

**COLLEGE OF THE HOLY CROSS
DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES**

**RELS 219: WOMEN IN CHRISTIAN HISTORY
Spring 2002**

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Office: Smith 421

Office Hours: M 11:00-11:55; T 2:00-3:00; W 2:00-2:55; and by appointment

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Course Description:

This course will focus on the role of women in the twenty centuries of Christian history: collectively, as part of society and culture; and individually, through an examination of the work of selected historical figures. In addition, this course will include a special section on one important area of theological activity: women and Christian liturgy.

By the end of this course, students should be able to discuss the role of women in Christianity during several major periods of Christian history. They should be able to identify important patterns and individuals among the women writers of these periods, and analyze these primary sources in some detail. In addition, students should be able to articulate the key ideas of one major contemporary theological area in which women are active.

Course Requirements:

- A. Readings: Several groups of readings will be assigned for each class meeting: some are background (secondary sources, like MacHaffie textbook), and others are primary (from primary sources written during the period under discussion, like the material in the MacHaffie reader or in Oden). The background readings are assigned to clarify the primary source selections; you may find some parts more helpful or relevant than others. Try to skim or “sample” the primary source readings until you come to one or two key ideas that interest you in some way (e.g. something you didn’t know before, something you agree/disagree with, something that seems especially striking or unusual). If you find one selection or section uninteresting, move on to another. *Readings assigned for a class must be read before the class meeting.*
- B. Discussion sheets: Students will be asked to hand in short discussion sheets (2 full pages) for each class in preparation for class discussion. These discussion sheets will present what you see to be the one or two key issues or ideas covered in the reading assigned for that class. Focus first on the primary source readings (remember that the introductions to these primary sources may be helpful), then on the background material. The discussion sheets should also include some of your own reflections on why these issues seems to be important. Each discussion sheet should conclude with

a general question for further group discussion in class. These discussion sheets will serve as starting points for class discussion on the seminar topic for that day. There are eleven (11) discussion sheets assigned; the lowest grade will be dropped.

- C. Other Activities: Students will be asked to write one longer reflection paper (5 pages) on *either* the video *Battle for the Minds* *or* an Easter Vigil observation. Further details will be discussed in class.

- D. Final Papers: Each student will be asked to write a substantial analysis of a primary text not already assigned for group discussion (minimum length: 10 pages). A list of suggested selections will be distributed in class. Students **MUST** consult with the professor on their choice of text. Brief students presentations on these papers will take place during the last two classes. Further details will be given in class.

Grade Evaluation:

50% = Discussion sheets (10)
10% = Reflection paper
40% = Final Paper
100% = Final Grade

Class participation will also have an influence on the final grade, especially in the case of borderline grades.

Policies:

Class attendance is expected. More than two unexcused absences may cause serious problems in understanding course material. If at all possible, please call my office and leave a message if you expect to be absent from class (due to illness or other serious reason). In some cases a note from the class dean may be necessary. Essays and papers are due on the day assigned; unexcused late work will receive grading penalties. All assignments are to be typed.

Required (for purchase)Texts:

B. MacHaffie. *Her Story*.
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A. Oden. *In Her Word: Women's Writings in the History of Christian Thought*.
J. Walton. *Feminist Liturgy: A Matter of Justice*.

Recommended (for purchase)Texts:

J. González. *Church History: An Essential Guide*.
M. Procter-Smith. *Women at Worship*.
G. Tavard. *The Thousand Faces of the Virgin Mary*.

Required Readings (on reserve):

Mary Daly, "Personal History: Sin Big," *The New Yorker* (2/26 and 3/04, 1996): 76-84.

Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Women in the Early Christian Movement," in *Womanspirit Rising*, pp. 84-92.

Elizabeth A. Johnson, "Marian Devotion in the Western Church," in *Christian Spirituality* II, pp. 392-414.

"Lexicon [Women and Worship]," *Liturgy Digest* 1 (2/1994): 78-105.

Elaine Pagels, "What Became of God the Mother? Conflicting Images of God in Early Christianity" in *Womanspirit Rising*, pp. 107-119.

Joanne Pierce, "'Green Women' and Blood Pollution: Some Medieval Rituals for the Churching of Women after Childbirth," in *Studia Liturgica* 29 (2/999): 191-215

Serenity Young, ed. *An Anthology of Sacred Texts by and about Women*.

Optional Secondary Material (on reserve):

J. González, *The Story of Christianity*. Vols. 1 and 2. [Under Pierce, RELS 119: History of Christianity 2]

Optional Secondary Material (on the Web):

Medieval:

www.labyrinth.georgetown.edu

www.georgetown.edu/labyrinth

Course Outline:

Class Meeting:

- 1) 1/16 Introduction.
For next class: Discussion sheet (1) on Women in the NT.

