Feminist Interpretations of Scripture

Divinity 3169

Thurs. 9:00-10:50

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Using various reading strategies (historical reconstructions, literary and sociological criticism, hermeneutical and theological appropriation, anthropological models, crosscultural comparison, postmodernist and new historicist interpretation, film theory, art history, liberationist views, etc.), this course explores narrative representations, ancient social roles, and contemporary recuperations of those often viewed as "other": women, ethnic outsiders, slaves, the unmarried, the 'unsaved,' the sexually 'unnatural' (Rom. 1:26), etc. Primary source materials will focus on canonical (Old Testament/TaNaK, OTApocrypha/Deuterocanonical, New Testament) texts, other literatures (Ancient Near Eastern, Pseudepigraphical, Patristic, Rabbinic, Gnostic), and the material culture of antiquity. Specific topics to be addressed include women's power and authority; depictions of sexuality; global interpretive perspectives; Christian feminist anti-Judaism; and the language of marginalization.

The course presupposes no prior work in feminist criticism, women's history, or gender studies. However, it requires basic exposure to the biblical text and exegetical methods.

REQUIREMENTS:

1. One major paper designed for publication in the venue of your choice: denominational journal, professional journal, newsletter, etc. The form and length of the paper may be determined by the forum in which you intend to place it. The final version of your paper is due the last day of class, in class. The paper is worth 30% of your grade.

2. One short take home exercise midway through the semester (see date, below), worth 15% of your grade.
3. A final exercise, scheduled during the final examination time, worth 25% of your grade.

4. One 1-hour conversation with me, scheduled any time after the October break. This (semi-)formal talk will address the primary and secondary source readings--and your assessment of them. This chat is worth another 10% of your grade.

5. Because feminist work is collaborative, you are very strongly encouraged to participate in discussions. Participation- in class, independently with me, on e-mail, etc.- is worth 20% of your grade.

Books:

A. Alice, Bach, Women in the Hebrew Bible: A Reader.
B. Jon Berquist, Reclaiming Her Story.
C. Bemadette Brooten, Love Between Women.
D. Gerald Caron, et al., The Women on the Way with Jesus.
E. Loretta C. Dornisch, Paul and Third World Women Theologians.
F. J. Cheryl Exum, Fragmented Women.
H. Carolyn Osiek and David Balch, Families in the NT World.
I. Gail Corrington Streete, 7he Strange Woman: Power and Sex in the Bible.

Please bring a Bible to class.
Notes:

A. Books available at Cokesbury are also on reserve at the Divinity School Library.

B. Students are welcome to use my personal copies, provided you do so in my office.

C. Students who wish to read the materials in the Hebrew and/or Greek should speak with me about setting up a time.

D. Please do all readings before the class for which they are assigned.

A few general questions:

1. Are the monotheistic vision and dualistic aspect of the creation story inherently bad for women/diversity?

2. Can a community define itself without negating, marginalizing, or demonizing its others (e.g., ethnic others, domestic others [slaves, women, gay people, etc.], divine others [competing deities])?

Schedule:

31 August--Organization
Discussion of syllabus, requirements, what you expect to get out of the class, etc., what "feminist interpretation" is and does; why it matters (or may not).

Test Cases:

3. Genesis 34.
4. 2 Samuel 11

7 September -- Beginnings Readings:

1. Genesis 1-3, 1 Timothy 2.
6. Olivette Genest, "Feminist Theories in the Interpretation of the Bible," in G. Caron et al., Women also Journeyed With Him.

14 September - Patriarchs, Matriarchs, and Tricksters Readings:

b. Carol Meyers, "Women and the Domestic Economy of Early Israel" in Bach.


g. J. Cheryl Exum, "Who's Afraid of 'The Endangered Ancestress'"? in Bach.

h. J. Cheryl Exum, Fragmented Women, 94-169.


j. Jon Berquist, Reclaiming Her Story, 41-76.

21 September - Slavery and Settlement Readings:

A. Exodus 1-15, Joshua 2-6, Judges 1-5.

B. Berquist, Reclaiming Her Story, 77-89.


D. Alice Bach, "With a Song in Her Heart," in Bach.

E. Corrington Streete, Strange Woman, 43-51, 57-62.


28 September -- Violence and Resistance Readings:


2. Book of Judith.


5 October - Reading Week.

12 October - Laws and Restrictions.

Readings:


2. Lev 12, 15-20.

3. Num 5:11-31; 6; 11-12; 25; 27; 30; 36.


5. Romans 1.


7. Corrington Streete, Strange Woman, 32-42.


10. Bernadette Brooten, Love Between Women. (If you have the time, you might wish to view the lecture, on tape, Brooten gave here a few years ago on the topic of her book.)
11. Elizabeth Castelli, "Paul on Women and Gender," in Kraemer and D'Angelo.

