

**FRENCH 1085 WOMEN'S VOICES IN FRENCH LITERATURE  
FROM THE MIDDLE AGES TO CONTEMPORARY AFRICA**

**PROFESSOR RENATE KOSINSKI**

*In this course we will explore how women writers from the twelfth to the twentieth centuries construct authoritative voices for themselves; how they see their place in society and deal with the conflicts between the learned sphere and married life; and how, through their own writings, they both integrate themselves into existing traditions and create new ones. We will explore different genres: poetry and prose as well as polemical writings.*

*This course will have a seminar format. This means I will lecture very little; our work will be done through class discussions. It is essential that you prepare carefully for each class. Read the texts more than once, take notes, jot down questions and topics you'd like to explore. Study the questions and topics on courseweb. Print out the questions and take notes that respond to them; be ready to discuss them in class.*

- You will write two shorter papers and a term paper. There will be no midterm or final exam in this course. *The term paper will be due during exam week.* Your term paper should treat a topic of your own choice, bringing together several works. I will discuss possible topics with you well before the date the paper is due.
- Throughout the semester we will do writing exercises of various kinds, including some in-class writing.

Your grade will be determined by two shorter papers (4-5pp= 20%; 5-6 pp.= 20%) and a term paper (c. 10 pages = 30%); participation in class discussion and informal writing (30%).

**Our program:**

***The Middle Ages***

**Week 1:**

Tuesday: Introduction. What is a female voice in literature?

Thursday: Marie de France (12<sup>th</sup> century), *Lais*: the Prologue; *Guigemar*; *Equitan*, *Le Fresne*



*The Two Lovers (Les Deux Amanz)*

**Week 2:**



Tuesday: *Bisclavret* ; *Yonec*; *Les Deux Amanz*; *Milun*  
Thursday: *Chaitivel*; *Lanval*; *Eliduc*

A

**Week 3:**

Tuesday: Christine de Pizan (*Selected Writings of Christine de Pizan*). Read:  
Introduction (pp. xi-xvi); *The God of Love's Letter* (pp. 15-29)  
Thursday: *The Book of Fortune's Transformation* (pp. 88-109)



**Week 4:** *Christine with Reason, Rectitude and Justice*

Tuesday: *The Book of the City of Ladies* (pp. 116-155)

Thursday: *City of Ladies*

- Paper topics for your first essay will be distributed. Discussion of writing techniques for analytical papers. We will peer review thesis statements and opening paragraphs that you will write in class.

**Week 5:**

Tuesday: *Christine's Vision* (pp. 173-201)

- Detailed outline for essay #1 due. I will send comments before the weekend.

Thursday: *The Tale of Joan of Arc* (pp. 252-262)

***The Renaissance***



**Week 6:**

*Louise Labé*

Tuesday: Louise Labé, *Sonnets* 2, 6, 8, 12, 13 (1555) **Essay #1 (4-5 pages) due**  
Thursday: Labé, *Sonnets*, 14, 18, 21, 24

**Week 7: (no class on Tuesday)**

Thursday: Gabrielle de Coignard, *Spiritual Sonnets*, 1, 3, 8, 12, 13(1594)

**Week 8:**

Tuesday: Gabrielle de Coignard, *Spiritual Sonnets*, 14, 42, 73, 86, 122, 123

Thursday: Catherine des Roches, *Letter to Her Mother; To my Distaff; To my Writings*

**The 18th Century**



**Week 9:** *Isabelle de Charrière*

Tuesday: Isabelle de Charrière, *Letters of Mistress Henley* (1784)

Thursday: *Letters*

**Week 10:**

Tuesday: Olympe de Gouges, *Declaration of the Rights of Women* (1791)

Thursday: Women and the French Revolution

**The 19th Century**



**Week 11 :**

Tuesday: Claire de Duras, *Ourika* (1823)

*Claire de Duras*

Thursday : *Ourika*

- Topics for Essay #2 will be distributed. You can also suggest your own topic.

## The 20<sup>th</sup> Century



Colette

### Week 12:

Tuesday: Colette, *The Vagabond* (1910)

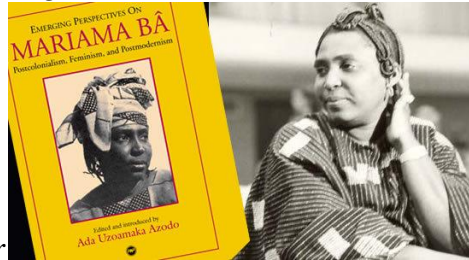
Thursday: *The Vagabond*

- Essay #2 (5-6 pages) due

### Thanksgiving Break

### Week 13:

Tuesday: Mariama Bâ, *So Long a Letter* (1980)



Thursday: *So Long a Letter*

Mariama Bâ

### Week 14:

Tuesday: *So Long a Letter*

Thursday: Final discussion

## Term paper due during exam week

### Texts:

Marie de France, *The Lais*, trans. G. Burgess and Keith Busby (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Penguin, 1999)

Christine de Pizan, *The Selected Writings of Christine de Pizan*, ed. R. Blumenfeld-Kosinski. Trans. RBK and Kevin Brownlee (W. W. Norton, 1997)

\*Louise Labé, *Complete Poetry and Prose*, trans. D. Lesko Baker and A. Finch (U. of Chicago Press, 2006). Excerpts.

\*Gabrielle de Coignard, *Spiritual Sonnets*, trans. Melanie E. Gregg (U. of Chicago Press, 2004). Excerpts.

\*Madeleine and Catherine des Roches, *From Mother and Daughter. Poems, Dialogues, and Letters of Les Dames des Roches*, ed. and trans. Anne R. Larsen (U of Chicago Press, 2006). Excerpts.

Isabelle de Charrière, *Letters of Mistress Henley*, trans. Philip Stewart and Jean Vaché

(Modern Language Association, 1993)

\*Olympe de Gouges, *Declaration of the Rights of Women* (1791)

Claire de Duras, *Ourika*, trans. John Fowles (Modern Language Association, 1994)

Colette, *The Vagabond* (Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2001)

Mariama Bâ, *So Long a Letter*, trans. M. Bodé-Thomas (Heinemann, 1989)

\*= texts on courseweb