- 2) 1/23 Topic: NT Churches: Preachers and Prophets.
Background Reading: MacHaffie, Chs. 1 and 2 (to page 27; have a Bible handy to check scriptural quotes); Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Women in the Early Christian Movement," in *Womanspirit Rising*, pp. 84-92.
Primary reading: Oden, 2 (Thecla).
For next class: Discussion sheet (2) on Women in the Early Church.

- 3) 1/30 Topic: The Early Church: “Gnosticism” and “Orthodoxy.”
Background reading: MacHaffie, Ch. 2 (finish); Elaine Pagels, “What Became of God the Mother? Conflicting Images of God in Early Christianity” in *Womanspirit Rising*, pp. 107-119.
Primary reading: MacHaffie, *Readings*, 13 (*Thunder, Perfect Mind*), 14 (Irenaeus); Oden, 1 (Gospel of Mary), 3 (Perpetua), 6 (Paula); Young, 46 (Tertullian), 57 (Gospel of Thomas).
For next class: Discussion sheet (3) on Mary
- 4) 2/06 Topic: Veneration of Mary
Background reading: Tavard, *The Thousand Faces of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, chs. 1, 2, 4, 6, 10 and 11; Elizabeth A. Johnson, “Marian Devotion in the Western Church,” in *Christian Spirituality II*, pp. 392-414.
Primary reading: TBA
For next class: Discussion sheet (4) on Early Medieval Women: Mystics, Monastics and Mothers
- 5) 2/13 Topic: Early Medieval Women: Mystics, Monastics and Mothers
Background reading:
Primary reading:
For next class: Discussion sheet (5) on Late Medieval Women: Mystics, Mendicants and Witches
- 6) 2/20 Topic: Late Medieval Women: Mystics, Mendicants and Witches
Background reading:
Primary reading:
For next class: Discussion sheet (6) on Protestant and Early American Women
- 7) 2/27 Topic: Protestant and Early American Women
Background reading:
Primary reading:
For next class: Discussion sheet (7) on The Nineteenth Century
- 8) 3/06 **Spring Break: No Class**
- 9) 3/13 Topic: The Nineteenth Century
Background reading: MacHaffie, Chs. 7 and 8.
Primary reading: Oden, 28 (Mother Ann Lee), 31 (Lucretia Mott), 34 (Elizabeth Cady Stanton); Young, *Anthology*, 405-407 (Shakers/Mother Ann Lee), 407-409 (Mary Baker Eddy), 409-411 (Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *Women’s Bible*).
For next class: Discussion sheet (8) on the Twentieth Century.

- 10) 3/20 Topic: The Twentieth Century
 Background reading: MacHaffie, Chs. 9 and 10; Janet Walton, *Feminist Liturgy: A Matter of Justice*, Ch. 1.
 Primary reading: Oden, 36 (Georgia Harkness); Mary Daly, "Personal History: Sin Big," (*The New Yorker* 2/26 and 3/04, 1996): 76-84.
 For 4/03: Discussion sheet (9) on Women and Liturgical History: The Churching of Women after Childbirth
- 11) 3/27 ***Optional Class:** Video: *Battle for the Minds*
- 12) 4/03 Topic: Women and Liturgical History: The Churching of Women after
 - Childbirth
 Readings: Joanne Pierce, "'Green Women' and Blood Pollution: Some Medieval Rituals for the Churching of Women after Childbirth," in *Studia Liturgica* 29 (2/999): 191-215; other readings TBA.
 For next class: Discussion sheet (10) on Feminist Liturgy
- 13) 4/10 Topic: Feminist Liturgy
 Background Reading: Walton, Chs. 2 and 4; "Lexicon [Women and Worship]," *Liturgy Digest* 1 (2/1994): 78-105.
 Primary Reading: Walton, Ch. 5.
 For next class: Discussion sheet (11) on Beyond Denominational Christianity (Women-Church and Others)
- 14) 4/17 Topic: Beyond Denominational Christianity
 Background Reading: Diann L. Neu, "Women-Church Transforming Liturgy, in *Women at Worship*, pp. 137-162; Wendy Hunter Roberts, "In Her Name: Toward a Feminist Theology of Pagan Ritual," in *Women at Worship*, pp. 137-162.
 Primary Reading: R. Ruether, *Women-Church* (skim rituals); D. Stein, *Casting the Circle* (skim rituals)
- Student presentations begin
- 15) 4/24 Student presentations conclude
- [16] 5/01 Study Week]**

Final Papers Due: Monday, 5/06

NOTE: The above schedule and procedures in this course are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances.