

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Syllabus

Compassion passion and gender in the late Middle Ages: a reading of Boccaccio's decameron - 19800

Last update 20-08-2017

HU Credits: 2

Degree/Cycle: 2nd degree (Master)

Responsible Department: general & compar. literature

Academic year: 0

Semester: 2nd Semester

Teaching Languages: Hebrew

Campus: Mt. Scopus

Course/Module Coordinator: Dr. Gur Zak

Coordinator Email: gur.zak@mail.huji.ac.il

Coordinator Office Hours: Tue 15-16

Teaching Staff:

Dr. Gur Zak

Course/Module description:

Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron* is one of the greatest masterpieces of world literature. In the popular imagination, the work is associated mainly with the celebration of earthly pleasures, explicit eroticism, and a profound – and hilarious – criticism of the religious establishment. Yet no less than human sexuality, the *Decameron* deals with the emotion of compassion and its place in human society. As the author-narrator states in the very opening sentence of the work: "It is a human quality to have compassion for the afflicted". This course will be dedicated to a close reading of selected parts of the *Decameron* – in Hebrew translation side by side with the Italian original – with the aim of elucidating the role of compassion in the work and the different ways in which it strives to elicit compassion in the reader. Major attention will also be given to the link between erotic passion, compassion, and gender in the stories. To enhance our analysis of the stories, we will also read several theoretical discussions of compassion from the fields of the history of emotions and literary ethics.

Course/Module aims:

Learning outcomes - On successful completion of this module, students should be able to:

To discuss in an informed and critical manner the stories of the "*Decameron*," the role of compassion in the work, and the strategies through which the work strives to elicit this emotion in the reader.

To evaluate the role of compassion in both medieval literature and contemporary literary theory.

Attendance requirements(%):

100%

Teaching arrangement and method of instruction:

Course/Module Content:

Reading the following Sections of the *Decameron*:

Author's Prologue

Day 1

Day 4

Day 8

Day 9

Required Reading:

Boccaccio, Decameron, ed. Vittore Branca (Turin, 1992).

Marilyn Migiel, A Rhetoric of the Decameron (Toronto, 2007)

The Decameron's Ten Days in Perspective (multiple volumes)

Martha Nussbaum, Love's Knowledge: Essays in Philosophy and Literature (Oxford, 1992)

Susan Broomhall, Early Modern Emotions: An Introduction (Routledge, 2016)

Lauren Berlant, Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion (Routled

Additional Reading Material:

Course/Module evaluation:

End of year written/oral examination 0 %

Presentation 0 %

Participation in Tutorials 20 %

Project work 70 %

Assignments 10 %

Reports 0 %

Research project 0 %

Quizzes 0 %

Other 0 %

Additional information: