

Course meets on Mondays and Wednesdays from 10:10-12:55 (with a 10 minute break)
Block A: Wednesday Sept. 8 to Monday October 19.

Office hours: M 2-3 and Th 12-1 & by appointment at lpostlew@calendly.com



Marie de France, *Lais*



François Rabelais, *Gargantua*

An exploration of French literary texts from the 12th to the 17th century

Focus of the course

Overarching questions that will guide us this semester:

- What is a “literary” text for an era before the concept of “literature.” In a pre-modern world, how was the literary text created and received, and what was its function in society?
- For this period, silent reading was by no means the single or even the principal means of transmission of the literary text. We will consider the modalities of reading aloud and performance, as well as reading silently, and how these modalities shape interpretation.
- How do pre-modern literary texts reflect the social and cultural contexts in which they were produced? How do literary texts complement historical understanding of these periods?
- How did early writers of “literature” employ and rework pre-existing motifs, techniques, and strategies to create original works?
- Why makes a literary text a “major work,” a “canonical text”?

Learning objectives

Students who successfully complete this course will:

1. Engage in reading and discussion of texts in French from the 12th to the 17th century; examine the social and cultural context of these texts.
2. Ask questions about the production, transmission, reception, and function of these texts, and of pre-modern texts in general.
3. Apply techniques of close reading and commentary supported by textual evidence. Utilize the software Perusall to facilitate this process.
4. Make two oral presentations in French, in collaboration with partners: a dramatic reading and a commentary on a play performance.

All readings, discussion, and assignments for the course are in French.

Featured literary works this semester:

Marie de France, *Lais*

François Rabelais, *Gargantua*

Molière, “L’école des femmes”

What will we do in this course?

Close Reading

This course fosters the practice of close reading and textual analysis; our objective is to read carefully and to privilege attention to detail over speed and quantity. We will give special attention to nuances of the French language as it developed from its emergence as a written language to the early modern period. One important objective is to give you the vocabulary and structures in French to articulate your thoughts about the texts in this course and in your reading of literature more generally.

Context

The literary works we will read and discuss this semester are from periods quite distant from our own; an understanding of the original context of these works is crucial for an informed appreciation of their interest and importance. Our reading of each text will be accompanied by short pre-recorded presentations on various aspects of the social, linguistic, and literary context of each work, including the situation of both the author and the original audience(s) for which the work was composed. These presentations, available on Canvas, will be part of the asynchronous work for the course. You are expected to take into consideration the context of the works in your discussion posts and written and oral assignments, even as you engage in your own interpretation of the works.

Use of Perusall

To enhance our close reading practice, we will use the software Perusall which will allow us to collectively annotate the texts and discuss our interpretations. The software is open access and free; an orientation to its use will take place in the first two class sessions.

Our learning experience this semester--online and immersive

Remote-learning affords flexibility in class presentation and dynamic use of resources; these elements make virtual courses engaging and stimulating. Of course, online courses also pose challenges: internet connection is not always reliable, the advantages of the physical classroom with human contact are hard to replicate in a domestic or public space, and it can be difficult to maintain one’s focus and attention on a screen for many hours a day. **I recognize** these difficulties and acknowledge the impact they have on your ability to learn. I am committed to working with you this semester to ensure the quality of the classroom experience. For example, the decision to redesign the course as an immersive course was made in large part to meet the challenges of concentration and focus in an online environment. Also, I hope to mitigate the lack of human contact by assigning collaborative work, using breakout rooms, and scheduling individual and small group meetings with you on a regular basis.

On the first day of class we will discuss your impressions of online learning so far and how we can address your needs. We will also establish together community guidelines for the remote-learning experience. I want

to hear about your experiences and I will communicate what I perceive as important for the class to function smoothly and effectively. I am confident that as long as we act as a community, we can meet the challenges of remote-learning and maximize the benefits.

Organization

The syllabus below is a general overview of the semester. A much more detailed view of the activities and assignments for each day can be found in **Canvas/Modules**; this includes the links to all materials and should be considered a central location for our course. All course materials can also be accessed directly through **Canvas/Files**, and assignments are found in **Canvas/Assignments**. These will be posted at the beginning of the semester, but there may be slight modifications as needed. Please check **Modules** before and after each class for updates.

We will also use **Google Drive** this semester to facilitate our work. The collective class folder will be shared with you; this folder is for work done in class. In addition, each student will have a personal folder for submission of written work.

A successful online and immersive learning experience requires organization and coordination of effort. The tightly-structured course presented here does not preclude flexibility; we will make adjustments as needed.

