

AS.100.414

Spring 2017

Instructor: Dr. Jenna Phillips

Office Hours: Thursdays, 10:30-12:30 and by appointment

email: jenna.phillips@jhu.edu

Love, Death and the Afterlife in the Medieval West

“Lady, you in whom my hope gains strength,
you who, for my salvation, have allowed
your footsteps to be left in Hell [...]”
You drew me out from slavery to freedom
By all those paths, by all those means that were
within your power. Do, in me, preserve
your generosity, so that my soul,
Which you have healed, when it is set loose from
My body, be a soul that you will welcome.” (Dante, *Paradiso*, XXXI, 79-93)

Romantic love, it is often claimed, is an invention of the High Middle Ages. The vocabulary of sexual desire that is still current in the twenty-first century was authored in the twelfth and thirteenth, by troubadours, court poets, writers like Dante; even by crusaders returning from the eastern Mediterranean. How did this devout society come to elevate the experience of sensual love? This course draws on primary sources such as medieval songs, folktales, the “epic rap battles” of the thirteenth century, along with the writings of Boccaccio, Saint Augustine and others, to understand the unexpected connections between love, death, and the afterlife from late antiquity to the fourteenth century.

Each week, we will use a literary or artistic work as an interpretive window into cultural attitudes towards love, death or the afterlife. These readings are analyzed in tandem with major historical developments, including the rise of Christianity, the emergence of feudal society and chivalric culture, the crusading movement, cultural contact with Islamic and Jewish traditions, and the social breakdown of the fourteenth century.

Course Requirements

A short (2 page) response paper to the reading is due each week before class. A longer research paper, analyzing a primary source (or sources) of your choice, is due at the end of semester. In Week 9, when we examine the *jeux partis*— Old French debate songs on social and sexual etiquette—you have the option, with a partner, of rewriting the lyrics into modern English and performing it in class. This will count in lieu of the weekly writing assignment. The reading load each week is intentionally light to give you opportunity to read closely and write reflectively.

Week 1

Introduction: Body and Society in Late Antiquity

Course overview, policies, expectations. In class: excerpt from the *Life of Melania the Younger*; statistics of birth and death rates in Roman society, a “population grazed thin by death,” rejection of worldliness and sex in conversion to Christianity.

Week 2

Love, Death and Sexual Renunciation: The Late Antique Heritage

Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, Books 1-3.

Peter Brown, "Body and City," in *The Body and Society*, pp. 5-32

Week 3

Saints: The Very Special Dead

The Passion of Saints Perpetua and Felicity

Peter Brown, "The Invisible Companion" and "Very Special Dead," in *Cult of the Saints*, pp. 50-86

Week 4

Sacred love and the rebirth of the feminine

Sermon excerpt from Amiens Cathedral in Stephen Murray, *A Gothic Sermon: making a contract with the mother of God*

Rachel Fulton, *From Judgement to Passion*, Part 2: *Maria, Compatiens*

In class: watch 20-minute video by Stephen Murray, *The Building of Amiens Cathedral*

Music in class: Marian hymn

Week 5

Theories of marriage, consent, conditions for non-nobles

Peter Lombard, *Sentences*, "Concerning Consent which makes Marriage" (ed., Brundage, 1987)

On marriage rights and the manumission of serfs

Selection of documents from a Dean's court: offences concerning fornication, adultery and mistreatment of spouses, *English Historical Documents, 1189-1327*

Herlihy, *Medieval Households*, Chapters 4-5, pp. 79-130

Week 6

The nobility and adulterous love

Andreas Capellanus, *On Courty Love*

Tristan and Iseult, trans. Caulkins and Mermier

Denis de Rougemont, *Love in the Western World*, pp. 15-55

Week 7

The Call to Crusade: martyrdom and a new concept of death

A. C. Krey, trans., *The First Crusade: The Accounts of Eye-Witnesses and Participants*

Carl Erdmann, *The Origin of the Idea of Crusade*, Introduction and "Urban II and Crusade"

music in class: Chanson de Croisade: "Both here and over there towards Damascus"

SPRING BREAK

Week 8

Crusader States and theories of cross-cultural exchange: romance from Damascus to Paris

Andrew Jotischky, *Crusading and the Crusader States*, pp.23-46

Christopher MacEvitt, *The Crusades and the Christian World of the East: Rough Tolerance*, pp. 1-26

Fakhraddin Gorgani, *Vis and Ramin*, trans. Dick Davis, (selections)

Weekly writing assignment: see handout comparing motifs of *Vis and Ramin* with *Tristan and Iseult*. Choose a side in the controversy over origins, and make an argument based on textual evidence.

Week 9

Chivalry, Idealizing War

Jeu parti handout

The History of William Marshall, trans. S. Gregory, (selections)

Christopher Page, "Music and Chivalric Fiction in France," *Early Music*, pp.1-21

Week 10

The "Birth of Purgatory"

*source on Jewish and early Christian views of the afterlife

Hildegard of Bingen, *Letter to the Clerics of Cologne, a harangue on the punishments in the afterlife*

Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory* (selections)

*counterpoint to Le Goff

Week 11

Dante and the Afterlife

Dante Alighieri, *Vita Nova*, selections

Inferno, Cantos I, II, III, IV, V

Purgatorio, Cantos I, II, III, IV, V

Paradiso, Canto XXXI

Handouts: geography of Dante's *Commedia*

Weekly writing assignment: respond to questions on handout regarding Andreas Capellanus' *Arts of Courty Love*, and their relationship to *Inferno V*.

Week 12

Reordering the World: Famine and Plague, humor in the face of death

Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron* (selections)

**Famine and Plague, an overview*

Week 13

Conclusions, The Black Death and Social Change

Final Paper Due