

Boston University, Kilachand Honors College  
People in Process: *Lives & Works*

*Medieval Foremothers?*  
*Joan of Arc and Christine de Pizan*  
KHC HC 501-A2 | Fall 2020

**COURSE INFORMATION**

Meets: Tuesdays 9-10:45AM

Brick & Mortar location: \_\_\_\_\_

Zoom Meeting ID for class: **942 7052 7036**, passcode 961901

**FACULTY INFORMATION**

Professor: Irit Kleiman, Department of Romance Studies

Contact: [kleiman@bu.edu](mailto:kleiman@bu.edu)

Brick & Mortar Office: 718 Commonwealth Ave, Room 503

BU Office phone: 617-358-4653

Virtual Office: Zoom Meeting ID 662-212-5421

Office Hours: Wednesday AM, Thursday PM, and by appointment.

Virtual unless arranged otherwise. Details TBA.



## **I. Big Ideas**

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

What is a meaningful life, and how is one made? What happens when we try to ask that question about lives lived out entirely within a period of crisis, in a context in which both enduring War and limited freedoms for women constrain the kinds of choices or actions possible? In this inescapably gendered realm, what are the strategies and sacrifices through which a meaningful life can be forged? To what extent is it possible to shape one's own destiny or control one's legacy from within a female body?

Joan of Arc might be called the Greta Thunberg of her day. As a teenager during the Hundred Years War, the peasant Joan disguised herself as a boy in order to fight for royal France, determined to “kick the English out.” Captured and tortured, tried and martyred, Joan is known today for the courage of her convictions. An abundant archive of medieval source texts surrounds her life and afterlife—including, most notably, the transcripts of her multiple trials and their reversals. These documents offer a window into Joan’s trajectory, choices, opportunities, and contextual constraints. Joan of Arc has also inspired a series of modern and contemporary works, such as Theodor Dreyer’s dazzling and fervid *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (1928), to cite just one canonical example. These artistic works deliver opportunities for critical assessment of Joan’s legacy. This interdisciplinary approach will offer a multidimensional opportunity to apprehend Joan through her own words (at trial, for instance) and also how Joan has been constructed by others as a vehicle for ideas about rebellion, feminism, faith, and nationalism.

If Joan of Arc might be compared to Greta Thunberg, then author Christine de Pizan is the fifteenth-century’s Madeleine Albright. When barefoot Joan leapt into the national imagination, Christine was already a respected elder and *grande dame*, deeply enmeshed for many years in the intellectual milieu that surrounded the French royal house. Where Joan cross-dressed to gain entry into male military experience, Christine writes about how Fortune took away her femaleness. Widowed very young and with small children to feed, Christine survived on her own by writing a series of social and political commentaries. In addition to the increasingly well-known *Book of the City of Ladies*, Christine’s large and varied oeuvre includes poetry, autobiographical writings, political treatises, and a series of public letters about the *Romance of the Rose* that have been called feminist manifestos. In subtle but powerful contrast to the textual production that captures Joan’s life (i.e., legal documents produced by men judging her), Christine took a detailed, hands-on approach to the manuscript production and circulation of her work. Moreover, we do not have to look far for a direct connection between the two: The 61-stanza poem known as the “Tale of Joan of Arc” is one of Christine’s final works.

Combined study of Joan and Christine creates a tight frame through which to examine what a *Life* and its *Work* meant at the end of the Middle Ages, and what they might mean to feminists, activists, and authors today. In this course we will examine legal and literary texts, illuminated manuscripts, films and a selection of post-1968 essays and artworks, and in so doing we will enrich our critical appreciation of Joan and Christine’s trajectories, choices, opportunities, and contextual constraints, and deepening our understanding of the mutual entanglements of life and work from two, contrasting but mutually enriching perspectives. The stories told about Joan and Christine's lives keep getting re-written by successive historical moments in myriad ways, nearly always in answer to cultural needs of that moment. How have others used these particular lives to think about the questions we are asking? How might we do so?

### **HUB LEARNING OUTCOMES: PHILOSOPHICAL INQUIRY AND LIFE’S MEANINGS (PLM)**

- Learning Outcome 1: Students will demonstrate knowledge of notable works in philosophical thought,

make meaningful connections among them, and be able to relate those works to their own lives and those of others. [...]

