

Professor Jennifer Selwyn

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HISTORY 352: Women in European History, ca. 1100-1700



Artemisia Gentileschi (*Self-Portrait as Martyr*, 1615)

This online course explores changing ideas about women, gender, and sexuality in the transition from medieval society to the modern age in Europe, ca. 1100-1700. What did it mean to be a woman in the medieval and early modern world? What were the gender norms and practices, and the costs to those who could not, or would not subscribe to these dominant values and practices? What were the attitudes about sexuality in this period that was undergoing such dramatic transformations? We will investigate a wide range of themes related to pre-modern women's history through a close examination of primary and secondary sources related to the history of women, gender and sexuality in pre-modern Europe.

We begin with a brief consideration of the Ancient World—The Holy Land, Greece, and Rome—in order to trace the dual influences of classical culture and the Judeo-Christian religious traditions on emerging ideas about sex and gender. In subsequent weeks, we will consider such topics as: family, religion, work, sexuality, and political authority, always contextualizing these themes within the broader social, political, and the cultural history of medieval and early modern Europe and the world beyond Europe's borders.

Required Texts (Available through PSU Bookstore, or online booksellers). Additional readings available to download at course site, under "Course Content" for the week for which they are each assigned.

Natalie Zemon Davis, *Women on the Margins. Three Seventeenth-Century Lives* (Harvard University Press, 1997) ISBN-10: 0674955218 [Available new for \$25.00 through Amazon, but many used copies exist]

Lisa Di Caprio and Merry Wiesner, Eds. *Lives and Voices. Sources in European Women's History* (Cengage, 2000) ISBN: 0395970520 [Listed new copies on Amazon for \$92.00; buy used copies from \$23.00]

Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*. 3rd. Edition. (Cambridge University Press, 2008) ISBN: 0521695449 [Listed new copies \$23.00, but available used from \$15.00]

Course Requirements and Policies: You must submit *all required assignments* in order to pass this course. I do not accept late papers, except in extraordinary circumstances. If you need to arrange an extension, due to an *emergency*, please contact me *prior* to the due date. I do not provide students with *incomplete* grades, either. If you discover early on in the course that it is not the one for you, please choose to drop the course. No hard feelings. I would prefer that you do this than simply disappear and have to receive an "X" grade.

As you know, all of your work must be original. When you cite the work of another author, you must give her/him their due by providing either a parenthetical citation, or a footnote/endnote. For the short paper assignments, I will accept either Chicago-style footnotes or parenthetical citations. Guidelines will be provided on our D2L course site, in the "Start Here" Module. Anyone who presents another person's work as their own is guilty of plagiarism and could potentially fail this course and face disciplinary action from Portland State University. When in doubt, always cite any sources from which you borrowed ideas, whether you are quoting directly, or paraphrasing. Always err on the side of caution! For a fuller definition of what constitutes plagiarism and the procedures followed by Portland State University in cases where it is suspected, please go the following website: <http://www.pdx.edu/dos/conductcode.html#Code>

See, especially, the section on "Proscribed Conduct," Item #2, and "Procedures for Complaints" regarding cases of academic dishonesty.

Final Grade Criteria: The following point totals represent the *maximum* number of points that a student may earn for each category of class performance.

***Participation/Discussion:** 50 points. Please see below for more information on the Discussion/Participation component of this course.

First Essay: 25 pts. (6 pages) Due Wednesday, April 30th, 2014 by 11:59PM (This analytical paper will be based on common course readings. Students will be given a choice of topics).

Second Essay 25pts (6 pages) Due Wednesday, June 11th, 2014 by 11:59PM (This analytical paper will be based on common course readings, unless a student chooses to do additional reading on a topic of their choice. In that case, please contact me by May 25th with your topic idea.)

Fuller descriptions of the individual writing assignments, as well as paper guidelines, are available at the "Assignments" folder under "Course Content" and posted on the Home Page as a "News" item.

