

MDVL 301: EUROPEAN LITERATURE FROM THE 5TH TO THE 14TH CENTURY
“THE LIBERAL ARTS”
THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA MEDIEVAL STUDIES PROGRAM
2016, WINTER SESSION, TERM ONE

SYLLABUS

INSTRUCTOR: Dr Juliet Ó BRIEN
Office: 728 Buchanan Tower
Email: juliet.obrien@ubc.ca
Office Hours: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday 14:30 – 16:30
Class time & place:
Tuesday & Thursday 13:00-14:20
Frederic Lasserre room 105

DESCRIPTION

“The function of freedom is to free someone else.” (Toni Morrison)

What is a liberal arts education? A course in the Faculty of Arts? What does it mean to be a student at a university? What’s the point of reading? Or of lifelong learning? What are the personal, public, social, and cultural purposes of all these things?

In this interdisciplinary course we will explore some answers to these questions—as current now as they have been over the last several centuries—offered by some Medieval texts written in European vernaculars and in Latin, and having an influence throughout Medieval Europe. While our principal focus will be the study of literary works, we will also explore the historical landscape in which these landmarks are situated; the cultural background against which their actions are staged; and their relationship to an integrated creative and intellectual environment—including visual and plastic arts, music, ideas, and the sciences.

REQUIRED READING

Course website: <http://blogs.ubc.ca/mdvl301>

Martianus Capella, *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii* (will be posted on Connect)

Guillaume de Lorris & Jean de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*
Trans. Frances Horgan.
Oxford World’s Classics, 2008.
ISBN: 978-0199540679

Original Old French text: the Roman de la Rose digital library <http://romandelarose.org/>

SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS

- additional readings from references in lectures
- students’ readings for their Liberal Art Week work and final project

SCHEDULE

WEEKS 1-3

The course starts with a 5th-century text: Martianus Capella, *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*. It will introduce us to: the history of the idea of liberal arts and some of its architects, from the pre-medieval (e.gg. Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Seneca) to the medieval (e.gg. Alcuin, Charlemagne, Alain de Lille) European worlds; university, scholarly, student, and intellectual cultures; these ideas' relationship to and integration within a larger global context; and the cultural roles of reading, commentary, and satire.

- week 1: introduction + organisation of seven groups (for week 4-10 work)
- week 2: A Brief History, Martianus Capella, Paris
+ student fieldwork
- week 3: Martianus Capella + the seven liberal arts

WEEKS 4-10

The main body of the course centres on a 13th-century work which resonates through the 14th century and beyond, Guillaume de Lorris & Jean de Meun's *Roman de la Rose*, through which "portal-text" we will investigate each of the seven liberal arts of the trivium (grammar, logic, rhetoric) and quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, music) individually in turn, one per week; along with a radial network of associated material (e.gg. illuminated manuscripts, libraries, Christine de Pizan and the *Romance of the Rose* debate, clerkly culture, public debates and other performances as proto-outreach, and other educations that include those excluded from or otherwise unable to attend universities).

- week 4: grammar
- week 5: logic / dialectic
- week 6: rhetoric
- week 7: arithmetic
- week 8: geometry
- week 9: astronomy
- week 10: music

WEEKS 11-13

The last three weeks will conclude in medievalist epilogue: looking forward to the 16th-c. *studia humanitas*, the post-medieval liberal arts & humanistic education, post-humanism and ecocriticism, emancipation and social justice, utopias, rethinking the university, speculative futures ... and final round-table discussions.

- week 10: the 14th century and later...
from Christine de Pizan and the Querelle to Francis I and the Collège de France, Rabelais, Montaigne, and a second dream vision: educational utopias
- week 11: and later and elsewhere outside Europe...
- week 12: round-tables
- week 13: round-tables

REQUIREMENTS / ASSESSMENT

Requirements:

- Regular short writing on the course blog = 10%
- A 4-5 page commentary due at midterm = 10%
- Group presentation of a liberal art = 20%
- A research project (7-8 page paper or equivalent) = 35%
independent or in a group (then 7-8 pages per person) due at the end of term
This may be an expansion of your Liberal Art Week work
- The presentation of that project = 25%
in the last week of term
- There is no final examination

PREREQUISITES

There is no pre-requisite for this course.

CREDITS

3

This information may be subject to change: all updates will be posted on blogs.ubc.ca/mdvl301 and the version there should be regarded as the Official & Authoritative one

For further information and an appendix to this syllabus, see also:
THE RULES <http://blogs.ubc.ca/mdvl301/2016/09/07/the-rules/>