Witch, Heroine, Saint: Joan of Arc and Her World

Interdisciplinary Seminar
Gallatin School of Individualized Study
New York University

Spring 2012
MW 12:30-1:45PM
1 Washington Place, Room 601

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Office Hours Tues 2-5PM
or by appointment

In May, 1431, Joan of Arc, the Maid of Orléans, was burned at the stake as a heretic and a witch by an English partisan court after the French nobility had betrayed her. An illiterate peasant girl just eighteen years of age at the time of her death, she had led the French back from the brink of defeat and saved the French monarchy from ruin. Yet in death, she would gain further power still as a martyr and symbol of indomitable French will and resistance. In this seminar, we will study Joan’s complex historical moment and her place within the long history of medieval women, Christian mysticism, and religious fanaticism. We will trace the stories of her appearance and military success, attempt to hear her voice in the extant transcript of her heresy trial, analyze contrasting French and English narratives about her life, and explore how she became the national heroine, patron saint, and political symbol that she is today.

Required Texts (available at the NYU Bookstore)

Further readings will be posted on the course website.

You will be expected to bring all readings to class in either hard copy (most preferable) or electronic form (notebook computer).

**Grading and Course Requirements**

As this is a seminar, students will necessarily be active participants in the course. Students are expected to come to class each week having read all assignments carefully and completely, ready for friendly and lively discussion. During the semester, each student will write one 4-6 page essay, a formal 10-12 page final essay draft turned in for critique shortly after midterm, and a significantly-revised 10-12 page final essay turned in at the end of term. Students will also post to the discussion board each week and will be responsible for leading the discussion once during the semester.

Discussion questions (due Sunday nights) and discussion leadership 15%
One 4-6 page (12 pt font, double-spaced, 1” margins) essay 15%
10-12 page (12 pt font, double-spaced, 1” margins) final essay draft 15%
10-12 page (12 pt font, double-spaced, 1” margins) significantly-revised Final Essay 25%
Participation* 30%

* Your participation grade includes attendance, preparation, oral presentation, and active participation in classroom discussion.

*Discussion Questions and Answers*: Good scholarship begins with good questions. Thus we will continually discuss and practice the art of asking strong analytical questions in this class. Each week, NO LATER THAN SUNDAY NIGHT AT 2AM, each student will prepare and post an analytical discussion question, written in complete sentences, about that week’s primary reading. Each week’s question, posted on-time, will count for 1% of your overall grade, so this is an important part of your coursework! Questions should be thoughtful, provocative, and should present a genuine puzzle. They should be, in other words, questions that invite discussion rather than fact-finding (if you can find the answer to your question by looking it up, look it up and ask a different question!). Discussion questions should also include a few sentences of information explaining how the readings lead to the formulation of the question and even identifying passages that might be fruitful to explore in consideration of the question.

*Discussion Leadership*: Beginning a few weeks into the semester, it will be the job of two students to lead discussion each Tuesday. Discussion leaders must read all of the discussion board questions and formulate an opening statement (one to three sentences, usually) that is designed to provoke discussion. By “provoke,” I mean a contentious (but respectful, of course) argument that directly engages the material of a given week and sparks a lively discussion, often by challenging common or “natural” modes of thinking. As with your discussion board questions, make sure that your provocations lead from or suggest a question or series of questions that could produce a multitude of “correct” answers. It takes time to devise a thoughtful provocation. It requires anticipating how a discussion will flow and why. So if it’s your week, don’t leave this to the last minute!

*Essays*: Each student will write one 4-6 page and one 10-12 page essay (with a formal first draft) for the course. In all of the essay assignments, I will expect you to practice the traditional essay
form: that is, I will expect you 1) to introduce an argument that answers an analytical question (implied or explicitly stated); 2) to defend that argument with explicit reference to evidence; and 3) to conclude by explaining how that argument contributes to a broader understanding of the particular concepts, themes, problems, and texts that are at issue in the essay. The short essay will ask you to treat specific texts from the course in juxtaposition. For the final, each student will write a 10-12 page (12pt font, double-spaced, 1” margins) essay in which he or she will argue whether our modern culture could produce, or has already produced, a Joan of Arc. We will discuss the parameters of this assignment further in class. A formal draft will be due the evening of Friday, April 13. I will comment on these drafts and will then require a significant revision for the final draft due at the end of term.

Attendance, Late Papers, and Incomplete Policy

In order to experience the course in full, you are expected to attend every class meeting (I’ll try my best to make it worth your while). If it happens, however, that you must miss a class due to illness or some other legitimate conflict, please contact me ahead of time. Note that even legitimate absences should be kept to a minimum. Excessive absences will result in a penalty to your participation grade. More than five unexcused absences will result in a failing grade for the course.

