

HIS 334 / WST 360
Women and Gender in Premodern Europe

Satisfies: SBS+

M/W, 2:00pm - 3:20 pm

Prof. Alix Cooper

This course will explore the role and status of women in ancient, medieval, and early modern Europe. We will read both modern scholarship and primary sources, i.e. original documents that give us clues about women's lives, such as laws, religious texts, writings by men about women, and some of the relatively rare but extremely illuminating documents written by women themselves. Examples of topics we will discuss include what is (and isn't!) known about such issues as women and goddess-worship in prehistory; Greek and Roman matrons' lives; Christian traditions about women; the lives of nuns, queens/noblewomen, peasant women, and city women in medieval Europe; the witch-hunts of early modern Europe; and early modern women's struggles for participation in intellectual life. By learning about individual women's lives, as well as the broader social contexts within which women lived, we will aim to increase our understanding not only of these particular periods in history but of sex and gender more broadly, in the many ways in which they have come to shape our world. Course requirements will include participation, two brief papers, a midterm, and a final exam.