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ENG 3604-001: Renaissance Women Writers in Context

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English 3604-001: Renaissance Women Writers in Context
Spring 2009

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Office hours TTH 11-12:30; T 2-3:30; W 2-3;
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TTH 12:30-1:45
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Texts

Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (3rd ed.)
Cerasano and Wynne-Davies, *Renaissance Drama by Women*
Stortoni and Lillie, *Women Poets of the Italian Renaissance*
Lawall and Mack, *Norton Anthology of Western Literature*, vol. 1 (8th ed.)
Aragona, *Dialogue on the Infinity of Love*
Tasso, *Aminta*
Andreini, *La Mirtilla*
Wroth, *The Countess of Montgomery’s Urania*, electronic draft

E-Reserves Packet

Course Focus

The pious expressions of Renaissance noblewomen and the seductive gazes of courtesans that grace the canvases of Renaissance artists from Bronzino to Tintoretto disguise the clever wits of women complicit with the strictures of their circumstances yet, in many cases, active as writers who participated in Renaissance literary society. This phenomenon of women portrayed in very limited ways, but who were actually well-educated, vocal, influential participants in literary circles was a fixture of Renaissance culture as it spread across Europe to England during the late fifteenth to early seventeenth centuries. In this course, we will look at the lives and works of several women writers from a variety of social strata, and we will examine their writing in tandem with some works by their male contemporaries. The major theme that we will explore is the discontinuity of received history regarding Renaissance women, i.e., the notions that women were to be silent, chaste, and obedient, and were to be objects of spiritual and artistic inspiration for men vs. the facts that women were actively and vocally participating in salon and academic society, writing, publishing, and otherwise circulating their work, and searching for ways to represent women’s experiences in life and love, all the while pushing the boundaries of women’s place in intellectual and literary discourse.

Policies

--The English Department statement on plagiarism stipulates that any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism—“The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author and representation of them as one’s original work” (*Random House Dictionary of the English Language*)—has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate
assignment of a grade of F for the assigned essay and a grade of NC for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office.
--Hand papers in on time. **Papers more than a class day late without a University-approved excuse will not be accepted at all. Any in-class writing and in-class group work cannot be made up.**
--If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.
--Be prepared for class. You'll get a lot more out of class discussions if you are participating in them, and I'll notice if you do not seem prepared to participate.

**Requirements and Grades**

--Three exams ...................... 45% (15% each of final grade)
--One 7-10 page research paper ........ 20%
--One research report with annotated bibliography ...................... .15%
--One presentation ................... 10%
--Response writings ................. 10%

The three exams will cover the three units of study. The third exam will contain some comprehensive elements in addition to covering the third unit.

The paper topic will be chosen from the assigned texts and issues related to them. I will give you a list of possible areas of study to consider early in the semester because you will be expected to select a topic and begin research early on. The paper will be 7-10 pages long. You will use at least 3-5 outside sources to support your arguments, and they should consist of scholarly books, journal articles, and Internet sources of well-known scholarly repute—no citations from Wikipedia will be accepted. You will use MLA Parenthetical Style, with a Works Cited page, for documentation. Around midterm, you will have a preliminary research report with an annotated bibliography due to show the progress that you have made regarding your research project. Do not worry that we haven’t covered the topic that interests you in class—this portion of our study is meant to be independent exploration of a topic that may be completely new to you. It is my hope that your independent study will augment for you what is eventually covered in class and will broaden the scope of the course as a whole for you.

The research report and annotated bibliography will cover the research that you do for your research paper and presentation. The report will address the topic, why you chose the topic, and the avenues of research that you chose to explore. The annotated bibliography will consist of bibliographic citations of at least five sources with your notes on each work that describe the document, summarize why it may be useful to your project, and include possible quotations that you might use in the paper.

The response writings will be short essays in which you reflect on specific issues from the three units. You will word process and turn in these assignments.
Tentative Schedule

T. Jan. 13—Introduction to course.
Homework: Read the Introduction and Ideas and Laws Regarding Women in *Women and Gender*. Note—we will use this text as a background source throughout the semester. Answer your part of the group questions. Read the sonnet handout, as well as Petrarch’s sonnets in *Norton* and Michelangelo’s sonnet 235 to Vittoria Colonna, in *Norton*.

Unit One—Italy

Th. Jan. 15—Discuss the Renaissance woman—the ideal and the real. Group questions over *Women and Gender* reading. (See also Christine de Pizan in *Norton*, p. 1862). Start Petrarch and Renaissance poetry.
Homework: Note: always read the biographical introductions to each author. In *Women Poets of the Italian Renaissance*, read Veronica Gambara (1, 2, 3, 10, 17; 21); Vittoria Colonna (1, 19, 45, 64); Laura Battiferri Ammannati (When the sun, Before the color...); Tullia d’Aragona (To Ochino, To Muzio, To Manelli, Love once consumed me); Veronica Franco (Sonnet 1, terza rime 16, letter 22).

T. Jan. 20—Women, class, and poetry in Renaissance Italy.
Homework: Read *Aminta*; read also The Female Life-Cycle in *Women and Gender*.

Th. Jan. 22—Drama and the influence of the pastoral: *Aminta*. Consider especially from *Women and Gender* the implications of cross-dressing in reality vs. on stage (see especially p. 72).
Homework: Read *La Mirtilla* (whole play); and in *Women Poets of the Italian Renaissance*, Andreini’s letter On the Birth of Women.