- Learning Outcome 2: Students will demonstrate the reasoning skills and possess the vocabulary to reflect upon significant philosophical questions and topics such as what constitutes a good life, right action, meaningful activity, knowledge, truth, or a just society. Major themes in the course include the social, historical, and political contingencies involved in crafting a life and legacy, the question of enduring impact in relation to shifting political and ideological currents, and the ways in which to evaluate a life's work in light of the often controversial or compromised life of the person who created it. By reading and discussing philosophical, historical, biographical, autobiographical, and critical scholarship pertaining to the life and work of a major historical figure, students will develop the conceptual resources necessary to think rigorously about one of the central existential problems that define the human condition; that is, the ways in which our lives are steeped in and shaped by factors such as normative discourse, conventional wisdom, and customary rationales, and also realized independently of them.

## **II. How the class works**

### **SUMMARY OF ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING:**

Please consult the appropriate assignment sheet for details and guidance about each of these activities.

Participation 20% Participation grades will be based on preparedness, in-class discussion and debates (including active listening), and insightful contributions based on course readings throughout the semester.

I will sometimes ask you to post a short paragraph or video [eg, Fipgrid or TikTok] to Blackboard prior to class, and/or to respond to your classmates' paragraphs. Where applicable, these otherwise ungraded activities count for participation and preparation.

3 short papers 35% These short-form tasks will help you formulate, express, and refine diverse perspectives on the goals, sacrifices, and pressures experienced by each woman at different moments in their lives (or afterlives).

In order, they include:

1. *Narrate a dream vision featuring Christine* (narrated or graphic) 15%
2. *Write an Op-Ed about Joan's 1431 trial* 10%
3. *Create a review of a film dramatizing Joan's story* (format flexible) 10%

Final project 35% The goal of each student's final project will be to represent, perform, illustrate, debate and/or interpret one or more major dilemma, struggle, or pursuit in Christine or Joan's lives in dialogue with our own contemporary world in a way that enhances reflections their own next steps in life.

The final product should use creativity to deepen the reader/viewer's perspective on the enduring lessons to be gained from understanding the challenges and crises

each woman faced, and the strategies or means they used in response. This is a process-driven assignment, where "showing your work" counts.

Select from the following menu of format choices. The examples offered are for inspiration, and are not restrictive.

- **Remediate a work by Christine or about Joan**, with or without cameos by the other or from you yourself as a character. For instance, you could render Joan's trial as a graphic novel, and include yourself or Christine as frame narrators.
- **Write and/or perform a screenplay that places the two women in dialogue**. For instance, what would it look like to have them together onstage on The Colbert Show, addressing the UN, or power breakfasting at Davos? This could also be performed and submitted as audio or video.
- **Create an original work about one of the themes in this class** that incorporates citations (verbal, graphic, or audiovisual) from the works we have studied. This might be a creative or fine arts project, or it might dramatize an aspect of the course learning outcomes using the conventions of non-fiction: Can you be Joan of Arc's lawyers and sue the French government; if so, on what grounds? Maybe you would rather write and deliver a keynote commencement address (whether as yourself or in character as Joan or Christine).
- Got an idea? Want to find one? Let's think it through together.

Keystone  
presentations  
10%

As per Kilichand HC guidelines, details forthcoming. Keystone on Tap to be held December 9th.

### REQUIRED TEXTS

You will need to purchase a copy of:

- Christine De Pizan. *The Selected Writings of Christine de Pizan: New Translations, Criticism*. Edited by Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, Translated by Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Kevin Brownlee. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997. ISBN 978-0393970104.

All other readings for this course can be made available in online/digital/pdf format. However, it is recommended that you purchase a copy of:

- Daniel Hobbins, ed. *The Trial of Joan of Arc*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007. ISBN 978-0674024052.

### PRINT COPIES AND COMPETING SCREENS

I strongly encourage students to print assigned materials for reading and annotating in hard copy. There are several reasons for this. The most important are:

1. Numerous studies have demonstrated clear cognitive differences between our interactions with screens and keyboards and our interactions with the material world of books and the kinetic (body movement) aspects of writing and notetaking. We learn and remember better when we are physically engaged. Typing doesn't cut it: To get these benefits, you need to actually write out your notes and annotations by hand.

