Nancy Warren

English 607 Topics in Medieval Literature and Culture

Medieval Women and Writing: Desire, Defamation, and Defense

Course Description

This course focuses on medieval text written by, for, and about women. As we interrogate the ways in which women participate in literate and literary practices, we will consider such topics as clerical antifeminism, women's education, mysticism, and romance as a gendered genre. We will read works from a variety of genres: devotional treatises, drama, conduct books, romances, lyric poetry, accounts of divine revelation, just to name a few. Our aim will be to situate texts in their historical and cultural environments as we bring to bear a range of theoretical and critical approaches.

The assignments in this course are designed to provide students with opportunities to practice professionally important forms of writing and will include a book review, an abstract for the final paper, and an article length research paper. Students will also do a presentation of research to the class as well as submit periodic written reading responses.

We will read texts in Middle English. However, no prior experience with Middle English is required or expected.

Course Objectives

- situate literate and literary practices in historical, religious and cultural environments
- explore the interactions of mutually-informing spiritual and political systems within women’s writings
- analyze relationships of genre and gender in texts by women
- interrogate medieval texts through the lens of contemporary theoretical approaches to literature and culture
- produce kinds of writing important to professional development