

Women and the Bible

RLGS 3114

Spring Term 2005; MW 9:00-10:50; Sturm Hall 479

Teacher/Facilitator: Dan Clanton

Office: Sturm Hall 168; Office Hours: 1:00-3:00 on Wednesdays, 10:00-11:00 on Friday;
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Description: This course examines the roles and images of women in Hebrew Bible, Apocryphal, and New Testament texts.

Objectives:

- (1) To familiarize ourselves with primary biblical and apocryphal texts about women.
- (2) To awaken ourselves to the various ways in which views of women's roles, actions, and presence(s) are viewed in these texts.
- (3) To engender critical reflection on and academic study of biblical literature, as well as challenge students to reflect upon the ways in which this literature has impacted modern understandings of women and women's roles.
- (4) To develop your own view(s) of the subject matter through reading primary and secondary sources, in-class discussion, and independent research.

Requirements: This course has 3 basic requirements and a total of two hundred and fifty (250) possible points:

- (1) Regular class attendance and participation are a must, and thus will account for 50 possible points toward your grade. By class participation, I mean both answering questions and making relevant comments in the context of our in-class discussion. **Roll will be taken every class session; if you are not present during the taking of attendance, you will be counted absent unless you speak with me that Session. If you are absent 3 (three) or more classes your grade will be lowered by one letter grade; if you are absent 5 (five) or more classes you will fail the course.**
- (2) Completion of the primary and secondary readings **prior to class** goes hand in hand with class participation, and thus is as important. I also expect you to bring any and all readings to class with you on the days we're scheduled to discuss it.
- (3) You will write two essays that will be 5-7 pages long. Additionally, each student will write a paper proposal for each essay that outlines the essay's thesis, argumentative plan and preliminary sources. Each student is required to meet with me at an agreed-upon time to discuss these proposals.

- (a) Essay One will address a female character or a text about women (decided on in consultation with me) from the Hebrew Bible or Apocrypha. The proposal for Essay One will be due on **April 11th (Session 7)**, and the completed paper will be due on **April 20th (Session 10)**.
- (b) Essay Two will address a female character or a text about women (decided on in consultation with me) from the Apocrypha or New Testament. The proposal for Essay Two will be due on **May 11th (Session 16)**, and the completed paper will be due by noon on **June 1st**.

Formal instructions and sample topics for these papers can be found online on Blackboard. Each essay will be worth 100 possible points toward your final grade.

Additional Course Information

- (1) No incompletes will be given unless the student contacts me well in advance of the end of the quarter. The circumstances must include serious medical problems or other extreme difficulties.
- (2) All requests for special accommodations, e.g., medical, athletic, or learning-related, must be presented to me the first day of class. All such requests must be accompanied by the appropriate paperwork to be considered.
- (3) No absences will be excused except in the cases of (a) an emergent medical situation or severe illness; or (b) a death in the student's immediate family.
- (4) Upon matriculation, all students implicitly agree to abide by the University's Academic Honor Code. Any violations of that code in our class will be taken very seriously. If we find evidence that you've violated the Honor Code, *either intentionally or unintentionally*, you will either (a) receive no credit for the assignment in question; or (b) be expelled from the class and assigned a failing grade for the course. In extreme cases, you may also be reported to the appropriate authorities on campus for further review.

FERPA Information

According to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), also known as the Buckley Amendment, information concerning grades and other student information may only be disseminated if the professor or institution has a signed release from the student in question, or if the student requests the information in person. **Requests for information via telephone or email without the aforementioned release will not be granted.**

Texts: (Numbers 1-3 Required; Numbers 4-5 Recommended)

- (1) André LaCocque. *The Feminine Unconventional: Four Subversive Figures in Israel's Tradition*. Overtures to Biblical Theology Series. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990. (Henceforth abbreviated as LaCocque)
- (2) Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe, eds. *The Women's Bible Commentary*. Expanded Edition, with Apocrypha. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1998. (Henceforth abbreviated as Newsom & Ringe)
- (3) Ross Shepard Kraemer and Mary Rose D'Angelo, eds. *Women & Christian Origins*. New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999. (Henceforth abbreviated as Kraemer & D'Angelo)
- (4) Amy-Jill Levine, ed. *A Feminist Companion to Paul*. Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2004.
- (5) A Bible that contains the Apocrypha. For this class, I've ordered The HarperCollins Annotated Study Bible (NRSV translation).

Schedule

I. Introduction(s)

March 21st (Session 1): Introduction to Course (Syllabus, Readings, Assignments, Responsibilities)

March 23rd (Session 2): Social and Historical Background for Women in the Hebrew Bible

Reading:

(1) LaCocque, Chs. 1-2, "Introduction," and "The Status of Women in the Ancient Near East and in Israel," pp. 1-20.

(2) Carol L. Meyers, "Everyday Life: Women in the Period of the Hebrew Bible," in Newsom & Ringe, pp. 251-259.

II. Women in the Hebrew Bible and Apocrypha

March 28th (Session 3): Ruth, Part One

Primary Reading: Ruth

Secondary Reading:

(1) LaCocque, Ch. 6, "Ruth," pp. 84-116.

(2) Amy-Jill Levine, "Ruth," in Newsom & Ringe, pp. 84-90.