2. Our in-class analyses require us to interact with the texts studied in ways that are not easy to accomplish digitally, and to interact with each other in ways that are not possible when we are looking at screens instead of one another.
3. Our class discussions will engage us in close textual analysis, so you will need to be able to manipulate and view the assigned readings during LfA discussions that will already involve using at least one screen, no matter what your location.

### **BLACKBOARD AND ONLINE TOOLS**

Throughout the semester, we will be using Blackboard for announcements, assignments, group projects, and course administration. You are automatically subscribed to Blackboard, and it is your responsibility to check it regularly. Most course materials will be distributed in electronic format, usually under the "Content" tab. Additional online tools and platforms will be used as appropriate.

### **REMOTE LEARNING & IN-PERSON EXPERIENCES**

As a default, regular class sessions will take place via Zoom. You should expect all, or nearly all, meetings and course-related activities to be synchronous and live. My goal is to arrange and facilitate a maximum of in-person learning experiences and events, as may best support our learning community and as the evolving Covid-19 situation allows.

## **III. Course Policies: The fine print you should always, always read**

### **ATTENDANCE, ABSENCES, AND TARDINESS**

This is an active learning course anchored in student participation. The strategies our syllabus uses to achieve these goals include a mix of discussion based learning, project based learning, and arts based learning.

Students are expected to attend each class session unless they have a valid reason for being absent. If you must miss class due to illness or another reason, please notify the instructor as soon as possible, ideally before the absence. <https://www.bu.edu/academics/policies/attendance/>

Habitual unexcused or disruptive tardiness may result in being marked absent, either for that day or as an "equivalency" for multiple late arrivals. Unexcused absences will negatively affect your participation grade. If you turn off your camera during Zoom sessions, you may be marked absent or removed; see below.

It is expected that you will come to class prepared to discuss the readings/viewings, and participate actively in class and small-group discussions. Computers, iPads or tablets, and even phones are likely to be tools we sometimes use for class activities and access to course content. However, even in this tech-supported, online environment, the extraneous use of devices is not allowed, and their abuse (eg, using social media, shopping, or answering emails during class) will result in sanctions.

### **ZOOM ETIQUETTE AND EXPECTATIONS**

The Zoom classroom is an extension of our on-campus classroom. Your attendance and participation should replicate as much as possible that professional/academic setting.

When we converse, we show our interest in what others say by looking at them, nodding, making small “aha” sounds, and by asking them follow-up questions and reacting verbally. When we speak and we do not receive this type of positive feedback, we generally assume the other person is not that interested and may trail off. We use facial expressions to gauge whether the other person understands us, and because in any discussion-driven seminar we are constantly taking risks, our peers need even more affirmation of understanding from us. Remote learning can rival or equal in-person experiences when we are attentive to these communicative behaviors.

Our common expectation is that cameras will remain on during class time. In addition to having your camera turned on, you should be at a stationary, quiet location (i.e. not traveling in a vehicle or outside in a public space). Zoom works best from a laptop; moreover, we will be making use of its desktop-only features. Aim to be seated indoors at a desk, table, and/or other place where you can focus for a large segment of time with as much privacy as possible. Please reach out to me if you anticipate difficulties meeting this expectation so that we can work together to find mutually satisfying solutions.

Privacy and safety matter. Zoom links are never to be shared with anyone outside of the class. Recording of class sessions, in whole or in part, opens the door to a number of risks and abuses, and is not permitted. Recordings of myself that I may make available to share course-related content and information are intended exclusively for limited use in the context of this seminar; they should be deleted promptly (as applicable) and never shared. These expectations also apply to recordings that students in this class may make or share for assignment or similar purposes. Violation of these policies will be treated as academic misconduct.

### **SUBMITTING ASSIGNMENTS & PENALTIES FOR LATE SUBMISSIONS**

Lately I have found that Dropbox request links provide the easiest way for students to upload their work, and for me to review it. Please be absolutely sure that your filename includes both your name and the assignment name. I accept text submissions in .pdf and .docx formats, exclusively. For practical reasons, submissions in Pages, as a Google doc, or via any kind Link will not be accepted, and will result in penalties for late submissions. I am also unable to accept assignments sent via email. Guidelines for submissions of multimedia (audio/video/visual/other) assignments that require variation from this policy will be provided well in advance of any due dates.

Late assignments will be penalized one-half letter grade per day late; weekends and holidays are counted by calendar days (ie, Sat/Sun=2 days). If you anticipate difficulty with an assignment deadline, please speak with me as early as possible to avoid penalties.

