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## REL 1234

# *The Body and Society: Christianity in the West*

### Semester 2 2010-2011

**Dr. Jane Doe**

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**Office hours:** Tuesday 11-12 am, Thursday 1-2 pm.

**Lecture:** Thursday 11-1 pm Big Building, Big Room 3

**Seminar:** Tuesday 4-5 pm Big Building, Smaller Room 5

### COURSE CALENDAR: LECTURES

**WEEK 1 (2 Feb):** *Introduction to the course and methodology*

No seminar and no assignment due

**WEEK 2 (9 Feb):** *A new anthropology: Love and marriage in Paul and early Christian writings*

Lindberg chapters 1&2

**WEEK 3 (16 Feb):** *Another point of view on love: Gnostics and the feminine divine principle*

E. Pagels *The Gnostics Gospels* 71-88, Lindberg chapter 3.

**WEEK 4 (23 Feb):** *Christianity and the policies of the body*

Brown, part II chapter 11: The desert fathers: from Anthony to John Climacus.

**WEEK 5 (1 Mar):** *Far away from the world: continence and the rise of monasticism*

Brown, part II chapter 12.

**WEEK 6 (8 Mar):** *Love, family and society: Debating on marriage I*

Lindberg chapter 4, Brown part III chapter 19.

**WEEK 7 (15 Mar):** *Love, family and society: Debating on marriage II*

Goody chapter 3, Brown part III chapter 19.

**WEEK 8 (22 Mar):** *Being in love with God: Christian mysticism*

Lindberg chapter 5 **The essay is due by today to the School office**

**WEEK 9 (19 Apr):** *Desire and repression*

Lindberg chapter 5

**WEEK 10 (26 Apr):** *A new form of love and eroticism: Courtly love in Europe*

Lindberg chapter 6

**WEEK 11 (3 May):** *Carrie Bradshaw lost in time? Christine de Pizan on love and marriage.*

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T. Adams, "Eros or Anteros? Christine de Pizan's economies of desire", in: A.J. Kennedy et al. (ed.), *Contexts and Continuities. Proceedings of the IVth International Colloquium on Christine de Pizan (Glasgow, 21-27 July 2000)*, Glasgow: Glasgow University Press 2002, 1-15.

**WEEK 12 (10 May): ... so what is all this chatting about the body? Conclusions and revision for examination**

Lindberg chapter 10&Conclusion

**Description:**

This course unit offers a new approach to the rise of Christianity as a world religion, from the conversion of the first Roman Emperor to the beginning of the Renaissance. We will approach Christianity as a religion focussed to an extraordinary degree on the body, its appetites and weaknesses, and will pay special attention to how concerns about food, sleep, sex, gender, and death shaped issues of community and religious status. The course unit involves close work with written sources.

**Course Aim:**

To introduce you to the history of Christianity in the Late Antiquity and Middle Ages, focusing on the body as a contested site of self and group definition.

**Learning Outcomes:**

By the end of this course unit you will normally:

- be able to show a familiarity with a range of central problems in the study of late antique and medieval Christianity;
- be able to show how your views are supported by direct critical engagement with the primary sources.

**Structure:** Two hours lecture and a 1-hour seminar per week. Attendance is required for both lecture and seminar according to the School's policy.

**Assessment:** 40% essay, 60 % end-of-year unseen examination. See below for further details.

**Textbooks:**

Each week you have assigned readings to be completed before lecture from the following two textbooks:

Carter Lindberg *Love. A Brief History through Western Christianity* (Oxford 2008)

Peter Brown *The Body and Society Men Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York 1988, 2009 anniversary ed.)

Your preparation for the examination must also include other readings from the Bibliography on Blackboard: I will append a short bibliography focussed on each lecture topic in the final slide of my weekly power point presentations available on Blackboard after sessions.

Reading assignments from other books will be posted on Blackboard.

**SEMINARS**

As for lectures, you must complete the reading assignments before class, and be ready to discuss the weekly questions on the basis of them, according with the following calendar. BEWARE: seminars are strictly connected with your written assignment therefore it is essential to participate

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in order to achieve a good mark. Readings (files or website links) will be posted in the Seminar folder on Blackboard.