***More on Participation/Discussion:** 50 points. (Each discussion will be worth a possible 5 points, including two original posts and one substantive response. Students may substitute a **substantive question** to another student for a discussion response. Students are welcome to contribute additional posts, if so motivated, and also be sure to post any questions of fact or interpretation, either on the "Questions for Professor Selwyn" section of the Discussion Board, or via D2L email. On any given week, there will often be more than two discussion questions, so feel free to respond to those that interest you most. The reading load may sometimes feel heavy, so learn to read the textbook efficiently, so that you can give your attention to the more challenging, but usually more stimulating primary and secondary sources.

Online courses offer a unique opportunity to build a non-traditional learning community, but because we do not meet face to face, both students and instructor must be that much more committed to making the course atmosphere for our class to achieve our shared learning objectives and be meaningful for each of us, we need to participate actively in the "virtual" classroom environment, as we engage with the readings and with one another online. This means that each of us must participate in *each* discussion with substantive comments/posts that help to illuminate the course

readings and the larger themes that they bring to life. Let's commit ourselves to creating an informal, but intellectually serious, and lively learning community in which all participants can engage. I welcome your feedback throughout the term on ways to improve our class community.

Please refer to the "Discussion Posts" icon on the course homepage for general guidelines for online discussion participation and "netiquette." For my part, I promise to read all students' posts with great care, and participate in all discussions, although I cannot respond to each post each week. If you have an individual question or matter to discuss with me, you are welcome to write me via the Blackboard mail function. I will check my mail at least twice a day and respond to you in a timely manner (normally within 12 hours, or less).

Each week, students can earn up to five points for participating in discussion. Students should plan to respond to two discussion questions (and/or make original posts relevant to the week's readings/key themes) and also offer at least one substantive response/critique of fellow students' posts. These critiques are *not* intended to be personal attacks, nor should students feel shy about debating points of interpretation from the readings. Rather, they are intended to help each of us to read carefully and thoughtfully and help our classmates to do the same. We are critiquing one another's arguments, *not* individuals.

Because this is a fairly small class, students will rely upon one another's participation for their own success, so please do your part! Discussion posts should go up early in the week to give ample time for responses and all posts should be in by the end of the weekend (Sunday evening), so that we can move on to the next topic/set of readings. If I find that students are not posting/responding with critiques in a timely manner, I reserve the right to "lock" discussion topics" with ample advanced notice given to all students. In the event that a student does not have sufficient posts to which to respond with a critique, you are invited to make an additional post(s), and the class will address this matter as a group and come up with a collective solution.

*Please note that responses to fellow students' posts that do not contribute anything substantive, such as: "Great comment, Jane, I hadn't thought of that;" or that are vague, like: "I agree with you that Wiesner's description of the witch trials is interesting," will not earn one point. Try to be expansive in your comments and **use text material as often as possible to illustrate and support your arguments.***

Paper Due Dates: (Descriptions of all written assignments can be found at the Home Page under "News." The prompts can also be viewed at the Drop Box. All papers should be submitted through the "Assignment Drop Box." If you are unfamiliar with D2L, please take advantage of the tutorial available at the Home page, which will acquaint you with all aspects of navigating the website, submitting assignments, using the Discussion Board...)

First Paper: Wednesday, April 30th, 2014 (11:59PM)

Second Paper: Wednesday, June 11th, 2014 (11:59PM)

Course Schedule

Please note: *All reading should be completed by the beginning of the week for which the texts are assigned.*

Week One (3/31-4/6): Introductions / Conceptualizing Pre-Modern Women's History

Reading: Judith M. Bennett, "Confronting Continuity" (Pdf at Week One Course Content)

Discussion Questions:

1. Early on in this article, Judith Bennett distinguishes between "changes in women's experience on the one hand and transformations in women's status on the other." (74) Why does Bennett think that historians of women are more comfortable with the idea of "transformations" than "continuities" in women's experiences over time? Provide specific examples to illustrate your arguments.
2. How does Bennett's presentation of evidence from her own work on female brewers in medieval England argue the need to pay attention to continuities? Please provide specific examples from the article to support your ideas.

