

Fall 2020  
English 461-01 Capstone Seminar I  
Wednesdays, 4:00-6:45 pm  
Dr. Meredith Clermont-Ferrand

## Gender and Sexuality in Medieval Literature

Gender identity and sexuality are intimately connected to each other throughout history, and the medieval era (roughly 500 to 1500 C.E.) played a critical role in the construction of modern Western sexual and gendered identities. In this senior seminar we will work with key gender and queer theory concepts such as sexuality, performativity, gender identity, intersectionality, oppression, privilege, essentialism, social construction, and queering categories of difference, to unpack literary representations of gendered and sexual identities in texts such as *Beowulf*, *The Song of Roland*, *Bérangier of the Long Ass*, and *The Canterbury Tales*.



The Belles Heures of Jean de France (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cloisters Collection, 1954 (54.1.1))

The seminar will work towards a critical examination of how gender and sexuality – in dynamic interaction with other socially constituted markers of difference – give form and meaning to the literature of the Middle Ages and serve as structuring principles of early, central and late medieval social organization. Furthermore, we will examine how those expectations sometimes conflicted with one another and how the complex and nuanced the definitions of gender were for both men and women and how the definitions and views of gender and sexuality changed throughout the course of the Middle Ages.



Bibliothèque nationale Française 5054, folio 60, verso

The course will be your capstone experience in the English Major at Eastern Connecticut State University. By the end of the Fall 2020 semester, you will be asked to develop your ideas about the literature we read through informed and thoughtful discussions during class, and in formal written papers, presentations, and a final project proposal. The final goal of this semester's study is to allow you to begin thinking about the final product of next semester—an extensively thought out, researched, and reworked capstone project.



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