

History 2159A
Midwives, Madonnas, Witches ,and Whores:
Women in early modern Europe, 1500-1700

2024-25 | Fall 2024 |

Instructor: **Dr. Sara Morrison**

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Office Hours: Mon 11:00-12:00; Tues 1:00-2:00

This is a **draft** outline. Please see the course site on OWL Brightspace for a final version.

Course Description

This course provides critical perspectives on the lives of European women 1500 to 1700. Students analyze early modern perceptions, life cycle, individuals, and various roles of women: wife, mother, nun, martyr, midwife, citizen, soldier, worker, property owner, and artist, plus female rulers and regents.

Although Europe did not yet exist in 1500, the world of “Christendom” extended over present-day western and central Europe. During the early modern period, the witch-hunting craze and the reformation is often considered a time of setbacks for women as they lost economic and political power, along with the prestige they had enjoyed during the Middle Ages. The age also produced female rulers: Mary Queen of Scots, Mary Tudor, Elizabeth I in England, Queen Isabella in Castile and Christina of Sweden. Several Queen Mothers stood in as regents for their underage sons in France during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: Catherine de Medici, Marie de Medici and Anne of Austria.

The course explores some of the questions engaging early modern historians studying women in Europe: Did women have a renaissance? Were women inferior or more sinful than men? What was the everyday life for women in different occupations and social groups? How did life cycle influence status? Was life influenced by the reformation and the dissolution of monastic houses in Protestant countries like England? What role did Angela Merici play in the Catholic reformation in sixteenth century Italy? What impact, if any, did a significant cluster of women rulers and regents have in early modern Europe? These are just some of the questions to be addressed in a thematic analysis of the recent historical literature concerned with early modern women, which explores contemporary perceptions and the reality of their everyday lives.

Anti-requisite(s): History 2459F/G

Course Syllabus

Through class lectures, readings, films, oral or written discussions, students will consider the role of women in early modern Europe. Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

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1. Think historically about women, understanding contemporary perceptions and the reality of their everyday lives in early modern Europe.
2. Learn basic content, themes and important events 1500-1700 (the renaissance, reformation, scientific revolution and the enlightenment) and the role women played in these events in the social, economic, religious, cultural, political and military history of Europe.
3. Critically read, summarize, and analyze secondary sources.
4. Understand that historians have biases or perspectives – a product of their life experiences and the times in which they lived and wrote.
5. Understand how things change over time and recognize that the past may be interpreted from different perspectives.

Methods of Evaluation

Students must complete two exams to pass this course:

Mid-term exam	40%	21 October 2024	In-Class
Final exam	60%	Date & Locations:	TBA -December Exam Period

Exams

Students must take two exams: one two-hour in-class mid-term during class time on Monday 21 October 2024, and a three-hour final exam, to be scheduled during the December Exam Period by the Registrar's Office. Both exams will feature a selection of short written answer questions and a choice of essay questions (one essay for the midterm and two essays for the final). Electronic devices of any kind (e.g., phones) are not permitted to be carried, or near to the student during exams.

Accommodation for Missed Exams:

Students seeking academic accommodation or consideration regarding the mid-term or final exam must contact their Academic Advisory office and provide formal supporting documentation. Make-up tests, midterms, and exams can only be approved by Academic Counselling. Please see https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/policies.html for department procedures and requirements involving make-up tests and exams. The designated make-up date will be assigned by the History department.

Course Materials

Merry Wiesner Hanks, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* 4th edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.

[[https://www.cambridge.org/ph/academic/subjects/history/european-history-after-1450/women-and-gender-early-modern-europe-4th-edition.](https://www.cambridge.org/ph/academic/subjects/history/european-history-after-1450/women-and-gender-early-modern-europe-4th-edition)]

N.Z. Davis, *Women on the Margins. Three Seventeenth Century Lives* (1997)

Western bookstore: Students will also be able to see this information on their Personal Textbook list. https://bookstore.uwo.ca/textbook-search?campus=UWO&term=W2024A&courses%5B0%5D=001_UW/HIS2159AURL

Any additional materials consisting of book chapters, articles, and illustrations will be available on the course website or through the Western Libraries Course Readings for History 2159A. Weekly Reading List will be found on the final version of the syllabus on the OWL Brightspace course website, prior to the beginning of classes.

Draft Course Schedule and Readings

Week 1	Introduction to Women and Gender 1500-1700; Europe in 1500 Wiesner Hanks (WH) Introduction; Map of Europe c. 1453)
Week 2	Ideas about Women (WH Ch. 1)
Week 3	The Body: The Female Life Cycle (WH Ch. 2)
Week 4	No Class – Remembering Day for Truth and Reconciliation
Week 5	The Early Modern Midwife Reading Week
Week 6	Mid-term (40%) 21 October
Week 7	Working Women & the Economy: Rural & Urban (WH Ch 3)
Week 8	Students & Scholars (WH Ch 4)
Week 9	Exceptional Women: Artists, Scientists and Writers (WH Ch 5) <i>On the Margins</i> : Maria Sibylla Merian
Week 10	Women & Popular Religion in Christendom Catholicism (medieval & reformed); Protestantism (mainstream to radical) (WH Ch 6: 201-243) <i>On the Margins</i> : Marie of the Incarnation
Week 11	The Other”: Heretics, Jews, Muslims & Witches Jewish & Muslim Women’s Life, (WH Ch 6: 243-251) Witchcraft (WH Ch 7) <i>On the Margins</i> : Gluckl of Hameln
Week 12	Queenship & Power: Female Rulers in Europe 1450-1700 Summary and Review
Final Exam	December exam period (60%)

Additional Statements

Communication policies: The best way to contact me is by email, after class or during office hours. Please write using your UWO email account as it is less likely to end up in spam. If my office hours do not fit your schedule, I am happy to talk after class or try to arrange an alternative time to meet. Office hours are useful to clarify any issues concerning the course but are also an opportunity for further discussion.

Classroom behavior: Please turn off your phone and use laptops for notetaking only.

Use of electronic devices: Participants in this course are not permitted to record the sessions, except where recording is an approved accommodation, or the student has the prior written permission of the instructor. No electronic devices are permitted during tests and examinations.

Copyright and Intellectual Property: PowerPoint lecture slides and notes are typically the intellectual property of the instructor. Unauthorized reproduction through audio-recording, video-recording, photographing, sharing on social media, or posting on course-sharing websites is an infringement of copyright, and is prohibited.

Use of generative artificial intelligence (AI):

You may not make any use of generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, for any assignments in this course.

Please review the Department of History's shared policies and statements for all undergraduate courses at: https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/policies.html for important information regarding accessibility options, make-up exams, medical accommodations, health and wellness, academic integrity, plagiarism, and more.