Also, please introduce yourself to the class, let folks know what brought you to History 352, and share a work of historical fiction, film, artwork, musical piece, etc. that is meaningful to you and why.

Week Two (4/7-4/13): Roots of Medieval Gender Systems and Norms: The Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian Traditions.

Reading: Wiesner-Hanks, Introduction, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*; Aristotle, *Politics*; Galen, *On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body*; Emperor Justinian, *Corpus Juris Civilis*; Israelite Laws from the Books of Numbers and Deuteronomy; Paul of Tarsus, *Letters to Corinthians, Galatians, and Timothy*; *Martyrdom of Perpetua*, all in *Lives and Voices. Sources in European Women's History* (hereafter: *Lives and Voices*)

Discussion Questions:

1. How do the various genres (categories) of texts from Greco-Roman societies provide distinctive perspectives on the status of women and gender in the Ancient World? Are they consistent in the picture of gender hierarchies that they present? If not, what might their inconsistencies tell us?
2. We often refer to religious writing (as well as other kinds of historical sources, such as law codes) as "prescriptive" evidence, rather than "descriptive," because they describe ideals of behavior and belief. What are the gender prescriptions presented in the biblical/martyrdom sources that you have read for today's class? Do you find any distinctive features?
3. Select a quote/quotes that you found particularly revealing/interesting from one or more of the sources and explain your choice in some detail.

Week Three (4/14-4/20): Medieval Women's Legal and Economic Status

Reading: Merry Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, Ch. 1, 17-30; *Lives and Voices*, Ch. 4, "The Early and High Middle Ages," 102-104; Gratian, *Canon Law on Marriage; Peasants' Manorial Obligations, Manuscript Illuminations of Women's Work; Weavers' Ordinances Regarding Women's Work in England; Sumptuary Laws and Their Enforcement; Women's Response to Sumptuary Legislation*; all in *Lives and Voices*.

Discussion Questions:

1. To what extent do the legal conditions for women shift during the medieval period? Do you find that "women's" status is further complicated by questions of social caste and/or marital status? Explain.

2. What kinds of restrictions were placed on women from the guild institutions of the medieval period (as seen in the Weavers' Ordinance)? Why would this have been significant? 3. What do the sumptuary laws of late medieval Europe, and women's responses to them, reveal?

Week Four (4/21-4/27): Gender and Medieval Religious Piety

Reading: John Coakley, "Gender and the Authority of the Friars: The Significance of Holy Women for Thirteenth-Century Franciscans and Dominicans" (Week Four Course Module); "The Case of Na Prous Bonnet" (1325) (Link available at Week Four Course Module)

Discussion Questions:

1. What is John Coakley's primary argument about the relationship between female mystics and the men in the mendicant orders (Franciscan and Dominican) that were inspired by their piety, in his article "Gender and the Authority of the Friars?" What does this article suggest about a "gender division of labor" in the High/Late medieval Christianity?

2. Based on your reading of the "Case of Na Prous Bonnet," for what "crimes" was she brought before the Inquisition as a heretic? To what extent, if any, did her gender contribute to the Inquisition's concerns over her unorthodox beliefs and behaviors?

First Paper Due on Wednesday, April 30, 2014 at 11:59PM at the Assignment Drop Box

Week Five (4/28-5/4): Did Women Have a Renaissance?

Reading: Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, Ch. 4, pp.141-157; Ch. 5; Christine De Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies*; Leonardo Bruni, "Letter to Lady Baptista Malatesta;" Moderata Fonte, "Women's Worth," all in *Lives and Voices*.

Discussion Questions:

1. What were the dominant cultural views of women's education at the advent of the so-called *Renaissance* (ca. 1400)? How did women (and their male advocates) challenge those prevailing attitudes? Be specific.

2. Beyond the debates over female education, how did women fare in their pursuit of professional status within the world of culture, whether it is literature, the visual arts, or the natural sciences and philosophy?

