

Religious Studies 2B03

Women in the Biblical Tradition

McMaster University, Term I, 2003/2004

Lectures - Wednesdays & Fridays, 12:30-13:20; Chester New Hall #102

Tutorials - [1] Fridays, 11:30-12:20; [2] Fridays, 13:30-14:20; University Hall #112

Course website - <http://www.annettereed.com/RS-2B03/>

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Teaching Assistant - TBA

In this course, we will consider images of women in the Hebrew Bible, New Testament, and related literature from the biblical period ("apocrypha," "pseudepigrapha"), exploring the range of roles that women play within biblical narratives (as wives and mothers; as heroes and villains; as warriors, queens, and prophets), the variety of metaphorical/symbolic uses of femininity in biblical traditions, and legal and ethical precepts related to the status of women in ancient Israel, early Judaism, the Jesus Movement, and early Christianity. We will ask what these ancient, literary representations of women and femininity might tell us about the experiences of "real" women and men in their authors' time, but we will also see how biblical stories about women have been reinterpreted according to the values of different times and cultures, and we will discuss the ways in which biblical traditions about women may have impacted the understanding of gender in Western culture, past and present. The themes of women and gender will simultaneously serve as a focus for a survey of biblical literature and history more broadly, pursued with a special concern for the different social and cultural contexts that shaped the canonical literature of Judaism and Christianity. Accordingly, no previous background in the Hebrew Bible and New Testament is assumed or required.

Course Requirements

- Class attendance & tutorial participation: 10%
- Two short-answer quizzes: 20%
- Two brief papers (3-5 pages): 30%
- Final exam: 40%

Required Books

There are two required books, which are available for purchase at Titles and which have also been placed on reserve at the Mills library:

- Tikva Frymer-Kensy, *Reading the Women of the Bible: A New Interpretation of their Stories* (Schocken Books, 2002).
- Ross Kraemer and Mary Rose D'Angelo, eds., *Women and Christian Origins* (Oxford University Press, 1999).

Other required readings – such as selections from biblical texts and other ancient sources – are accessible from the course website (<http://www.annettereed.com/RS-2B03/>), from which the assigned passages can be read and printed out.

Biblical texts in English translation

Students are not required to purchase a bible for this course, since assigned passages from the Hebrew Bible and New Testament, as well as "apocryphal"/deutero-canonical books and other ancient sources, can be printed from the course website (see URL above). There are also a wide variety of bible translations available on-line for browsing and searching. For this course, students are encouraged to use the following:

- Revised Standard Version (RSV):
<http://www.hti.umich.edu/r/rsv/>
- New Revised Standard Version (NRSV):
<http://www.hope.edu/academic/religion/bandstra/BIBLE/BIBLE.HTM> -
- Jewish Publication Society (JPS) - Hebrew Bible only
<http://www.hareidi.org/bible/index.html>

Students who are interested in further studies in biblical traditions, Judaism, and Christianity may wish to purchase a Study Bible; these handy volumes contain non-denominational English translations (i.e., RSV or NRSV) of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, "apocryphal"/deutero-canonical books, and New Testament, together with scholarly commentary and introductory essays. Copies of the *HarperCollins Study Bible* are available for optional purchase at Titles. The *Oxford Study Bible with Apocrypha* is also recommended. Multiple copies of both books can be found in the library, as well.

Other Resources

A recommended but optional book, which will be available for purchase at Titles and placed on reserve at the library, is

- Carol Meyers, et al, eds., *Women in Scripture: A Dictionary of Named and Unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible, the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, and the New Testament* (Eerdmans, 2000).

Links to electronic resources, together with copies of handouts and other course materials, will be available on the course website at: <http://www.annettereed.com/RS-2B03/resources.html>

Statement on Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty consists of misrepresentation by deception or by other fraudulent means and can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various kinds of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](#), specifically Appendix 3.

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty: (1) Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained. (2) Improper collaboration in group work. (3) Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Schedule of Assignments

Friday, 5 September - **Introduction: What is “The Bible,” and what can we learn from the academic study of biblical women?**

I. WOMEN IN THE HEBREW BIBLE & ANCIENT ISRAEL

Wednesday, 10 Sept. – **Created “in His image”? Females and humankind in the “P” creation account**

*Genesis 1:1-2:4 [Course website]
Frymer-Kensky, pp. xiii-xxvii
(Recommended: Meyers, pp. 1-11)

Friday, 12 Sept. – **Eve and the expulsion from Eden: Females and humankind in the “J” creation account**

*Genesis 2:4-5:5 [Course website]

Wednesday, 17 Sept. – *NO CLASS* (Note, however, the doubled reading assignment for Friday!)

