COURSE DETAIL

READING THE QUEER MIDDLE AGES
Country Ireland
Host Institution Trinity College Dublin
Program(s) Trinity College Dublin
UCEAP Course Level Upper Division
UCEAP Subject Area(s) Women’s & Gender Studies History
UCEAP Course Number 136
UCEAP Course Suffix
UCEAP Official Title READING THE QUEER MIDDLE AGES
UCEAP Transcript Title QUEER MIDDLE AGES
UCEAP Quarter Units 5.00
UCEAP Semester Units 3.30

Course Description

In 1394, John Rykener, having been detected in women's clothing and calling themself 'Eleanor', was arrested in London for 'committing that detestable, unmentionable, and ignominious vice' with John Britby. This case went unremarked for decades despite the printing of a calendar of these records, because the editor summarized it only as 'Examination of two men charged with immorality'. This course takes this case as a starting point and asks: was Eleanor Rykener a trans woman? Was John Rykener a man in drag? Were they genderfluid? Are these terms applicable in the Middle Ages? Did this case even happen or was it all a political satire? Students read comparable cases from elsewhere, recent scholarship on the issue, other sources relating to queer identities in the Middle Ages, and historical fiction focusing on Rykener as a character.

Language(s) of Instruction
English

Host Institution Course Number
HIU33108

Host Institution Course Title
READING THE QUEER MIDDLE AGES

Host Institution Course Details
https://www.tcd.ie/history/assets/pdf/ug/25-26/list3/queer-middle-ages.pdf

Host Institution Campus

Host Institution Faculty

Host Institution Degree

Host Institution Department
History

Course Last Reviewed
2025-2026

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