



THE NEWBERRY

Center for Renaissance Studies

2012 – 2013 Graduate Seminar at the Newberry

**Asceticism, Eroticism, and the Premodern Foucault:
Revisiting the *History of Sexuality***

Professor Eileen Joy, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, and
Professor Anna Klosowska, Miami University, Ohio

2:00 – 5:00 p.m. Fridays, January 11 – March 15, 2013

This seminar will focus on re-reading Foucault's *History of Sexuality* in relation to hagiographic narratives from the Late Antique, Old English, and Middle English traditions and to medieval and early modern French literary texts on love (in translation). The central guiding concept is Foucault's notion of an "improbable manner of being"—a notion that Foucault sketched, somewhat elliptically, in his late lectures and interviews in relation to his thinking on asceticism and techniques of the "care of the self" that he had explored in classical and early Christian texts, but had no time to more fully develop.

Participants will explore medieval and early modern texts to imagine what the inclusion of particular representations in these texts of "improbable" modes and techniques of the self would have contributed to Foucault's history of sexuality, with an eye toward the consequences Foucault's readings of these texts might have had upon his study of sexuality in the premodern period. The seminar will also interrogate some of the paradoxes inherent in Foucault's attempts to provide a linear periodization of the development of the history of sexuality from the classical period to the present time—a periodization, moreover, which much work in current medieval and early modern studies of sexuality have called into question. Each of the ten meetings will pair excerpts from Foucault's works with readings in relevant medieval or early modern texts, as well as in contemporary critical sexuality studies.

Prerequisites: Reading knowledge of French, Latin, Italian, Old English, or Middle English is **desirable but not required**. Original texts and English translations will be made available. Some background in courses in medieval literature, at the undergraduate or graduate level, is desirable.

Enrollment is limited. Register online at www.newberry.org/renaissance. To earn optional credit you must also enroll in either a Newberry course at your campus (available at several Chicago-area schools) or an independent study. Contact the Center for Renaissance Studies consortium faculty representative at your home institution for your university's policies and to apply for travel reimbursement. Enrollment fees are waived for consortium members.

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