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WS 494.01: The Renaissance Debate on Women

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Spring 2006

The Renaissance Debate on Women

LS 494 ENLT 495 WS 494

Wednesday 1.10-4.00 p.m. Room: SS340

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Office Hours: Tues. 8.30-9.30; Wed. 10-11, and by appointment

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Modern attitudes to women in the Western hemisphere are crucially shaped by the debate that raged throughout the Renaissance and Reformation, and grew out of medieval debates on women and gender. In this seminar course, we will read texts from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries, in several different genres (prose pamphlets, lectures, lyrics, drama, extracts from epics), to examine the arguments presented by women and men on both sides of the question.

Texts

1. The Romance of the Rose by Guillaume de Lorris and Jean De Meun, translated by Charles Dahlberg (Princeton University Press, 1995).
2. The Book of the City of Ladies by Christine De Pizan, translated Jeffrey Richards (Persea Books, 1998).
3. Declamation on the Nobility and Preeminence of the Female Sex by Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa (Chicago University Press, 1996).
4. The Worth of Women: Wherein Is Clearly Revealed Their Nobility and Their Superiority to Men by Moderata Fonte; Virginia Cox Editor & Translator (Chicago University Press, 1997).
5. Shakespeare, Othello.
6. Shakespeare, The Taming of the Shrew.
7. Shakespeare, The Winter's Tale.
8. Thomas Heywood, A Woman Killed with Kindness.
9. Photocopied materials, given out in class.

Requirements

Students are required to

(a) attend classes regularly. Please inform me in advance if you are unable to attend a class. More than one absence not explained to my satisfaction will result in a zero for attendance. More than three absences may affect your other grades as well. Leaving early or coming late without explanation will be treated as an absence. Explanations must be backed up with documentation, communicated to me in person and accepted by me. Four or more absences will result in failing the class.

- (b) keep up with the assigned reading, bring the text to class, and participate in class discussions.
- (c) write a 1-3 page paper on each major text and bring it to class. Topics will be given in advance.
- (d) make a five to ten-minute class presentation on one or two texts. Presentations must not be summaries of the texts. They must raise questions for discussion.
- (e) write a long paper (4-6 pages double-spaced typed);
- (f) hand in a thesis and abstract for the paper, in advance, on the specified date, and discuss the abstract with me during office hours. The abstract must outline your argument.
- (g) Topics for presentations and papers must be decided in individual consultation with me.
- (h) Graduate students must write longer papers – 2-4 and 6-10 pages respectively, and must demonstrate more background reading.

Grades

The long paper will be worth 15%, class attendance and participation 15%, short papers on the texts 20%, the mid-term exam 15%, the final exam 25%, and the presentation 10%. Handing in papers late without an explanation satisfactory to me will result in a diminished grade.

Papers and exam essays must (a) address the topic (b) have a clear thesis/argument (c) support the argument with textual evidence, and (d) adhere to the conventions of academic writing, including correct grammar and syntax.

Plagiarism or academic dishonesty of any kind, in any assignment, will result in your failing the class and may also result in other penalties such as expulsion from the University (for further details, refer to the section on Academic Misconduct in the Student Conduct Code).

If you have any condition, such as a physical or learning disability, that will make it difficult for you to complete the work as I have outlined it, please notify me in the first week of class.

Reading Schedule

This schedule is tentative. It is your responsibility to keep up with any changes and obtain any hand-outs given in class during your absence from class.

January 25 Introduction

February 1 The Romance of the Rose, pp.31-99, and extract from Dante, Paradiso, and medieval lyrics on Mary (photocopies).

February 8 The Romance of the Rose, pp. 153-178, 225-269, 339-354, and Christine de Pizan's response (photocopy).

- February 15 Christine de Pizan, The Book of the City of Ladies, pp.3-120. **1-3 page paper due, on Romance of the Rose**
- February 22 Christine de Pizan, The Book of the City of Ladies, pp.120-257.
- March 1 Chaucer, The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale, and extract from Ariosto, Orlando Furioso (photocopies). **1-3 page paper due, on de Pizan.**
- March 8 Chaucer, The Clerk's Prologue and Tale and Dialogues between Ganymede and others (photocopies).
- March 15 Cornelius Agrippa, Declamation on the Nobility and Preeminence of the Female Sex. **1-3 page paper due, on Chaucer.**
- March 22 **Mid-term exam** (one and a half hours)
John Knox, First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women
- March 22 Moderato Fonte, The Worth of Women.
- March 27-31 Spring Break
- April 5 Shakespeare, The Taming of the Shrew. **1-3 page paper, on Fonte or Knox.**
- April 12 Heywood, A Woman Killed with Kindness. **1-3 page paper, on Taming.**
- April 19 Shakespeare, Othello **Thesis due, in class.**
- April 26 Shakespeare, The Winter's Tale. **Abstract due, in class.**
- May 3 Swetnam, The Arraignment of Lewd, Idle, Froward and Unconstant Women. Review and conclusion. **Long paper due, in class.**
- May 8, 3.20-5.20 p.m. **Final exam.**