change is made, I will inform you in class and – if the change is a major one – hand out a revised copy of the schedule.

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|---|---|
| Tues August 27  | Course Introduction & Library Visit   |
|  | <b>Theme 1: Background on Medieval and Early Modern Europe</b>  |
| Tues September 3  | <p><b>(i) The Early to High Middle Ages</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mark Kishlansky, Patrick Geary, &amp; Patricia O'Brien, <i>A Brief History of Western Civilization</i> (3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Longman, 2002), vol. I, chapters 8-9.</li> <li>This syllabus, pages 1-5.</li> </ul> <p><b>(ii) The Late Middle Ages</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Mark Kishlansky, Patrick Geary, &amp; Patricia O'Brien, <i>A Brief History of Western Civilization</i> (3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Longman, 2002), vol. I, chapters 10-11.</li> </ul> <p>Library assignment is due at the beginning of class.</p>   |
| Tues September 10   | <p><b>(i) Early Modern Europe</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mark Kishlansky, Patrick Geary, &amp; Patricia O'Brien, <i>A Brief History of Western Civilization</i> (3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Longman, 2002), vol. I, chapters 13 &amp; 15.</li> </ul> <p><b>(ii) Primary Sources on Women</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Linda E. Mitchell, “Sources for the History of Medieval Women,” in Mitchell (ed.), <i>Women in Medieval Western European Culture</i> (1999). CP 52-55.</li> <li>Primary Source: Christine de Pisan, <i>Treasury of the City of Ladies</i> (1405), Book 2: Chapter 10; Book 3: Chapters 3, 8, 9, 12, 13. In the edition <i>A Medieval Woman's Mirror of Honor</i>, trans. Charity Cannon Willard, ed. Madeleine Pelner Cosman (1989). CP 56-65.</li> </ul> <p>Journal 1 (Mitchell) due at the beginning of class.</p> |



## Theme 2: Women and Social Status

Tues September 17

### (i) Peasant Women

- Barbara A. Hanawalt, "Peasant Women's Contribution to the Home Economy in Late Medieval England," in Hanawalt (ed.), *Women and Work in Preindustrial Europe* (1986). CP 66-74.
- Primary Source: "Coroners' Rolls: Violent incidents," in Emilie Amt (ed.), *Women's Lives in Medieval Europe: A sourcebook* (New York, 1993). CP 75-77.

### (ii) Townswomen

- Bonnie Anderson and Judith P. Zinzer, "The Townswoman's Daily Life: The twelfth to the seventeenth centuries," in their *A History of Their Own: Women in Europe from prehistory to the present* (2nd ed., 2000), v. 1, pp. 353-77. CP 78-92.
- Primary Source: Sandy Bardsley (ed.), "Borough Court Records from Middlewich (England), 1424-5." CP 93-99.

Journals 2 (Hanawalt) and 3 (Anderson & Zinzer) due at the beginning of class.

Tues September 24

### (i) Noblewomen

- Barbara J. Harris, "Women and Politics in Early Tudor England," *The Historical Journal* v. 33 (1990). CP 100-111.
- Primary Source: "The Paston Letters," in Emilie Amt (ed.), *Women's Lives in Medieval Europe: A sourcebook* (1993). CP 112-114.

### (ii) Medieval Queens

- Janet L. Nelson, "Medieval Queenship," in Linda E. Mitchell (ed.), *Women in Medieval Western European Culture* (1999). CP 115-129.
- Primary Source: *The Life of Saint Chrothilda [Clotild]* in Jane Slaughter & Melissa K. Bokovoy, *Sharing the Stage: Biography and gender in Western history*, v. 1 (2003). CP 130-132.

### (iii) Early Modern Queens

- Bonnie Anderson and Judith P. Zinzer, "Women Rulers," in their *A History of Their Own: Women in Europe from prehistory to the present* (2nd ed., 2000), v. 2, pp. 44-61. CP 133-141.
- Primary Source: Speeches of Elizabeth I: "To the Troops at Tilbury, 1588," "The 'Golden Speech' of 1601." CP 142-144.