### **Seminar calendar**

#### **\*WEEK 1 no seminar!\***

**Week 2:** Plato *Symposium* and Paul, *Letters* (Abstracts): compare and contrast marriage, love, sex and gender in the two authors.

**Week 3:** *Gospel of Mary* and Epiphanius *Panarion* I, 26. Do you think that women's role in the Gnostic writings can explain the exclusion of these texts from the Christian canon?

**Week 4 seminar:** Athanasius, *Life of Saint Anthony*. How does Anthony discipline his body and why?

**Week 5 seminar:** Athanasius, *Life of Saint Anthony*. How does Anthony discipline his body and why?

**Week 6 seminar:** Augustine *On Marriage, City of God, Confessions* (Abstracts). How do you interpret Augustine's position on marriage in the light of his personal experience as told in the *Confessions*, and his writings?

**Week 7 seminar:** Bede, *Ecclesiastical History* I, 27. What kind of relationship between love, marriage and sex are expressed in the instructions that Pope Gregory the Great gives to Augustine, first bishop of Anglia?

**Week 8 seminar:** *Song of Songs*; Bernard of Clairvaux *Sermon 20 on the Song of Songs*; Hildegard of Bingen Letter 250r to a community of nuns.

How do you explain the key-role of the language of love in mysticism?

**Week 9 seminar:** *The Letters of Abelard and Eloise* (Letter I, The story of his misfortune; Letter II, From Eloise to Abelard). Compare and contrast Abelard and Eloise views on their experience. Do you think gender matters?

**Week 10 seminar:** Andrea Capellanus, *Art of Courtly Love* (abstracts)

What kind of roles do genders play in Andrea's description of courtly love?

**Week 11 seminar:** Christine de Pizan, *The God of Love's Letter*.

Analyse the Letter: what is the argument? What does it reveal about the surrounding society?

#### **Week 12 revision**

**WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT: One essay of 2,500-3,000 words.** You must submit **2 copies** of your essay in **type-script** to the School Office (Samuel Alexander A6) on the deadline date (**March 22**).

You will choose the title of your essay from the seminars' questions over listed. The essay should have an argument (i.e. your answer to the question), which you must demonstrate on the basis of primary (i.e. ancient sources) and secondary sources (i.e. scholarly bibliography on the topic).

**Primary sources:** the starting point will be the weekly sources, however you are expected to use at least other two new sources out of the over written reading list, and how many you think appropriate from the ones considered in class.

**Bibliography:** you must use the textbooks and at least three other books and/or articles. They should be updated, i.e. published after 1980, unless you are citing a classic (such as Foucault, Brown, etc.). If you have doubts, ask BEFORE submitting the paper.

The essay must have footnotes or references and an appended bibliography.

You **MUST** give the words count at the end of the essay (not less than 2,500 and no more of 3,000, footnotes and bibliography excluded: according to School policy you'll be penalized in case you will not respect these limits. You must indicate the word count on the essay).

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Websites are admitted ONLY if they are academic. Citations from Wikipedia are not only forbidden but will be even penalized. Obviously you may cite material downloaded via TalisPrism (JStor, e-books, etc.) or published on academic/scientific websites (if you have doubts ask BEFORE submitting the paper).

For citations and style you are invited to follow *The Chicago Manual of Style*, according to R&T policy

(On line edition: [http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html)), or other systems according to your study program. What is really important is to choose one system and then stick with it.

## **EXAMINATION**

It is worth 60% of the final mark and will consist of two sections of questions. You will have to choose one question from each section (50% each of the examination mark). Section A will be a list of four passages chosen from four of the ancient sources discussed in class and seminars. You will have to conduct a source-analysis on one of them. Remember that: 1. This must be different from the main source that you chose for the essay; 2. The analysis should be on the given passage and not a general discussion of the work from where the quotation comes from. Section B will be a list of four general questions on themes and issues studied during the semester.

More directions will be given in lectures in due course. You may refer to past examination papers available through Blackboard for having clear examples on the exam structure.