



Theo 278: Religion and Gender

John Felice Rome Center

Fall 2019

Wednesdays | 14.00 -16:30

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 16.30 – 17.30 or by appointment

Course Description

We will begin this course with an introduction to contemporary gender theory, and discuss how it can be applied as a critical tool for examining religion past and present. The contemporary perspective is woven consistently through parts 1 and 2 with analysis and discussion on sexualities, gender identities and feminist critique.

In Part 1 of the course we focus on the Garden of Eden in biblical narrative, and study its history of interpretation in relation to female and male gender roles. Further biblical texts that relate to this narrative will be analysed, as well as its impact on Christian beliefs. This Garden of Eden text is foundational, providing archetypes that both consciously and unconsciously inform gender identity in Western and Post-Colonial contexts. You will be shown how this text is interpreted in art and sculpture, and be encouraged to study examples in Rome and across Europe.

In Part 2 we move outside the biblical and Christian worlds to observe how gender has been constructed in a selection of the world's major religious traditions, namely Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism and Islam. These foci will provide a broad global perspective of beliefs and practices.

Important note: At the outset you need to be aware that because this course examines religious beliefs and issues pertaining to gender roles and identities discussions will include sexual and gender expressions, body anatomy, sexual attitudes and behaviors. Exploring and challenging our own assumptions and expectations about both religion and sexual identity may produce a certain level of discomfort. The classroom should be a safe space where consideration of each student's individual expression is paramount for learning. Students' individual opinions and feelings are to be fostered, protected, and respected. Any personal opinion or experience shared within the class must and will remain within the class.

Learning Outcomes

Students who successfully complete this course will have the ability to:

- Apply their research skills to construct a well-informed argument in writing and orally
- Research and evaluate secondary sources in relation to primary texts
- Understand diversities and similarities in gender roles across major world religions
- Identify and explain key issues in gender studies and religion from an historical and global perspective
- Synthesize information from a variety of academic disciplines as it relates to the impact of religion on women and men's lives around the world
- Provide examples, both historical and contemporary, of the impact that gender construction and expectations in religious contexts can have on social, cultural, political, and economic conditions

Required Texts/Materials

All required readings are posted on SAKAI, to be read by all students in preparation for each class. The recommended volume for use throughout the course is: Anderson, Leona M. and Dickey Young, Pamela (eds) Women and Religious Traditions, Oxford University Press. **Copies are available from the campus bookshop**

Assessment Components

Worksheets, participation and presentation	25%
Midterm	25%
Final Paper	25% (annotated plan 5%, paper 20%)
Final Exam	25%

Worksheets, participation and presentation

Each week you will be given a **worksheet** to complete. This will include questions based on the reading/s for that week posted on SAKAI. These worksheets will form the basis for the discussion in groups. You can revise your answers/comments on your sheet in the light of the lecture and discussion. By doing this exercise for the duration of the course you will be compiling your learning journal. **Worksheets for weeks 1-6 will be submitted in Week 7, and worksheets for weeks 8-12 in week 13.**

Midterm and Final Exams comprise questions requiring short answers, and an essay question

The **Final Paper** requires you to write an essay (page count: minimum 10 double-spaced), which is submitted in **Week 13**. You should begin to think about a suitable topic at the beginning of the course and start early to collect material. In **Week 7** there'll be a workshop on choosing research questions, and in **Week 8** you submit your typed proposal for the final paper, including the central questions, a plan for research, and a preliminary bibliography. In **Week 9** there'll be one to one consultations to discuss your progress and to ensure there is a viable plan and relevant material for your assignment.

For your **presentation** you will be part of a group of 4/5 students researching and designing a 15 minute talk/PowerPoint on a specific subject relating to gender and religion. You will be assessed on the quality of research and preparation, the class' reception of the presentation, and your individual contribution to the exercise. Groups are invited to liaise with me prior to presenting.

Grading

94-100: A	90-93: A-	87-89: B+	84-86: B	80-83: B-	
77-79: C+	74-76: C	70-73: C-	67-69: D+	60-66: D	59 or lower: F

Grading criteria for Exams, Coursework and Participation: A (90-100) Outstanding, excellent: original articulation of student's understanding of major concepts/ideas; displaying in-depth reading of class material and complex critical insight; few, if any, problems with organization. Present and alert in class. Good listening, taking notes. Frequent, thoughtful contributions to discussion.

B (80-89) Very good: good articulation of student's understanding of major concepts/ideas; displays very good grasp of the reading; perhaps some problems with organization. Present and alert in class. Good listening, taking notes. Contributes often to discussion.

C (70-79) Satisfactory: meets requirements/expectations; displays a basic grasp of the reading; some problems with organization. Present and alert in class. Listens, takes notes. Contributes occasionally to discussion.

D (60-69) Unsatisfactory: does not meet minimal expectations, does not display a clear understanding of the reading and basic concepts; writing may be incoherent or unintelligible. Several absences from class and discussion. Inattentive or disruptive.