In summary:

- **We will use both Canvas and Google Drive extensively in this course.**
- **There are no texts to purchase for the course. All materials will be provided in Canvas/Files.**
- **Check Canvas/Modules and Canvas/Assignments before every class.**

Work for the course and grade breakdown:

1. 15% Participation and attendance:

a. In-class participation

Your presence and participation are essential; it is expected that you will speak during every class session and that you will ask questions, of me as the instructor and of each other. The best kind of course is a conversation, and this is all the more the case in a foreign language course! The assignments for the semester have been designed to allow you to prepare in advance so that participation in French can be easier.

b. Group and individual meetings with Prof. Postlewate

Every student is required to schedule a minimum of **2 appointments** with Prof Postlewate on Calendly. (These appointments are in addition to the oral discussion on Gargnatua scheduled for the week of Oct. 12.) These appointments can be individual or group meetings for the two projects indicated on the syllabus. The purpose of these appointments is to discuss your progress in the course, revise your writing assignments, and address any questions you have.

c. Absences

Our semester block is short and intense. Therefore, you are allowed one absence with no questions asked. (But I do very much appreciate it when students take the time to check in and let me know they are doing ok!) Exceptions to this rule are illness for which you have a doctor's or Health Services excuse and religious holidays for which you have notified me in advance. If you have more than one unexcused absence, your participation grade will be lowered by five points for each additional absence.

2. 20% Daily Assignments and Discussion Board posts

Daily assignments that you do outside of class provide a critical scaffolding for the work we do in class. We will use the **Canvas Discussion Board** extensively for daily assignments. You will also be asked to contribute commentaries, formulate questions, and respond to the posts of your classmates; these will be used in the following day's class session. There will also occasionally be assignments using Perusall outside of class. Precise instructions for each assignment/post will be in **Canvas/Modules** and **Canvas/Assignments**, including the length, format, and time by which the post must be made or the assignment completed. Please pay careful attention to these detailed directions to ensure that you understand at all times what is to be done and when the work is due.

Please note you are expected to make an effort to write the posts in correct French, using the vocabulary and structures we will be learning to discuss literary texts.

There are a total of **10** daily assignments in the form of discussion boards and other activities. You should complete a minimum of **8** of these; fewer posts will result in a lower grade. Assignments must be completed by the time indicated in order for our class to function well in the immersive format.

Assessment of participation and discussion board posts

I will provide you with a written assessment (grade) of your oral participation and discussion board posts on the following dates: Sept. 21, Sept. 30, October 14, October 23.

3. 25% Dramatic reading and textual analysis

a. 10% Dramatic reading: With partner #1 you will create a collective dramatic reading of a passage of one *lai* of Marie de France. I will suggest passages to you, or you may propose your own passage.

Dramatic readings will take place in class on Monday 28 September.

b. 15% Written textual analysis (900 words): Individually, you will write a textual analysis explaining how you arrived at your interpretation in your dramatic reading. For this paper you should use the techniques we will explore through our use of Perusall. This paper will be submitted in first draft and then revised.

First draft due: Monday 28 September

Revision due: Monday 5 October

Detailed descriptions and instructions of both parts of this assignment are in Canvas/Assignments.

4. 15% Commentaire oral: 15-20 minutes en rendez-vous individuel avec Prof. Postlewate

Each student will make an individual appointment for an oral discussion (in French) of one of the topics below, related to Rabelais' *Gargantua*. We will go over in class how you should prepare for this exercise which will last 15-20 minutes.

Possible topics for the oral commentary

- a. Father and son: The education of Gargantua and his letter to his son Pantagruel
- b. The education of Gargantua: model or parody?
- c. The comedy of excess in *Gargantua*: why is it funny?
- d. Another topic you propose to Prof. Postlewate

Appointments for this oral commentary will take place the week of October 12.

A detailed description of this assignment is found in Canvas/Assignments.

5. 25% Présentation orale + commentaire écrit sur “L'École des femmes” de Molière

a. Presentation 10%: With partner #2 you will present an oral presentation/analysis of one performed interpretation of one scene of Molière's *L'École des femmes*. (There will be several different video performances to choose from.)

Presentations will take place on Wednesday 21 October at the regular class time of 10:10.

b. 15% Written analysis (900 words): Individually you will compose a written version of your analysis. There will be no revision for this paper.

Paper due: Friday 23 October (no revision of this paper)

Detailed descriptions and instructions of both parts of this assignment are in Canvas/Assignments.

Summary overview of the semester:

Please use Canvas/Modules for detailed description of each class session and all assignments.

Class session #1: Wednesday 9 September:

Introduction to course: presentation of syllabus and community guidelines

Framing questions for course: What do we mean by a 'literary text' and a 'major text'?