You are responsible for adhering to these guidelines, and for understanding the grading consequences that submitting work late, in unsupported file formats, or via email may incur.

### **EMAIL**

If you are writing to me about something time sensitive and/or urgent, please put the subject in the email header. You are encouraged to use live conversation during office hours to discuss any subject that requires more than 5 sentences to resolve. I will be glad to share my time with you.

I check and respond to email as promptly as possible, however it is important to understand that:

- a) Most of my work takes place outside of email and away from a computer. I may be teaching, meeting with students or other colleagues, preparing class, or conducting research. Please allow time and leeway for me to see your messages.

- b) I may respond to your message directly, or I may reply verbally when we next meet, or I may judge that no reply is required, eg, to emails that share information but do not require immediate action.
- c) As a matter of policy, principle, and sustainable work-life balance, I do not consult or respond to emails outside of business hours or on weekends. Please plan accordingly.

### **DISABILITY & ACCESS SERVICES**

Students with documented disabilities, including learning disabilities, may be entitled to accommodations intended to ensure that they have integrated and equal access to the academic, social, cultural, and recreational programs the university offers. Accommodations may include, but are not limited to, additional time on tests, staggered homework assignments, note-taking assistance. If you believe you should receive accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability & Access Services to discuss your situation. This office can give you a letter that you can share with instructors of your classes outlining the accommodations you should receive. The letter will not contain any information about the reason for the accommodations.

If you already have a letter of accommodation, you are encouraged to share it with your instructor as soon as possible.

Disability & Access Services  
25 Buick Street, Suite 300  
617-353-3658  
[access@bu.edu](mailto:access@bu.edu)  
<http://www.bu.edu/disability/>

### **ACADEMIC CONDUCT**

All Kilachand Honors College students are expected to maintain high standards of academic honesty and integrity. Every Kilachand student must follow Boston University's Undergraduate Academic Conduct Code regarding "academic misconduct," which is "conduct by which a student misrepresents his or her academic accomplishments, or impedes other students' opportunities of being judged fairly for their academic work. Knowingly allowing others to represent your work as their own is as serious an offense as submitting another's work as your own." Furthermore, Kilachand students must meet all Kilachand Honors College Academic Standards. These policies and procedures should guide students in achieving their educational goals.

## **IV. Calendar and Planning**

- Titles of works by Christine de Pizan refer to *The Selected Writings of Christine de Pizan*, a Norton Critical Edition anthology of curated extracts. Page numbers are given in parentheses for ease of reference.
- Unless otherwise communicated, all other materials for reading and viewing are accessible via our course Blackboard site.
- Fall 2020 will be unlike anything we have experienced before. I encourage you to communicate with me proactively as may be useful to helping make this course an outstanding experience for each and all of us.
- This is at your discretion, but telling me if you are in quarantine or ill will help me best support you.

### **Week 1, September 8**

What are we talking about when we seek to understand what makes a life meaningful, purposeful, or good? How have others framed these questions or sought to answer them?

- Shirley Chisholm, *Unbought and Unbossed*, Extracts.
- Adrienne Rich, "When We Dead Awaken"; Commencement speech from Swarthmore, 1992.
- David Foster Wallace, "This is Water" (audio on youtube)
- Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*, Chapter 2.

### **Week 2, September 15**

Where are we? Background and inheritances. We begin by trying to understand the world in which Christine and Joan lived, a world marked by the sprawling, messy, and multifaceted 100 Years War; by plague; and by the reign of a mad king (Charles VI) and his depressed son (Charles VII). Spotlight: Christine writes about Joan.

- Larissa Juliet Taylor, *The Virgin Warrior*, "Prologue: The Hundred Years War."
- Dossier of materials for online exploration of the 100 Years War (access via Blackboard).
- Christine de Pizan, "The Tale of Joan of Arc" (252-62), first reading.

### **Week 3, September 22**

What makes us? Becoming who we are, reflections on vocation and necessity. The despair of civil war. Primary sources that offer a glimpse of Joan of Arc before her notorious posterity.

