

Masterclass – 16 June 2016, Brussels

Gender, Religion, and the Power of Resistance in the High and Late Middle Ages

For about thirty years, especially since the publication of Caroline Walker Bynum's *Holy Feast and Holy Fast* in 1987, the study of women and gender in medieval religion has been a flourishing subfield. The work of such scholars as Nicole Bériou, John Coakley, Dyan Elliott, Kaspar Elm, Roberta Gilchrist, D. H. Green, Jeffrey Hamburger, Hildegard Elisabeth Keller, Susan Marti, Bernard McGinn, Tanya Stabler Miller, Anneke Mulder-Bakker, Elizabeth Petroff, Sarah Salih, Walter Simons, David Wallace, Nicholas Watson, Karen Winstead, and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne – to name only a few – has radically changed the way we understand such topics as mysticism, heresy, literacy, preaching, sainthood, art and architecture, and the growth of religious orders. Where do we stand now? Since the old master narrative has crumbled, has a new one taken its place? Have the “linguistic turn” and the “material turn” played themselves out, or is there still more to be learned from them? What comes after the old model of authoritative male clerics teaching compliant women and the newer model of a clerical elite suppressing resistant women? What have we learned definitively about female agency, initiative, and oppression? What are the hot-button issues and the most fruitful points of departure for future work?

This class is open to **eight early-career researchers in the field** – advanced graduate students, postdocs, and beginning lecturers. After the opening conversation by Prof. Barbara Newman, each scholar will give a 15-minutes presentation on her/his current research, to be followed by 15-20 minutes of feedback and discussion. Younger and more senior scholars are welcome to attend and join in the discussion.

This masterclass is a joint organisation of the Flemish Medievalist Association (Vlaamse Werkgroep Mediëvistiek) and the Network of French-speaking Belgian Medievalists (Réseau des Médiévistes belges de Langue Française), with financial support of the History Department of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel. The event will take place at the Vrije Universiteit Brussels (Pleinlaan 2 gebouw C, 1050 Brussel). Further practical details will be announced at a later stage.

Early career researchers are invited to submit proposals for papers. A one-page description of the proposed paper and a short CV should be submitted to pieterjan.deckers@vub.ac.be, secretary of the VWM, and to christophe.masson@ulg.ac.be, no later than **15 April 2016**.



Barbara Newman is Professor of English, Religious Studies, and Classics and the John Evans Professor of Latin at Northwestern University. She is the winner of a 2009 Mellon Foundation Distinguished Achievement Award and has held fellowships from the American Council of Learned Societies, the Guggenheim Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation at Bellagio, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Prof. Newman is also a Fellow of the Medieval Academy of America and served as its president in 2015-16. Her most recent books are *Making Love in the Twelfth Century: Letters of Two Lovers in Context* (2016), *Medieval Crossover: Reading the Secular against the Sacred* (2013), *Thomas of Cantimpré: The Collected Saints' Lives* (2008), and *Frauenlob's Song of Songs: A Medieval German Poet and His Masterpiece* (2006). Prof. Newman is also the author of *God and the Goddesses: Vision, Poetry, and Belief in the Middle Ages* (2003), *From Virile Woman to WomanChrist* (1995), and several books on Hildegard of Bingen, including *Sister of Wisdom* (1987).

Prof. Barbara Newman will also be the keynote speaker of the conference *Social dominance and resistance in the Middle Ages* which will be held on June, 17th, at the Université Libre de Bruxelles. Her lecture will be entitled *Annihilation and Authorship: Three Women Mystics of the 1290s*. More information about this conference will be announced at the beginning of March 2016.