

# "Marriage and Sexuality in Medieval Europe"



**HISTORY 368 / WOMENS STUDIES 368 / RELIGIOUS STUDIES 368**

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SPRING 2000  
MWF 12:20-1:10 MG 165

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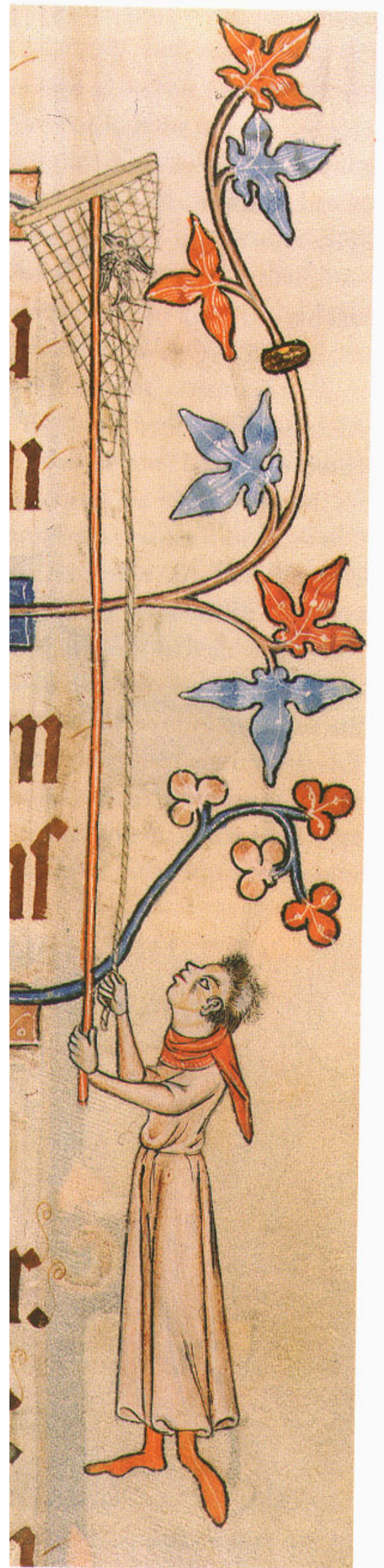
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**W**e are all interested in gender relations and sex in our own way. Each strikes at the sensitive core of our being. Few topics generate heat and controversy so readily today. Decisions made in the first centuries of the Christian era still haunt us. They affect all of us, whether we acknowledge the faith that produced them or not -- atheists, non-believers and even many non-westerners included.

**T**he history of western attempts to deal with the problem of marriage and sexuality thus has a special claim to our attention. A glum tale of the continuing influence of the dominant white male it does seem. Marriage is society's main framework for the control - some would say repression -- of sexuality and reproduction, activities with a supreme power to explode into violence and confusion. For the historian intent on a comprehensive view of a culture, it offers quite as good a starting point as politics, one with its own still fresh perspective. This is not a "professional" exposition of the History of Sexuality, which has become a specialty of its own, but an exposition of what is known, what is knowable, and how these findings affect our overall understanding of the Medieval West.





This will be very much a **reading-and-discussion** course. Lectures will review the readings in historical perspective and supplement them. Friday discussions (in small groups) will usually take off from samples of original source material, in English translation, intended to spur critical examination of the readings. Students will certainly bring to the course a wide variety of preoccupations and theoretical starting-points. They are encouraged to voice their own thoughts and feelings about the issues uncovered, and to listen to those of their companions.

The period to be studied ranges from the first Christian centuries up to the eve of the Reformation. We begin by clarifying in outline the process by which the theologians and canon lawyers produced an ideal and a workable definition of a binding Christian marriage. We then seek to explain the character of the synthesis that emerged. Armed with the legal and theological context of marriage, we can then proceed to some more specific topics, such as homosexuality, rape/abduction, prostitution, bawd and literary attitudes towards sexuality. Previous classes have found the material not just fascinating but on occasion hugely enjoyable. The hope is to end up with some idea of how the reality compared with the Church's "ideal" and, in some sense, to assess the product that came forward to the Reformation, and to us, who still suffer (?) under its legacy today.

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## **REQUIRED READINGS:**

**The Letters of Abelard & Heloise**, tr. B. Radice  
E. Amt, **Womens' Lives in Medieval Europe** [Sourcebook]  
Andreas Capellanus, **The Art of Courtly Love**, tr. J.J. Parry

J. Boswell, **Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality**  
J. Brundage, **Law, Sex and Christian Society in Medieval Europe**.  
V. Bullough & J. Brundage (eds.), **Sexual Practices and the Medieval Church**  
D. Elliott, **Spiritual Marriage**  
E. Pagels, **Adam, Eve and the Serpent**  
P. Payer, **The Bridling of Desire**

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## OPTIONAL READINGS:

G. Duby, **The Knight, the Lady & the Priest**  
H.E. Fisher, **Anatomy of Love**  
F. and J. Gies, **Marriage & The Family in the Middle Ages** [if available]  
J. Goody, **The Development of the Family and Marriage in Europe**  
J. Riddle, **Contraception and Abortion from the Ancient World to the Renaissance**

All the above are available from the Campus Bookstore, and copies are in Uris Reserve. A package of xeroxed readings (marked [R] on the Weekly Schedule below) is available from The Campus Store. Various other books, marked [U] below and listed at the back will be available on Reserve in Uris Library; these will be most useful for the final paper.

