

**Invitation from**

Professor Simon Gaskell,  
Principal

To the Malcolm Bowie Lecture

# Legible Skins. Animals, Ethics, and Reading in the Middle Ages

Sarah Kay  
Professor of French and Italian  
Princeton University

**Thursday 18 March 2010 at 6.30pm**

Arts Lecture Theatre  
Arts Building  
Queen Mary, University of London  
Mile End Road  
London E1 4NS

A reception will follow the lecture.



Professor Sarah Kay

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Professor Sarah Kay

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**Posthumanist interest in human specificity acquires particular leverage in the Middle Ages, where schoolboys are educated on fables and animals are put on trial, where the nobility wear furs and the clergy write books on parchment. Rational entities seem to inhabit animal bodies, while human skins, the envelopes of social existence or cultural thought, become inseparable from animal ones. The definition of man as a rational animal is impaired by the very circumstances that render it intelligible, as both humans and (other) animals are conjoined through reading.**

Sarah Kay is Professor of French and a specialist in medieval French and Occitan literature at Princeton University. Trained at the University of Oxford, she taught at the Universities of Liverpool and Cambridge, where she was head of the department of French (1996-2001). Elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 2004, she was awarded the degree of Litt.D (Cambridge) in 2005, and admitted as Chevalier dans l'Ordre des palmes académiques in 2006. Her major publications are an edition of *Raoul de Cambrai* and four monographs on various aspects of medieval literature. With Malcolm Bowie and Terence Cave she co-wrote *A Short History of French Literature* (Oxford, 2003).

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