19 October - Stephen Moore and Tina Pippin

Readings:


2. Tina Pippin, Chapter 4 in Death and Desire.


7. Catherine Keller, Apocalypse Now and Then, esp. pp. 64-78.


26 October - Bethrothals and Boundaries

Readings:

1. 2 Sam 11-14 (revisiting).

2. Book of Ruth.


2 November - Metaphors

Readings:

1. Hosea (esp. 1-3).


3. Song of Solomon.

4. Berquist, Reclaiming Her Story, 119-140.


9 November - Divinity

Readings:

A. Susan Ackerman, "And the Women Knead Dought': The Worship of the Queen of Heaven in Sixth-Century Judah," in Bach.


D. Susan Ackerman, "The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel," in Bach.


F. Corrington Streete, Strange Woman, 120 39.

16 November - Jesus, the Poor, and the Marginalized


3. Ross Kraemer, "Jewish Women and Women's Judaism(s) at the Beginning of Christianity," in Kraemer and D'Angelo.

4. Mary Rose D'Angelo, "Reconstructing 'Real' Women from Gospel Literature: The Case of Mary Magdalene," in Kraemer and D'Angelo.

5. Amy-Jill Levine, "Women in Q Community(ies) and Traditions," in Kraemer and D'Angelo.


23 November Thanksgiving

30 November The gospel to the "poor and marginalized"

Readings:
1. Matthew 15.
5. Mary Rose D'Angelo, "(Re)presentations of Women in the Gospels," in Kraemer and D'Angelo.

7 December the Paul Problem.

Readings:

A. Background
2. Lynn R. LiDonnici, "Women's Religions and Religious Lives in the GrecoRoman City," in Kraemer and D'Angelo.

B. Texts
4. Margaret Y. MacDonald, "Reading Real Women Through the Undisputed Letters of Paul," in Kraemer and D'Angelo.
5. Margaret Y. MacDonald, "Early Interpreters of Paul on Women and Gender," in Kraemer and D'Angelo.
6. Michel Gourgues, "Who is Misogynist: Paul or Certain Corinthians?" in Caron.
7. Loretta Dornisch, Paul and 7hird World Women Theologians.

14 December - Ministries

Readings:


5. Francine Cardman, "Women, Ministry, and Church Order in Early Christianity," in Kraemer and D'Angelo.


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Final Notes:

A. Please contact me if you are distressed, oppressed, repressed, or depressed about this course; the more I know about your concerns, interests, and needs, the more I can do to meet them.

B. Please pay special attention to "Note A."

Books on reserve:
Susan Ackerman, Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen: Women in Judges and Biblical Israel.

James M. Arlandson, Women, Class and Society in Early Christianity.

Jon Berquist, Reclaiming Her Story.


Bernadette Brooten, Love Between Women.

Gerald Caron, et al., The Women on the Way with Jesus.

Kathleen Corley, Private Women, Public Meals.

Loretta C. Dornisch, Paul and Third World Women Theologians.

J Cheryl Exum, Fragmented Women.

Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 10th anniversary Edition.

E. S. Fiorenza (ed.), Searching the Scriptures, vols. 1, 2.

Ingrid Rosa Kitzberger (ed.), Transformative encounters: Jesus and women re viewed.

Kwok Pui-Lan and Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza (eds.), Women's Sacred Scriptures.


Stephen Moore, God's Gym.

Carol Newsom and Sharon Ringe (eds.), Women's Bible Commentary, exp. ed.

Carolyn Osiek and David Balch, Families in the NT World.

Alicia Susan Ostriker, The Nakedness of the Fathers.

Leo G. Perdue et al., Families in Ancient Israel.

Tina Pippin, Apocalyptic Bodies.

Tina Pippin, Death and Desire.
Luise Schottroff. Lydia's Impatient Sisters.

Yvonne Sherwood, The Prostitute and the Prophet.

Gail Corrington Strete, The Strange Woman; Power and Sex in the Bible.
*There is also a reserve pack with the materials for the Pippin/Moore visit.