Friday, 19 Sept. – **Barrenness and blessed births: The matriarchs and their handmaids**

*Genesis chs. 12; 15-22; 24; 26-27; 29-30 [Course website]
Frymer-Kensky, pp. 4-23, 91-98, 225-237

Wednesday, 24 Sept. – **The rape of Dinah and the trickery of Tamar**

*Genesis chs. 34 & 38 [Course website]
Frymer-Kensky, pp. 179-198 (recommended: pp. 199-208)

Friday, 26 Sept. – **Egyptian women, Israelite women, and the Exodus**

*Genesis ch. 39 (recommended: skim chs. 37, 39-41 for context) [Course website]
*Exodus 1-2; 15:1-21 [Course website]
Frymer-Kensky, pp. 24-33, 74-77

Wednesday, 1 Oct. – **Ruth, Naomi, and the Davidic kingship**

*Ruth (entire book!) [Course website]
Frymer-Kensky, pp. 238-256 (recommended: pp. 257-282)

Friday, 3 Oct. – **Women warriors, queens, and consorts**

*Judges chs. 4-5, esp. 4:17-23 [Course website]
*1 Kings 21 (see also 1 Kings 16:31; 18; 19; 2 Kings 9) [Course website]
Frymer-Kensky, pp. 45-57, 209-214
QUIZ #1

Wednesday, 8 Oct. – **Wisdom as God's daughter: Feminine imagery in the Wisdom tradition**

*Proverbs 7-9 [Course website]
*Job 28 [Course website]
*Wisdom of Solomon 6 [Course website]

*Wisdom of ben Sira 24 [Course website]
Frymer-Kensky, pp. 283-291

Friday, 10 Oct. – **Babylon as whore, Jerusalem as unfaithful wife: Feminine images of destruction and Exile**

*Isaiah 1:21-23; 3:25-26; 47:5-7; 49:7-26; 54:1-10; 57:3-13; 62:4-5 [Course website]
*Ezekiel 16; 23 [Course website]
*Jeremiah 2-4; 13:20-27 [Course website]
*Lamentations 1 [Course website]
Frymer-Kensky, pp. 333-338

II. WOMEN IN SECOND TEMPLE JUDAISM

Wednesday, 15 Oct. –

Women in Second Temple Judaism and the Graeco-Roman World

*Selections from the writings of Josephus [Course website]
Kraemer and D'Angelo, pp. 13-34, 50-79

Friday, 17 Oct. –

Gender and Jewish identity: Esther, Judith, and Susanna

*Esther (all) [Course website]
*Judith 8:1-16:25 [Course website]
*Susanna (= ch. 13 in Greek version of Daniel) [Course website]

Wednesday, 22 Oct. –

Cain's sister, Joseph's wife, Job's daughters: Women in early Jewish biblical exegesis

*Selections from Jubilees, Testament of Job, and Asenath [Course website]

Friday, 24 Oct. –

Jerusalem as widow once again

*Selections from 4 Ezra and Baruch (3-5) [Course website]
SHORT PAPER #1 DUE

III. WOMEN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT & EARLY CHURCH

Wednesday, 29 Oct. –

From the Jesus Movement and Judaism to the New Testament and Christian Origins

Kraemer and D'Angelo, pp. 35-49, 80-102

Friday, 31 Oct. –

“Old Testament” women in the “New Testament”

*2 Corinthians 11:1-5 [Course website]
*Galatians 4:21-31 (see Romans 4:19; 9:9; Hebrews 11:11; 1 Peter 3:6) [Course website]
*1 Timothy 2:13-14 [Course website]
*Revelation 2:20-23 (see also 17:3-18:24) [Course website]

Wednesday, 5 Nov. & Friday, 7 Nov. –

Paul on men, women, and angels

*Galatians 3, esp. 3:28 [Course website]

*1 Corinthians, esp. 7; 11:2-11; 14:33-36 [Course website]

Kraemer and D'Angelo, pp. 199-235.

Wednesday, 12 Nov. & Friday, 14 Nov. –

Women in the Gospels

*Selections from gospels of Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John [Course website]

Kraemer and D'Angelo, pp. 105-149, 171-195

QUIZ #2 (on Friday, 14 Nov)

Wednesday, 19 Nov. –

Gender, authority, and the struggle over Paul's legacy

*1 Timothy, esp. 2:8-15; 5:3-16 [Course website]

**Acts of Thecla* [Course website]

Kraemer and D'Angelo, pp. 236-253

Friday, 21 Nov. –

Recovering the role(s) of women in the Jesus Movement and early Church

*Book of Acts [Course website]

Kraemer and D'Angelo, pp. 300-329

SHORT PAPER #2 DUE

Wednesday, 26 Nov. –

The Virgin Mary: From the mother of the messiah to mediatrix

* Matthew 12:46-50; 13:53-58 [Course website]

* Luke 1:5-2:52; 8:19-21; 11:27-28 [Course website]

* John 1:1-2:11; 19:25-27 [Course website]

*Protevangelium of James [Course website]

Friday, 28 Nov. –

Concluding discussions & exam review