Introduction to our first text, the *Lais* of Marie de France, "Prologue"

Class session #2: Monday 14 September

Marie de France "Chevrefoil"

Class session #3: Wednesday 16 September

Marie de France: "Bisclavret"

Class session #4: Monday 21 September

Marie de France, "Chaitivel"

Class session #5: Wednesday 23 September

Dramatic readings of Marie de France

Class session #6: Monday 28 September

Introduction to Renaissance humanism and Rabelais
Rabelais, *Gargantua* “Prologue”

Class session#7: Wednesday 30 September

Rabelais, *Gargantua* (chaps. 4,6, and 11)

Class session #8: Monday 5 October

Rabelais, *Gargantua* (chaps. 14, 15, and 17)

Class session #9: Wednesday 7 October

Rabelais, *Gargantua* (chaps. 23 and 24)

Class session #10: Monday 12 October

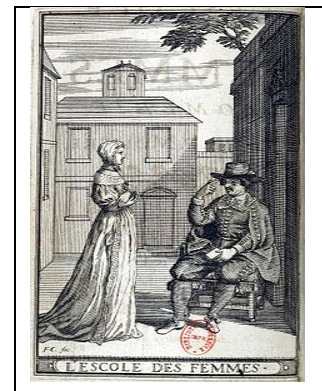
Introduction to 17th century theatre
Molière, “L’École des femmes” (Scène 1-3)

Class session #11: Wednesday 14 October

Molière, “L’École des femmes” (Scènes 4-5)

Class session #12: Monday 19 October

Molière, “L’École des femmes”
Conclusion to course



Wednesday 21 October: 10:10-12:55

Final presentations and discussion

The statements below are to inform you of important policies and services at Barnard College. We will discuss these on the first day of class and you should feel free at all times to consult with me on them.

1. Barnard Honor Code:

Approved by the student body in 1912 and updated in 2016, the Code states:

We, the students of Barnard College, resolve to uphold the honor of the College by engaging with integrity in all of our academic pursuits. We affirm that academic integrity is the honorable creation and presentation of our own work. We acknowledge that it is our responsibility to seek clarification of proper forms of collaboration and use of academic resources in all assignments or exams. We consider academic integrity to include the proper use and care for all print, electronic, or other academic resources. We will respect the rights of others to engage in pursuit of learning in order to uphold our commitment to honor. We pledge to do all that is in our power to create a spirit of honesty and honor for its own sake. o When including the

Honor Code on your syllabus, please include a statement acknowledging that it has been updated. For example, “established 1912, updated 2016.” o <https://barnard.edu/honor-code>

2. Wellness Statement:

It is important for undergraduates to recognize and identify the different pressures, burdens, and stressors you may be facing, whether personal, emotional, physical, financial, mental, or academic. We as a community urge you to make yourself--your own health, sanity, and wellness--your priority throughout this term and your career here. Sleep, exercise, and eating well can all be a part of a healthy regimen to cope with stress. Resources exist to support you in several sectors of your life, and we encourage you to make use of them. Should you have any questions about navigating these resources, please visit these sites:

<http://barnard.edu/primarycare>
<https://barnard.edu/about-counseling>
<https://barnard.edu/wellwoman/>

3. Center for Accessibility Resources & Disability Services (CARDS) Statement

If you believe you may encounter barriers to the academic environment due to a documented disability or emerging health challenges, please feel free to contact me and/or the Center for Accessibility Resources & Disability Services (CARDS). Any student with approved academic accommodations is encouraged to contact me during office hours or via email. If you have questions regarding registering a disability or receiving accommodations for the semester, please contact CARDS at (212) 854- COI Guidelines for Syllabi Updated January 2, 2020 Page 4 of 5 4634, cards@barnard.edu, or learn more at barnard.edu/disabilityservices.

CARDS is located in 101 Altschul Hall.

4. Affordable Access to Course Texts & Materials Statement:

All students deserve to be able to study and make use of course texts and materials regardless of cost. Barnard librarians have partnered with students, faculty, and staff to find ways to increase student access to textbooks. By the first day of advance registration for each term, faculty will have provided information about required texts for each course on CourseWorks (including ISBN or author, title, publisher, copyright date, and price), which can be viewed by students. A number of cost-free or low-cost methods for accessing some types of courses texts are detailed on the Barnard Library Textbook Affordability guide (library.barnard.edu/textbook-affordability). Undergraduate students who identify as first-generation and/or low-income students may check out items from the FLIP lending libraries in the Barnard Library (library.barnard.edu/flip) and in Butler Library for an entire semester. Students may also consult with their professors, the Dean of Studies, and the Financial Aid Office about additional affordable alternatives for having access to course texts. Visit the guide and talk to your professors and your librarian for more details.