Week Six (5/5-5/11): The Female Life Cycle: Women, Sexuality, and Marriage in the Early Modern Period

Reading: Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, Ch. 2, "The Female Life Cycle"; Anna Bijns, "Happy the Woman Without a Man;" "Reflections on Widowhood;" *Regulation of City Brothels*; *Trial of Two Women for Same Sex Relations*; Catharina Schrader, "Midwife's Activities," all in *Lives and Voices*.

Discussion Questions:

1. How would you characterize the predominant attitudes toward female sexuality in the early modern period? Provide specific examples to illustrate your argument.
2. Select at least one of the primary sources that you have read for this week and be ready to summarize the significant insights that it provides into early modern women's marital and/or sexual lives and status.
3. Share a quote that you found interesting/revealing and be ready to explain your choice.

Week Seven (5/12-5/18): Women and Religious Activity during the Age of Reformations

Reading: Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, Ch. 6; Argula Von Grumbach, "Letter to the University of-Hanks Ingolstadt;" Luisa de Carvajal, "Letter to Father Joseph Creswell, S.J.;"

Discussion Questions:

1. How did women attempt to negotiate greater spheres of autonomy and authority during the Protestant and Catholic Reformations? What were the results of these efforts? Provide specific examples from the readings.
2. Both Argula Von Grumbach and Luisa de Carvajal take very *public* positions in regard to their religious beliefs (whether through missionary activities, as in the case of Carvajal, or in letter form, like Von Grumbach). Compare their respective accounts and consider how their contemporaries might have perceived each.
3. While much of the material deals with the status of Protestant and Catholic women in the early modern period, what generalizations can we make about Jewish and Muslim women in this era?

Week Eight (5/19-5/25): Gender and Witch-Hunting Phenomenon

Reading: Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, Ch. 7; Various Witchcraft Documents, in *Lives and Voices*, pp. 223-235 (Read all of these!)

Discussion Questions:

1. How have historians understood the causes, timing, and consequences of the witch-hunting phenomenon in early modern Europe? How are these various theories borne out in influential primary sources, such as the *Malleus Maleficarum* (*Hammer of Witches*)?
2. Compare a prescriptive source, such as the *Malleus*, or one of the other witch pamphlets with a trial document, such as that describing the prosecution of Suzanne Gaudry. What strikes you about the trial procedure and the methods used to extract a confession? Does Gaudry fit the "profile" provided in the other sources? Why or why not?
3. Select at least one quote from one of the readings to present in class. Be ready to justify your selection.

Week Nine (5/26-6/1): Women & Power in the Early Modern Period

Reading: Wiesner, *Women and Gender in the Early Modern Period*, Ch. 8; John Knox, *First Blast of the Monstrous Regiment of Women*; Queen Elizabeth I, *Tilbury Speech*; T.E., *Law's Resolution of Women's Rights*, all in *Lives and Voices*.

Discussion Questions:

1. What were some of the restrictions against/objections to women holding formal political power in the early modern period? How did women negotiate those restrictions? Offer specific examples from the textbook as well as the primary sources.
2. How was the very notion of power gendered in this period, according to Wiesner? Do we see this notion reflected in works like Knox's *First Blast of the Trumpet*, or Elizabeth I's *Tilbury Speech*? Explain.

Week Ten: (6/2-6/8): Women, Vocation, and Work in 17th-Century Europe and the New World

Reading: N. Z. Davis, *Women on the Margins*; Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender in the Colonial World*, Ch. 9

Discussion Questions:

1. Does Natalie Zemon Davis make a good case for including each of the women that she profiles in *Women on the Margins*? Why or why not? What, if anything, do these women share? How does each portrait illuminate a different aspect of early modern life and gender identity? In providing your answers, be sure to include specific examples from the reading to support your arguments.
2. How does Wiesner-Hanks view the expansion of Europe/colonization of the New World impacting issues of gender and women's experiences in the early modern world?

Second/Final Paper Due on Wednesday, June 12, 2013