Still other source translations are available for reading and/or printing out through my [Web pages](#) (Home Page address as above, but also findable through the "History Courses" page). Cate will be glad to assist any student who does not know more about the Web than she does. The Web version of this prospectus will be updated as necessary (let me hear of errors etc., please) and is authoritative in case of doubt.

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## COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. **Prelim Exam on the Legal Development of Christian Marriage**. This will be a take-home, consisting of short questions answerable from the readings of Weeks I - V. [**15 % of Final Grade**]
2. **Dossier of relevant Biblical Texts**. You will come across frequent Bible citations in the readings. Make yourself a list of those you find interesting in a file. You may use any Bible version that is available to you, online versions included.

The Bible most used in the period was some kind of Latin "Vulgate". Make me explain. The English-language *Douai Bible* [Olin BS180. 1888], that follows this closely, is in the Medieval Studies Reading Room, Olin 404, also at

<<http://www.cybercomm.net/~dcon/drbbible.html>>.

A copy of this preliminary list of citations will be due before leaving for Spring Break. From it, you will select about 6 texts for brief (max. of 1 page each) comment (eg on the different medieval readings and responses). This dossier is to be submitted by the start of Week XIV (**May 1**). [**15 % of Final Grade**]

3. **Chaucer as a source for attitudes on Marriage and Sexuality**. Each student will be assigned on a random basis one of a list of selected Canterbury Tales, and should be prepared, if called on, to make a brief presentation on his/her assigned Tale in Week XIII. It is **your own responsibility** to acquire well in advance a text (e.g. a xerox) of this. [**5% of Final Grade**]

4. **Term-Paper**. This will be an upper-level research paper, say, 20+ pp. long. See me in Office Hours to agree a title and discuss materials before **Friday April 14**. The paper **must** be in by 5 p.m. **Monday, May 8**, at the start of Study Week.  
[**60 % of Final Grade**]

5. **Readings & Class Participations** [10% of Final Grade]. It is especially important to make an early start on the reading, whose weight varies from week to week. This is an *intensive-reading* class. I reserve the right to produce (on a Wednesday) spot quizzes on the week's reading; these will consist of 3 questions easily answered by those who have done the reading. That way everyone will be capable of contributing to class discussion. I demand no vast originality, and will give credit simply for launching good questions at the instructor. The whole class benefits from a student prepared simply to voice, for example, his or her difficulties with the readings. **The Friday sections are a full part of the class**, indeed its main point, and attendance is essential. (Obviously class **attendance**, including any make-ups is also *mandatory*.) Please make yourself known personally in **Office Hours** to one or both of us early in the semester; these too are an integral part of the course, which you should treat as a resource and use to review progress or discuss points of interest.

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## Online Resources:

- [ORB \(Online Resource Book in Medieval Studies\)](#)
- [The Medieval Sourcebook](#)
- [The Labyrinth](#) - Georgetown University
- [CARRIE: An Electronic Library](#) - The University of Kansas

## SOURCE TRANSLATIONS:

- [A HUSBAND'S ENDOWMENT OF HIS FUTURE WIFE ON THEIR BETROTHAL - SOUTHERN BURGUNDY, 994](#)
  - [GRATIAN ON MARRIAGE \(dictum post C. 32. 2. 2\)](#)
  - [ENGLISH & LATERAN COUNCIL LEGISLATION:](#)
    - [COUNCIL OF WESTMINSTER, 1076](#)
    - [COUNCIL OF WESTMINSTER, 1173 \(?\)](#)
    - [COUNCIL OF LONDON, 1200, c. 11](#)
    - [4th LATERAN COUNCIL, 1215, c. 51](#)
  - [Manorial Marriage and Sexual Offense Cases](#)
  - [1](#)
  - [2](#)
  - [3](#)
  - [4](#)
  - [ROBERT OF FLAMBOROUGH'S "SUMMA CONFESSORUM" ON "LUXURIA"](#)
  - [THE CHURCH COURTS PURSUE ADULTERERS](#)
  - [WIFE SUES TO GET HER HUSBAND BACK](#)
  - [CHURCH COURT PROCEDURE C. 1220/45](#)
  - ["SALE" OF DAUGHTER AS CONCUBINE](#)
  - [THE CROW OF THE BESTIARIES](#)
  - [LOUIS VII'S CONTINENCE](#)
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## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

- [Spring 2000 Semester Schedule](#)

- [Reserve Reading List](#)
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