Journals 4 (Harris), 5 (Nelson) and 6 (Anderson & Zinzer) due at the beginning of class.





## Theme 3: Women and Marital Status


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| Tues October 1  | <p><b>Girls and Single Women</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clarissa Atkinson, “‘Precious Balsam in a Fragile Glass’: The ideology of virginity in the later middle ages,” <i>Journal of Family History</i> v. 8 (1983). CP 166-172.</li> <li>Primary Source: “The Life of Christina of Markyate,” in Emilie Amt (ed.), <i>Women’s Lives in Medieval Europe: A sourcebook</i> (1993). CP 173-176.</li> </ul> <p>Journal 7 (Atkinson) due at the beginning of class.</p> <p>Note: Part one of your paper (proposal and source lists) is due in hard copy at the beginning of class tonight.</p>   |
| Tues October 8  | <p><b>(i) Married Women</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stanley Chojnacki, “The Power of Love: Wives and husbands,” reprinted in his <i>Women and Men in Renaissance Venice: Twelve essays on patrician society</i> (2000). CP 177-188.</li> <li>Primary Source: Marie de France, Two fables about women and their lovers. In Larry D. Benson and Theodore M. Andersson, <i>The Literary Context of Chaucer’s Fabliaux</i> (1971), pp. 257-61. CP 189-191.</li> </ul> <p><b>(ii) Mothers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shulamith Shahar, “Cultural Attitudes and Strategies of Oppression: Medieval motherhood,” in Karen Glente and Lise Winther-Jensen (eds.), <i>Female Power in the Middle Ages</i> (1989). CP 192-200.</li> <li>Primary Source: “Autobiography of Guibert of Nogent: Life of his mother,” in Emilie Amt (ed.), <i>Women’s Lives in Medieval Europe: A sourcebook</i> (1993). CP 201-204.</li> </ul> <p>Journals 8 (Chojnacki) and 9 (Shahar) due at the beginning of class.</p> |
| Tues October 15 | <p><b>Fall Break: No Class</b></p>   |
| Tues October 22 | <p><b>(i) Widows</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Henrietta Leyser, “Widows” in her <i>Medieval Women: A social history of women in England, 450-1500</i> (1995). CP 205-215.</li> <li>Primary Source: “Wills, archdeaconry of Buckingham,” in P.J.P. Goldberg (ed.), <i>Women in England, c. 1275-1525</i> (1995). CP 216-218.</li> </ul> <p><b>(ii) Prostitutes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ruth Mazo Karras, “Prostitution in Medieval Europe,” in Vern L. Bullough and James A Brundage (eds.), <i>Handbook of Medieval Sexuality</i> (1996). CP 219-228.</li> <li>Primary Source: Ruth Mazo Karras (ed.), Appendix to her article “Regulation of Brothels,” in Judith M. Bennett et al. (eds.), <i>Sisters and Workers in the Middle Ages</i> (Chicago, 1989). CP 229-235.</li> </ul> <p>Journals 10 (Leyser) and 11 (Karras – article, not primary source) due at the beginning of class.</p> <p>Note: part two of your paper (abstracts) is due at the beginning of class today.</p>         |





