This course is an introductory exploration of some representations of women in the great dramatic operas of the Italian and French 19th Century tradition (also known as the venerable War Horses of the opera repertoire). This survey is a labour of love for a wonderful musical form that is filled with passion, drama and spectacle. It is also an act of resistance against the limited lot within which operatic women must struggle for power and transcendence. Whether she is the fragile and diseased Mimi, the dangerous Carmen or the mad Lucia, death closes her struggle for health or power or love. This closure is conveyed in the music but also the words of the libretto. As a hybrid form, opera benefits from a study that considers both the text and the music. Therefore, we will read the libretti as well as watch performances of the operas.

Works to be studied
La Bohème
Lucia di Lammermoor
Rigoletto
Norma
Aida
Carmen
Turandot

Required readings
Custom courseware package
available at the bookstore

Course requirement
Short review (1000 words )
of Lucia di Lammermoor and Aida 30%
Term paper (2000 words) 30%
Final exam (scheduled, closed) 30%
Class participation 10%

Prerequisite: 60 credit hours

Note: The department of Women’s Studies encourages clarity of thought and expression and good writing. Students will be evaluated on these skills in all courses given by the department.