

## MEDIEVAL QUEENS: BRIDES, PEACEWEAVERS, REGENTS

Prof. Tanya Stabler Miller  
CC 506

Hist 310C  
T/R 1pm-2:15pm



### Course Description:

Medieval queens occupied powerful, exceptional, and (ultimately) tenuous positions in medieval society. Their positions, whether acquired via marriage or (rarely) inheritance, required constant negotiation of cultures, political factions, and gender expectations. Women who became queens through marriage traveled to foreign lands as young women, straddling two cultures and two families and serving as political mediators between their birth families and royal husbands. As foreigners, Queens faced suspicion and distrust. However, as wives, mothers, daughters, and sisters, Queens had undeniable influence within the family, influence that could translate into significant political power. Queens served their realms as regents and intercessors. Queens were admired as models of piety and patronesses of art and education; some were maligned as well as agents of discord and instigators of civil wars. Their positions were exceptional among medieval women, but required constant manufacture and maintenance of networks of loyalty.

This course will explore this politically powerful position as it developed from a spousal partnership in the early Middle Ages into an institution in the later Medieval period. Through the lens of queenship, we will examine the ways in which gender, ideals of

rulership, inheritance practices, and kinship networks shaped European politics and culture in the Middle Ages.

**Course Requirements:**

***Participation – 25%***

***Short papers (3 @ 15% each) – 45%***

***Wikipedia project and presentation – 30%***

Surveys of contributors to Wikipedia have shown that less than 15% of its contributors are women. This Wikipedia “gender gap” affects what sort of information ends up in a Wikipedia entry as well as what topics get represented on Wikipedia. By engaging in this issue, we will explore the gendered nature of knowledge and authority (what gets included and why; scrutiny of female authorship and “women’s history”), while at the same time doing our part to contribute to the world’s biggest encyclopedia. Students will write or critique and edit a Wikipedia entry on a Medieval Queen. The project will require individual research, utilization of primary sources, and familiarity with the secondary scholarship on queenship. Details about this assignment will be communicated well before the due dates.

**Course Readings:**

Students will read a variety of primary sources and secondary scholarship on Medieval Queens (to be posted on the course website.) On average, readings will not be more than about 50 pages per week.

Required textbook: Theresa Earenfight, *Queenship in Medieval Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. v + 356. ISBN 978-0-230-27646-8 (pb).



## Abbreviated Syllabus

**Week One:** Introduction to Studying Queens

**Week Two:** Merovingian Queens and Networks of Power

### UNIT 1: HOLY ASCETICS



**Week Three:** Radegund's Disputed Legacy

**Week Four:** Jilted Queens of the Politics of Marriage and Inheritance

*Hincmar of Rheims: On the Divorce of King Lothar and Queen Theutberga*

UNIT 2: AMBITIOUS HEIRESSES



**Week 5** Maltilda's failed quest for the English throne

Melisende, Queen of Jerusalem

**Week 6:** Eleanor of Aquitaine, the Wife of Two Kings

UNIT THREE: SINFUL WIVES



Week 7: Scandals at the Court of Philip IV

UNIT FOUR: PEACEMAKING BRIDES



Week Eight: Isabelle of France and the Hundred Years War

Week Nine: Isabelle of Valois and the Hundred Years War

UNIT 5: PROTECTIVE MOTHERS



**Week Ten:** Isabeau of Bavaria and the Challenge of being Regent

**Week Eleven:** Catherine Medici and the French Wars of Religion

**UNIT 6: LEGITIMATE RULERS**



**Week Twelve:** Isabella of Castille

**Week Thirteen:** Elizabeth I

**Week Fourteen:** Queens, Gender and Power

**Week Fifteen:** Rethinking Monarchy and Gender