## Theme 4: Women and Religion

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| Tues October 29 | <p><b>Christian Laywomen</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Katherine L. French, “Women in the Late Medieval English Parish,” in Mary C. Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (eds.), <i>Gendering the Master Narrative: Women and power in the middle ages</i> (2003). CP 236-244.</li> <li>• Primary Source: “The Book of Margery Kempe: Pilgrimage to the holy land,” in Emilie Amt (ed.), <i>Women’s Lives in Medieval Europe: A sourcebook</i> (1993). CP 245-248.</li> </ul> <p><b>Nuns</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bonnie Anderson and Judith P. Zinzer, “Authority Within the Institutional Church,” in their <i>A History of Their Own: Women in Europe from prehistory to the present</i> (2nd ed., 2000), v. 1, pp. 183-204. CP 249-262.</li> <li>• Primary Source: “The Rule of St. Clare,” in Emilie Amt (ed.), <i>Women’s Lives in Medieval Europe: A sourcebook</i> (1993). CP 263-268.</li> </ul> <p>Journals 12 (French) and 13 (Anderson and Zinzer) due at the beginning of class.</p>  |
| Tues November 5 | <p><b>(i) Mystics and Beguines</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Caroline Walker Bynum, “Food in the Writings of Women Mystics,” in her <i>Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The religious significance of food to medieval women</i> (1987). CP 282-300.</li> <li>• Primary Source: Selections from Angela of Foligno’s <i>Memorial</i> in Elizabeth A. Clark and Herbert Richardson (eds.), <i>Women and Religion: The original sourcebook of women in Christian thought</i> (2nd ed., 1996). CP 301-305.</li> </ul> <p><b>(ii) Witches and Witch Trials</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elspeth Whitney, “Witches, Saints, and Other ‘Others’: Women and deviance in medieval culture,” in Linda E. Mitchell (ed.), <i>Women in Medieval Western European Culture</i> (1999). CP 306-315.</li> <li>• Primary Source: Heinrich Kramer and Jacob Sprenger, <i>Malleus Maleficarum</i> in Elizabeth A. Clark and Herbert Richardson (eds.), <i>Women and Religion: The original sourcebook of women in Christian thought</i> (2nd ed., 1996). CP 316-320.</li> </ul> <p>Journals 14 (Bynum) and 15 (Whitney) due at the beginning of class.</p> |

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| Tues November 12   | <p><b>(i) Jewish Women</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Judith R. Baskin, "Medieval Jewish Women," in Linda E. Mitchell (ed.), <i>Women in Medieval Western European Culture</i> (1999). CP 269-277.</li> <li>Primary Source: "Hebrew Chronicles: Massacres of Jews during the first crusade," in Emilie Amt (ed.), <i>Women's Lives in Medieval Europe: A sourcebook</i> (1993). CP 278-281.</li> </ul> <p><b>(ii) Women and the Reformations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Susan C. Karant-Nunn, "The Reformation of Women," in Renate Bridenthal, Susan Mosher Stuard, &amp; Merry E. Wiesner (eds.), <i>Becoming Visible: Women in European history</i> (3rd ed., 1998). CP 321-348.</li> <li>Primary Source: Martin Luther, "Lectures on Genesis," in Elizabeth A. Clark and Herbert Richardson (eds.), <i>Women and Religion: The original sourcebook of women in Christian thought</i> (2nd ed., 1996). CP 349-352.</li> </ul> <p>Journals 16 (Baskin) and 17 (Karant-Nunn) due at the beginning of class.</p> |
| Tues November 26   | <b>Thanksgiving Break: No Class</b>  |
|  | <h2 style="text-align: center;">Theme 5: Putting Things in Perspective</h2>  |
|  |  |
| Tues December 3  | <p><b>Men &amp; Masculinity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vern L. Bullough, "On Being Male in the Middle Ages," in Clare A. Lees (ed.), <i>Medieval Masculinities: Regarding men in the middle ages</i> (1994). CP 353-360.</li> <li>Primary Source: "How the Wise Man Taught his Son," in Edith Rickert and L.J. Naylor (eds.), <i>The Babee's Book: Medieval manners for the Young</i> (repr., 2000). CP 361-363.</li> </ul> <p><b>Continuity and Change in Women's History</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Judith M. Bennett, "Confronting Continuity," <i>Journal of Women's History</i>, v. 9 (1997). CP 364-375.</li> </ul> <p>Journals 18 (Bullough) and 19 (Bennett) due at the beginning of class.</p> <p>Note: Your final paper is due via email by 6:30pm tonight. See handout for instructions.</p>  |
| Sat December 7   | <b>8<sup>th</sup> Undergraduate Conference in Medieval &amp; Early Modern Studies</b>  |
| Tues December 10   | <b>Final Exam</b>  |