- Christine de Pizan, "Lamentation on the Evils that Have Befallen France" (224-29).
- Craig Taylor, *Joan of Arc: La Pucelle*. Part I: "The Life of Joan." Selection of primary sources with minimal editorial intervention.
- Suggested: Larissa Juliet Taylor, *The Virgin Warrior*. Clear-eyed, page-turning biography based on the primary sources we will read for class throughout the semester. Not required, but likely helpful, and worth keeping on your virtual bookshelf.

### **Week 4, September 29**

How does change happen? Becoming who we are, reflections on vocation and necessity. Readings from autobiographical works by Christine de Pisan that address her life as a widow, mother, and awakening to her calling as writer of more than just "pretty poems" about love.

- Christine de Pizan, [selected] Ballads (5-15), "The Path of Long Study" (55-87),

### **Week 5, October 6**

Who will I be when I grow up? Becoming who we are, reflections on vocation and necessity. Readings from autobiographical works by Christine de Pisan that address her life as a widow, mother, and awakening to her calling as a writer of conscience.

- Christine de Pizan, "The Book of Fortune's Transformation" (88-109), and "Christine's Vision" (173-201).
- DUE FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9TH: DREAM VISION FEATURING CHRISTINE.

### **Week 6, October 13**

We have no class meeting this week. Use this time to develop your reading of Joan's trial in Hobbins's edition.

### **Week 7, October 20**



What is freedom, and what does it cost? Joan's 1431 trial. Please use the two-week window granted by BU's adjusted calendar to read the entirety of:

- Daniel Hobbins, *The Trial of Joan of Arc*.

Be sure to begin your reading with Hobbins's Note on the Translation and Introduction, and to familiarize yourself with the resources he provides at the end of the book, including a list of major participants in the trial and an overview of its chronology. You may find the Appendices in *The Virgin Warrior* also useful.

### **Week 8, October 27**

How far does a life extend? Aftermaths and legacies. Trauma and re-vision: The shock of Joan's death and the Rehabilitation (Nullification) trial of 1456. Thinking about living memory and collective identity...

- Larissa Juliet Taylor, *The Virgin Warrior*, Chapter 10: "Vindication" and Epilogue.
- Craig Taylor, *Joan of Arc: La Pucelle*. Part IV: "The Nullification Trial (1455–56);" selections from Parts III and V ("The Memory of Joan of Arc").
- DUE FRIDAY, OCTOBER 30TH: OP-ED ABOUT JOAN'S TRIAL(S). SEE ASSIGNMENT SHEET.

### **Week 9, November 3**

What's film got to do with it? Kinetic Sainthood, the unauthorized hagiographies. Joan's 1920, post-WWI canonization. Joan as mystic and martyr; mysticism and cinema; Joan's ever-expanding notoriety in relation to 20th-century anxieties.

- Carl Theodore Dreyer, *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc [The Passion of Joan of Arc]*, 1928. Viewing to be arranged.
- KEYSTONE PITCHES THIS WEEK!

### **Week 10, November 10**

What's film got to do with it? Kinetic Sainthood, the unauthorized hagiographies. Emphasis on Joan as a figure of national vigor, an incarnation of *Ecclesia militans*, and an alter-ego to Marianne, personification of the French Republic.

- Luc Besson, *Jeanne d'Arc [The Messenger]*, 1999. Viewing to be arranged.
- DUE FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 13TH: REVIEW OF JOAN'S LIFE ON SCREEN.

### **Week 11, November 17**

What is freedom, and what does it cost? Authority, activism, and the public sphere. First reflections on gender, community, and hope.

- Christine de Pizan, "The Debate on the *Romance of the Rose*" (41-45); "The Book of the City of Ladies" (116-55).

### **Week 12, November 24**

How far does a life extend? Aftermaths and legacies. Virtual field trip to London to see British Library MS Harley 4431, "the Queen's Manuscript." Is the artist's life always an afterlife?

- Access online resources and readings via Blackboard.
- DUE TODAY: APPROVED PLAN FOR FINAL PROJECT, WITH TIMELINE.

### **Week 13, December 1**

What do we owe to others? Foremothers and daughters of tomorrow. Intergenerational dialogues. Revisions of past and future promises. Syntheses and connections.

- Reread Christine's *Tale of Joan of Arc* from Week 2.
- Judy Chicago, "The Dinner Party," 1974–79.

9/4/20 3:19:00 PM

**Week 14, December 8**

Are we there yet? Our final meeting will be devoted to sharing your final projects.

(Due date for final project submission TBD.)