F (59 and below) Very unsatisfactory: does not approach minimal expectations. Incomplete or missing work. Does not meet minimal expectations. Numerous absences from class and discussion.

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are unacceptable at the JFRC and will be dealt with in accordance with Loyola University Chicago's guidelines. Please familiarize yourself with Loyola's standards here: http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml. You are responsible to comply with the LUC Student Handbook.

Late or Missed Assignments

Late or missed assignments will not be accepted for grading without the authorization.

Attendance Policy

In accordance with the JFRC mission to promote a higher level of academic rigor, all courses adhere to the following absence policy:

- For all classes meeting once a week, students cannot incur more than one unexcused absence.

Unexcused absences beyond this will result in 1% lowering of the final course grade for every absence after the "approved limit".

Accessibility Accommodations

Students registered with the Student Accessibility Center requiring academic accommodations should contact the Office of the Dean at the John Felice Rome Center, the first week of classes.

Email Communication I will do my best to reply to emails sent during business hours (**Monday to Friday, 9.00 – 18.00**). Emails sent after 18.00 will be considered received the next day. The best way to communicate is directly, during my office hour or by making an appointment.

Computer, Phone & Internet Use in the Classroom Use of phones is always prohibited. Please turn your phones off when in class. Use of laptop computers during class time for note taking is permitted. There may be times when you will be asked to put your laptop away for various exercises/lessons. Use of the internet is not permitted unless specifically directed by the instructor. This includes checking of email and use of instant messengers.

Course Schedule *Full details of the readings can be found below in the bibliography*

WRT refers to Anderson, Leona M. and Dickey Young, Pamela (eds) Women and Religious Traditions, Oxford: Oxford University Press. Copies are available from the campus bookshop

Week One: 09/04 **Introduction to the course and the subject: gender studies and religion**

Worksheet readings: Posey, Lauren, 'Gender', pp.94-96; Pilcher, Jane, Whelehan, Imelda, Key Concepts in Gender Studies, 'Gender' and 'Gendered'.

Part 1: A Walk in the Garden of Eden: Western and Colonial Gendered Foundations

Week Two: 09/11 **Introduction to the biblical account**

Presentation: Is the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden a good or bad thing for humanity? Exploration of the motives and actions of the characters in the narrative.

Worksheet reading: Fewell, Danna Nolan and Gunn, David M. 'Shifting the Blame', Gender, Power and Promise: The Subject of the Bible's First Story, pp.22-38.

(FRIDAY CLASS) Week Three: 09/20 **The Biblical legacy of the Garden of Eden**

Lecture/discussion theme: To what extent do the gender roles constructed in the Garden influence ideas on sexuality?

Worksheet reading: Locke, Kenneth A. 'The Bible on Homosexuality', pp. 125-156.

Week Four: 09/25 **Female and Divine alliances – Biblical examples**

Presentation: The Figure of Judith – How does she present 'an alternative history of our attitudes to sex, politics and power', according to Margarita Stocker (p.23)? Do you agree with Stocker?

Worksheet reading: Bellis, Alice Ogden, Helpmates, Harlots and Heroes, pp.206-223
Text: Judith 8-16.

Week Five: 10/02 **From the Garden of Eden to Augustine of Hippo and Beyond**

Lecture/discussion theme: The doctrine of Original Sin, and its implications for the figures of Eve and Mary, the mother of Jesus, in Christian tradition.

Workshop reading: Freeman, Charles, A New History of Early Christianity, 'The End of Optimism: Augustine and the Consequences of Sin', pp.285-297.

Part 2 Gender and Religion beyond Christianity

Week Six: 10/09 **Final Paper workshop - Midterm Review (submit Worksheets for Weeks 1-6)**
Midterm Exam

Fall Break

Week Seven: 10/23 Islam

Presentation: Discuss how wearing the veil can be interpreted as a sign of the coercion *and* the autonomy of women.

Worksheet reading: Clark, L. 'Women in Islam', pp.214-246 WRT

Week Eight: 10/30 Judaism (Annotated plan of final papers due)

Lecture/discussion: Does male circumcision as the sign of Judaism's covenant with God signify that it is essentially a religion for men?

Worksheet reading: Kuikman, Jakoba, 'Women in Judaism', in WRT, 2 pp. 51-73

Goldstein, Elyse, 'Jewish feminism and "new" Jewish rituals', Canadian Woman Studies; Downsview Vol. 16, Iss. 4, (Fall 1996): 50-52.

Week Nine: 11/06 One to Ones: Final Paper consultations and progress feedback

Week Ten: 11/13 Hinduism

Presentation: Worship of the goddess versus the reality of women's status in Hindu culture

Worksheet reading: Anderson, Leona M., 'Women in Hindu Traditions' pp. 20-36 WRT

Week Eleven: 11/20 Buddhism

Lecture/discussion: '...as far as misogynist discourses go, it (Buddhism) is one of the most flexible and open to multiplicity and contradiction' (Faure, B., 2003, p.3).