Late papers may be docked one letter grade for every 24 hours that they are late. I have designed assignments to be challenging, but eminently doable; thus if you find that you are struggling to meet deadlines, please do not hesitate to contact me for help. There is no shame in doing so (in fact, it’s the whole point of taking a class) and often I will be able to help you to streamline your process and to work more efficiently.

Gallatin has a strong policy on students’ taking incompletes, based on two essential premises: (a) students should take incompletes only for good reasons (“I haven't finished yet” is not a good reason), and (b) students should meet deadlines for completing the required work. If a grade of incomplete is absolutely necessary, the student must request the incomplete in writing (on a form called Request for a Grade of Incomplete) well before the end of term.

Academic Integrity, Plagiarism, and Citations

As a Gallatin student you belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the University. Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating. Please consult the Gallatin Bulletin or Gallatin website [www.gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/policy/integrity.html] for a full description of the academic integrity policy.

A further note: plagiarism often involves intentionally trying to pass off the words or ideas of other people as your own. But some plagiarism actually happens by accident through incomplete note taking and/or sloppy citation. Note well: *both* kinds of plagiarism, intentional and unintentional, result in the same penalty, which is possible disciplinary action. Thus, you must never allow accidental plagiarism to happen to you. You must work hard to cite every word and every idea that is not your own. Watching out for plagiarism is actually a very good way to
gauge how analytical your writing is. If you find yourself wanting simply to retell what other people have written, it’s likely that you’re not being analytical enough in your thinking. This is a good time to seek help from me about how to approach your subject from a stronger critical angle.

In citing sources, you may use either University of Chicago or MLA citation style. The former is preferred by most professional historians. The latter is the chosen style of most professional literary critics. Neither citation style is better than the other, but most writers have a clear preference for which one they like to use. The only two rules are that you must use one of these citation styles, and that you must ONLY use one of these styles. You may not mix and match.
Schedule of Classes and Major Assignments (CS = reading available on the course website)

1/23  Introduction to the Course

UNIT ONE: THE STORY OF JOAN OF ARC
1/30  Orleans Manuscript Chronicle  CS
2/1   Textbook histories
2/6   Preparatory Trial (Hobbins, 33-117)
2/13  Ordinary Trial, Trial for Relapse, and Aftermath (Hobbins, 118-213)

4-6 PAGE ESSAY DUE SUNDAY 2/19

UNIT TWO: JOAN OF ARC IN THE CONTEXT OF EXTRAORDINARY WOMEN
2/20  PRESIDENT’S DAY – NO CLASS
2/22  Marie de France, Lanval  CS
       Thomas of Cantimpré, The Life of Christina the Astonishing  CS
2/27  Hadwijk (selected poetry)  CS
       Catherine of Siena, Dialogue (excerpt)  CS
2/29  Caroline Walker Bynum, Holy Feast and Holy Fast (excerpt)  CS

FINAL PROJECT PROPOSALS DUE FRIDAY, 3/2

3/5   Pope Innocent VIII, “Summis desiderantes affectibus”  CS
       Heinrich Kramer and Jacob Sprenger, Malleus Maleficarum  CS
3/7   Joan Kelly-Gadol, “Did Women Have a Renaissance?”  CS

SPRING BREAK
UNIT THREE: ONE JOAN OR MANY?

3/19 Christine de Pisan, “Le ditie de Jehanne d’Arc” CS


3/26 Shakespeare, I Henry VI

3/28 Lisa Dickson, “No Rainbow Without the Sun” CS

4/2 Mark Twain, *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc* (brief excerpt) CS
George Bernard Shaw, *Saint Joan*

4/4 Craig Hamilton, “Constructing a Cultural Icon” CS

4/9 Film: The Passion of Joan of Arc (Dir. Carl Theodor Dreyer)

4/11 Nadia Margolis, “Trial By Passion: Philology, Film, and Ideology in the Portrayal of Joan of Arc (1900-1930)” CS

**FINAL PROJECT DRAFT DUE FRIDAY 4/13**

4/16 *Jeanne d’arc au bûcher (Joan of Arc at the Stake)* (Composer: Arthur Honegger, Librettist: Paul Claudel) CS

4/18 Anne Llewellyn Barstow, “She Gets Inside Your Head: Joan of Arc and Contemporary Women’s Spirituality” CS

4/23 Bertolt Brecht, *The Visions of Simone Machard* CS

4/25 Eric Jennings, “‘Reinventing Jeanne’: The Iconology of Joan of Arc in Vichy Schoolbooks, 1940-1944” CS

4/30 Film: The Messenger (Dir. Luc Besson)

5/2 Bill Scalia, “Contrasting Visions of a Saint: Carl Dreyer’s The Passion of Joan of Arc and Luc Besson’s The Messenger” CS

5/7 TBA

**FINAL PROJECT DUE FRIDAY 5/11**