

Rel 330 Women and Religion

Spring 2019

Prof. Alice Keefe

Office: 412 CCC

Office hours: Tuesday and Thursday 2:00-3:30 and by appointment

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Students will explore key issues in the study of “women and religion,” a.k.a. “feminist studies in religion.” We will investigate the ways that women have been marginalized and/or denigrated within western religious traditions, and how that society’s gender hierarchies have been supported and mirrored in religious teachings and practice. We will also look at the ways traditionalist women claim their own religious agency within patriarchal contexts, and the strategies by which progressive women are challenging the patriarchal and androcentric dimensions of their religious traditions.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Knowledge. Students applying themselves to this course will be able to

- Explain the terms patriarchy and androcentrism and apply these terms to the analysis of religious traditions.
- Explain how women assert agency in response to the patriarchal and androcentric elements in their religious traditions, either by creating their own religious worlds or by working to transform them.

Skills. Throughout this course, students will practice and hone skills in

- close reading and careful interpretation of written texts.
- written communication, especially the short essay and longer research paper
- information literacy necessary for the production of a strong research paper
- critical thinking about the intersection between issues involving sex and gender and matters of religious practice, God language, interpretation of sacred texts, etc.

Dispositions. Successful students in this course will develop and practice

- the intellectual virtues, including humility, confidence and curiosity about issues relating to religion, sex and gender
- the ability to look at emotionally charged issues (such as gender segregation) from multiple perspectives, and understand opposing points of view
- the ability to bracket or suspend one’s own biases and worldview in order to empathetically understand that which appears foreign or different.

REQUIRED BOOKS ON TEXT RENTAL:

Susan Sered, *Women as Ritual Experts*

Carol Christ and Judith Plaskow, eds., *Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion*

Rita Gross, *Feminism and Religion*

REQUIRED READER FOR PURCHASE: *Rel 330 Reader*

CRITERIA OF ASSESSMENT

Four short essays (@ 8% each)	32%
Research paper (25%) and oral presentation (3%)	28%
Midterm exam	15%
Final exam	15%
Pop Quizzes	5%
Attendance, participation and pop quizzes:	5%

EXPLANATION OF ASSIGNMENTS

4 short essays (8% each). Prompts and due dates will be found on the assignment schedule.

Essays will be graded on the basis of the following criteria:

- Demonstrates careful and close reading of relevant materials
- Demonstrates thoughtful and informed reflection on key issues or questions that emerge from those materials
- Includes appropriate details and quotes from reading materials to support points.
- Is well organized, with a clearly defined paragraph structure, effective introduction and relevant conclusion
- Fulfills instructions in the prompt
- Is free of grammar and spelling errors
- Is approximately 2-3 pages, typed and double spaced
- handed in on time: late essays will lose 3 points per class period late.

Short research paper (25 %): Your topic should focus on a person, a movement, a text, or a question involving religion and sexuality/women/gender issues. You must focus on a topic involving western religions unless you receive permission to do otherwise. Your topic should be narrow enough for successful treatment in a short paper of 5-8 pages.

Research papers will be assessed on the following criteria:

- relevance of research topic to class themes and significance/originality of research project topic and/or argument of paper
- Evidence of sound research methodology (at least six sources drawn from a variety of research media), and use of at least *one key primary source*
- Clearly argued and organized, with clearly articulated paragraph structure, including introduction and concluding paragraphs
- appropriate use of relevant supporting evidence including illustrative quotes and/or specific details from primary sources and/or secondary sources
- use of correct and consistent format in citations and reference list; any standard citation style is acceptable.
- correct grammar and spelling
- typed and double-spaced, **5-8 pages in length.**

Research papers will be due in the 14th week of classes. Late research papers will lose 3 points for every class period late. Papers received after last day of classes (during finals week) will lose 20 points for lateness.

Oral presentation on research project (3 %)

Oral presentations will be assessed on the following criteria:

- clarity of structure of report
- evidence of careful preparation
- appropriate body language and clear speech
- use of appropriate supporting visual aids
- engagement with discussion questions to and from peers
- timing -- reports should be between 3 and 5 minutes in length

Midterm and Final Exams (15 % each). These exams will test comprehension of assigned materials and questions/issues discussed in class.

Pop Quizzes (5%). Occasional pop quizzes will be based on the assigned readings students are supposed to have completed by that class date. ***I will count your best 5 (out of approximately 8) pop quizzes.***

Attendance and active participation (5%):

Regular *attendance* is required, and excessive absences will affect your grade as follows:

Excellent attendance: two or fewer unexcused absences = A in this category

Good attendance: three to five unexcused absences = B in this category

Poor attendance: six to eight unexcused absences = C in this category

Even worse attendance: nine to eleven unexcused absences = D in this category

Unacceptable attendance: more than twelve unexcused absences = F in this category – actual score will be calculated according to following formula -- $x/30*100$ – with x being the number of classes attended.

Active participation requires that you come to class ***having done the assigned reading***, that you have ***a copy of the assigned reading with you*** in class, and that you ***regularly contribute to class discussion***.

Classroom Etiquette:

- Cell phones must be muted and put away. Please ask for special permission to have your phone on your desk in cases where it is urgent that you be available for a call.
 - Laptop use in class is acceptable, though not recommended. (Studies show most students learn more effectively by taking handwritten notes.) If you are using a laptop for taking notes, you must close all social media sites and other sources of distraction.
 - Do your best to get to class on time. However, sometimes circumstances intervene, and it is OK to enter the classroom late. Please come up after class to get credit for attendance.
 - When speaking in class about matters involving religion, be aware of the religious diversity within the class, and strive to ensure that your comments are respectful of difference and contribute to an atmosphere of civil discourse.
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Policy on academic integrity:

Plagiarism and cheating are violations of the codes of honesty and mutual respect that binds us together as a community. The minimum penalty for a violation of academic integrity is a failure (zero) for the assignment. In addition, all infractions will be reported to the university. For more information regarding the university policy on academic misconduct (plagiarism) and disciplinary procedures, please see chapter 14 of the University Handbook, located at this web page link:

<http://www.uwsp.edu/admin/stuaffairs/rights/rightsChap14.pdf>

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal law requiring educational institutions to provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. For more information about UWSP's policies, check here: <http://www.uwsp.edu/stuaffairs/Documents/RightsRespons/ADA/rightsADAPolicyinfo.pdf>

If you have a disability and require classroom and/or exam accommodations, please register with the Disability Services Office and then contact me at the beginning of the course. I am happy to help in any way I can. For more information, please visit the Disability Services Office, located on the 6th floor of the Learning Resource Center (the Library). You can also find more information here:

<http://www4.uwsp.edu/special/disability/>.