Worksheet reading: Halafoff, Anna and Rajkopal, Praveena, 'Sakyadhita International: Gender Equity in Ultramodern Buddhism'.

Week Twelve: 11/27 Feminism vs Womanism?

Presentation: What are the main features of womanism? How does womanism critique feminism? What happens to God in The Color Purple?

Worksheet reading: Gillman, L., 'Storytelling as Embodied Knowledge: Womanist Praxis in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*' in Unassimilable Feminisms, pp.95-131

Text: The Color Purple, Alice Walker, New York: Pocket Books, 1985, extract from Weaving the Visions, pp.101-104.

Week Thirteen: 12/04 Course Review

Final Paper Due

Initial Bibliography (all of these texts are on SAKAI)

Introduction

Posey, Lauren, 'Gender', Critical Quarterly, October 2016, Vol.58 (3), pp.94-96

Pilcher, Jane, Whelehan, Imelda, Key Concepts in Gender Studies (SAGE Key Concepts series) 2016, 'Gender' and 'Gendered'

Part 1: A Walk in the Garden of Eden: Western and Colonial Gendered Foundations

Barton, Bernadette, "'Abomination"—Life as a Bible Belt Gay', Journal of Homosexuality, 57:4, (2010), pp.465-484

Bellis, Alice Ogden, Helpmates, Harlots and Heroes: Women's Stories in the Hebrew Bible, Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, pp.206-223

Clines, David J.A., What Does Eve Do To Help? And Other Readerly Questions, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990, pp.25-48

Fewell, Danna Nolan and Gunn, David M. 'Shifting the Blame', Gender, Power and Promise – The Subject of the Bible's First Story, Abingdon Press: Nashville, 1993, pp.22-38 +notes pp.188-189

Freeman, Charles, A New History of Early Christianity, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009

Locke, Kenneth A. 'The Bible on Homosexuality', Journal of Homosexuality, 48:2, (2005), pp. 125-156

Sawyer, Deborah F. 'Gender Strategies in Antiquity: Judith's Performance', in Journal of Feminist Theology 28 (September 2001), pp.9-26

Sawyer, Deborah F., 'Setting the Boundaries', God, Gender and the Bible, Routledge: London and New York, 2002, pp.29-35

Sawyer, Deborah F., 'Resurrecting Eve? Feminist Critique of the Garden of Eden', in A Walk in the Garden: Biblical, Iconographical and Literary Images of Eden, Paul M. Morris and Deborah F. Sawyer eds, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992, pp.273-289

Stocker, Margarita, 'The Gorgeous Gorgon', chapter 2 in Judith Sexual Warrior: Women and Power in Western Culture, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998, pp.3-23

Trible, Phyllis, 'An Unnamed woman: The Extravagance of Violence', Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984, pp.65-91

Warner, Marina, 'Second Eve', Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary, London: Picador, 1985, pp.50-67

Part 2 Gender and Religion beyond Christianity

Áhmadi, Fereshteh, 'Islamic Feminism in Iran: Feminism in a New Islamic Context', Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion, 22.2 (2006), pp. 33-53

Anderson, Leona M. and Dickey Young, Pamela (eds) Women and Religious Traditions, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 3rd edition 2015

Burkhalter Flueckiger, Joyce, 'Vrats: Ritual Vows and Women's Auspiciousness', in, Everyday Hinduism, John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2015

Clark, L. 'Women in Islam', pp.214-246 WRT

Collett, Alice, 'Buddhism and Gender: Refraining and Refocusing the Debate', Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion, 22.2 (2006), pp. 55-84

Cannon, Katie G., Gise, Alison P. 'Womanist Works in Word', Johnson and Angela D. Sims, Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion, Vol. 21, No. 2 (Fall, 2005), pp. 135-146

Gillman, L., 'Storytelling as Embodied Knowledge: Womanist Praxis in Alice Walker's The Color Purple' in Unassimilable Feminisms : Reappraising Feminist, Womanist, and Mestiza Identity Politics, Palgrave Macmillan: US, 2010, chapter 4, pp.95-131

Goldstein, Elyse, 'Jewish feminism and "new" Jewish rituals', Canadian Woman Studies; Downsview Vol. 16, Iss. 4, (Fall 1996): 50-52

Halafoff, Anna and Rajkopal, Praveena, 'Sakyadhita International: Gender Equity in Ultramodern Buddhism', Feminist Theology 2015, Vol. 23(2) 111–127

Neumaier, Eva K., 'Women in the Buddhist Traditions', pp.80-112 WRT

Walker, Alice The Color Purple, New York: Pocket Books, 1985, extract from Plaskow, J. and Christ, Carol P. (eds), Weaving the Visions: New Patterns in Feminist Spirituality, San Francisco: Harper, 1989