T. Jan. 27—What does a female actor and playwright do with the traditions of the pastoral? *La Mirtilla* and Andreini’s letter.
Homework: Read Tullia d’Aragona’s *Dialogue on the Infinity of Love*, as well as *Symposium* (E-Reserves).

Th. Jan. 29—Discuss the genre of the Renaissance dialogue. (Look at handout excerpt from Speroni.) *Infinity of Love* and *Symposium*.
Homework: Response Writing from this unit


Th. Feb 5—Exam One
Homework: Read Christine de Pizan, *Letter from the God of Love* (Norton) and the chapters, Literacy and Learning and Religion in *Women and Gender*.

Unit Two—France

T. Feb. 10—The beginnings of the literary quarrel called the *Querelle des femmes* and Christine de Pizan. Discuss also chapters from *Women and Gender*. 
Homework: Read Boccaccio's Prologue to The Decameron, The Sixth Story of the Ninth Day (Pinuccio and Nicolosa), and The Tenth Story of the Tenth Day (Griselda) (Norton).

Th. Feb. 12—Discuss Boccaccio's Decameron and issues from the Querelle des femmes that we see addressed there.
Homework: Read Marguerite de Navarre’s Heptameron (Norton).

T. Feb. 17—Consider the French court, patronage, and Marguerite de Navarre’s literary career, as well as her friendship with Vittoria Colonna. Heptameron and Decameron discussion. Where do you see Marguerite de Navarre engaging in the querelle?
Homework: Read Louise Labé selections (E-Reserves); Madeleine de l’Aubespine selections (E-Reserves); Madeleine and Catherine des Roches selections (E-Reserve).

Th. Feb. 19—Discuss French salons/literary circles and the poetry of women who participated in them. Note especially the examples of sonnets and other poems exchanged by male and female participants in the L’Aubespine readings.

T. Feb. 24—Continue with French women poets.
Homework: Read Samuel Will, “Camille de Morel” (E-Reserves) and do Writing Response for this unit.


T. Mar. 3—Catch-up and review for Exam Two

Th. Mar. 5—Research Report with Annotated Bibliography is due. Exam Two
Homework: Read Women and the Creation of Culture in Women and Gender. Begin reading Wroth’s The Countess of Montgomery’s Urania, which you received via electronic attachment. (You’ll probably be reading it both now and during your spring break. Might as well start now.) For Tuesday, read Queen Elizabeth (E-Reserves Packet).

Unit Three—England

T. Mar. 10—Discuss the Renaissance in England and Queen Elizabeth’s prominence as an international intellectual. (For the fun of it, look at D’Aubigny’s “Lettre à mes filles...” in your E-Reserves Packet. See what names you recognize.)

Th. Mar. 12—Fun with the English version of the Querelle des femmes.
Homework: Finish reading Wroth’s Urania. Start reading the following: Aemilia Lanyer’s Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum from the Brown University Women Writers Project available from the “Magazines and Journal Articles” page of Booth Library, under “Databases” on
that page. Read also Pamela Benson’s article, “The Stigma of Italy Undone: Aemilia Lanyer’s Canonization of Lady Mary Sidney,” *Strong Voices, Weak History* (Anna Arbor: U of Michigan, 1903), 146-175 in your E-Reserves Packet.

**T. Mar. 17**—Spring Break

**Th. Mar. 19**—Spring Break

**T. Mar. 24**—Wrap up discussion of Pamphlet Wars and English debate about women. Aemilia Lanyer and the stigma of Italy: start Aemilia Lanyer’s *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* and Pamela Benson’s article, “The Stigma of Italy Undone: Aemilia Lanyer’s Canonization of Lady Mary Sidney.”

**Th. Mar. 26**—Continue discussion of Lanyer and Benson’s article. Note: Today is Pamela Benson’s talk on campus. Your attendance is required.

**Homework:** Writing response to Benson’s talk. Also, get ready to start discussion of Wroth’s *Urania*. Answer the appropriate part of your group’s questions.

**T. Mar. 31**—Women and the Romance Genre: Wroth’s *Urania*.

**Th. Apr. 2**—Wroth’s *Urania*.

**Homework:** Read Elizabeth Cary’s *Mariam* and Wroth’s *Love’s Victory* in *Renaissance Drama by Women*. Answer the appropriate part of your group’s questions.

**T. Apr. 7**—Catch-up Day. If possible, start discussion of the tradition of Closet Drama—and consider how closely elements in these plays recall those in public drama, in Shakespeare’s *Othello*, *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and *Romeo and Juliet*, for example. 

**Homework:** Read “Amyes of the English Court” (E-Reserves Packet)

**Th. Apr. 9**—Continue discussion of literary circles and closet drama. Consider ways in which *Love’s Victory* reminds you of *La Mirtilla*.

**Homework:** Thinking about Wroth’s *Love’s Victory*, read Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (E-Reserves Packet).

**T. Apr. 14**—*A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (film)

**Th. Apr. 16**—*A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (film)

**Homework:** Questions to consider—where do we see reference to classical practice regarding the law and daughters? What do you see reflected in the father/daughter relationship that illustrates the extreme of Renaissance practice? What are the dangers for a young, unaccompanied woman? What happens when roles are reversed—and women pursue men? What are themes and issues from the entire semester that we see in the play?

**T. Apr. 21**—Catch-up day.

**Th. Apr. 23**—Presentations.

**T. Apr. 28**—Presentations.

**Th. Apr. 30**—Presentations. **Research Papers are due.**

**Final Exam:** (Exam Three) Tues., May 5, 12:30-2:30pm