From the twelfth through eighteenth centuries, European women emerged from the silence of the Middle Ages to become eloquent, forceful participants in the mainstream of civilization. At first, primarily those authorized by their holiness – nuns, mystics, tertiaries, anchoresses – spoke of their visions and their mission. Then, triggered by the arrival in 1361 of On Famous Women by the Italian author Giovanni Boccaccio, there followed a stream of works, by both men and women, defending the targets of a misogynistic tradition embedded in the respected disciplines of law, medicine, philosophy, and theology. By the early 1500s, the availability of the print medium and the maturation of the European vernaculars permitted women authors to explore verse and prose fiction, even as the querelle des femmes ("the debate about women") soared to its climax in the first half of the seventeenth century. By this date, writing by women and about women had moved from periphery to center of European culture, and the major issues pertaining to women’s nature and capacity had been addressed. These were the foundations on which Mary Wollstonecraft erected her manifesto of 1792, challenging her contemporaries to recognize the due rights of woman even as the French Revolution, then still in progress, established the rights of man.

This course examines a sampling of the key works, originally in Latin and four European vernaculars, that trace this story. We shall all read in common the works listed below (weekly readings will average about 100 pages), assigning oral presentations of the readings across the semester so that each student has multiple opportunities to present. In addition, students will select and report on six monographs (or the equivalent): orally to the class, according to a schedule which we shall collectively devise, and in writing (abstracts of 600-900 words) to the professor.

Many of the assigned readings are available in inexpensive editions that you may purchase if you wish. In addition, the library will have all works on reserve in hard copy or on E-RES.

Online bibliographies of relevant secondary works include my “Women and Learning” at Oxford Bibliographies Online: Renaissance and Reformation (http://www.oxfordbibliographiesonline.com/display/id/obo-9780195399301-0032#verytop) and the OVIEME Series Bibliography (http://www.othervoiceineme.com/othervoicebib.html) compiled by Albert Rabil, Jr., et al., both updated as of 2010. Downloaded files will be made available on E-RES before the start of the spring 2011 semester.
Syllabus

Week 1

Introduction

Week 2

Holy women: Hildegard, Heloise, and their heirs (12th-15th centuries)


ERES


Week 3

Giovanni Boccaccio, scholar and storyteller, *On Famous Women* (1361-1375)


Week 4

Christine de Pisan, first feminist, and the *City of Ladies* (1405)


Week 5
Week 6

Women humanists: Isotta Nogarola and Laura Cereta (15th century)


Week 7

Women poets and storytellers: Colonna, Franco, Marguerite de Navarre (16th century)


Week 8

Men defend women: Agrippa, Erasmus, Vives (16th century)


Week 9

Women and the Reformation: Morata, Dentiere, Zell (16th century)


Week 10

Thoughts on marriage and family: Francesco Barbaro, Elizabeth Joscelin, Elizabeth Clinton, Countess of Lincoln (15th to 17th centuries)


Week 11
Moderata Fonte asserts *Women’s Worth* (1601)


Week 12

**Female equality: Gournay, Schurman, Makin, and Astell (17th century)**


Week 13

**Utopian and dystopian reflections: Cavendish and Behn**


Week 14

**Mary Wollstonecraft and the rights of woman (1792)**