March 30th (Session 4): Ruth, Part Two

Reading:

- (1) Phyllis Trible, "A Human Comedy," in *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 166-199.
- (2) Danna Nolan Fewell and David M. Gunn, "'A Son is Born to Naomi!': Literary Allusions and Interpretation in the Book of Ruth," in *Women in the Hebrew Bible: A Reader* (ed. Alice Bach; New York & London: Routledge, 1999), 233-239.

April 4th (Session 5): Ruth, Part Three

Reading:

- (1) Alta C. van Dyk and Peet J. van Dyk, "HIV/AIDS in Africa: Suffering Women and the Theology of the Book of Ruth," *Old Testament Essays* 15 (2002) 1:209-224.
- (2) Dalila Nayap-Pot, "Life in the Midst of Death: Naomi, Ruth and the Plight of Indigenous Women," in *Vernacular Hermeneutics* (ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 52-65.

April 6th (Session 6): Esther, Part One

Primary Reading: Esther (and Greek Editions)

Secondary Reading:

- (1) LaCocque, Ch. 5, "Esther," pp. 49-83.
- (2) Sidnie Ann White Crawford, "Esther," in Newsom & Ringe, pp. 131-137.
- (3) Adele Reinhartz, "The Greek Book of Esther," in Newsom & Ringe, pp. 286-292.

April 11th (Session 7): Esther, Part Two

Reading:

- (1) Sidnie Ann White, "Esther: A Feminine Model for Jewish Diaspora," in *Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel* (ed. Peggy L. Day; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 161-177.

- (2) Lillian R. Klein, "Honor and Shame in Esther," in *A Feminist Companion to Esther, Judith, and Susanna* (ed. Athalya Brenner; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 149-175.

April 13th (Session 8): Esther, Part Three

Reading:

- (1) Elie Wiesel, "Esther," in *Sages and Dreamers: Portraits and Legends from the Jewish Tradition* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), 133-151.
- (2) Itumeleng J. Mosala, "The Implications of the Text of Esther for African Women's Struggle for Liberation in South Africa," *Semeia* 59 (1992): 129-137.
- (3) Sarojini Nadar, "Gender, Power, Sexuality and Suffering Bodies in the Book of Esther: Reading the Characters of Esther and Vashti for the Purpose of Social Transformation," *Old Testament Essays* 15 (2002) 1:113-130.

April 18th (Session 9): Judith, Part One

Primary Reading: Judith

Secondary Reading:

- (1) LaCocque, Ch. 4, "Judith," pp. 31-48.
- (2) Denise Dombrowski Hopkins, "Judith," in Newsom & Ringe, pp. 279-285.

April 20th (Session 10): Judith, Part Two

Reading:

- (1) Amy-Jill Levine, "Sacrifice and Salvation: Otherness and Domestication in the Book of Judith," in *A Feminist Companion to Esther, Judith, and Susanna* (ed. Athalya Brenner; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 208-223.
- (2) Philip F. Esler, "'By the Hand of a Woman': Culture, Story, and Theology in the Book of Judith," in *Social Scientific Models for Interpreting the Bible: Essays by the Context Group in Honor of Bruce J. Malina* (ed. John J. Pilch; Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2001), 64-101.

April 25th (Session 11): Judith, Part Three

Reading:

- (1) Diane Apostolos-Cappadona, “ ‘The Lord Struck Him Down by the Hand of a Woman’: Images of Judith,” in *Art as Religious Meaning* (eds. Diane Apostolos-Cappadona and Doug Adams; New York: Crossroad, 1987), 81-97.
- (2) Linda Bennett Elder, “Virgins, Viragos, and Virtuo(u)si among Judiths in Opera and Oratorio,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 92 (2001): 91-119.
- (3) Dan W. Clanton, Jr., “Judy in Disguise: D. W. Griffith’s *Judith of Bethulia*,” in *Studies in Jewish Civilization 14: Women and Judaism* (eds. Leonard J. Greenspoon, Ronald A. Simkins, and Jean Axelrad Cahan; Omaha, NE: Creighton University Press, 2003), 119-130.

III. Women in the New Testament

April 27th (Session 12): Social and Historical Context for Women in the New Testament

Readings:

- (1) Amy L. Wordelman, “Everyday Life: Women in the Period of the New Testament,” in Newsom & Ringe, pp. 482-488.
- (2) Ross S. Kraemer, “Jewish Women and Christian Origins: Some Caveats,” and “Jewish Women and Women’s Judaism(s) at the Beginning of Christianity,” in Kraemer & D’Angelo, pp. 35-79.

May 2nd (Session 13): Paul and His Letters, Part One

Primary Readings: Romans 16; 1 Corinthians 5-7, 11.2-16, 14; Galatians

Secondary Readings:

- (1) Jouette M. Bassler, “1 Corinthians,” in Newsom & Ringe, pp. 411-419.
- (2) Carolyn Osiek, “Galatians,” in Newsom & Ringe, pp. 423-427.

May 4th (Session 14): Paul and His Letters, Part Two

Readings:

(1) Margaret Y. MacDonald, "Reading Real Women Through the Undisputed Letters of Paul," in Kraemer & D'Angelo, pp. 199-220.

(2) Elizabeth A. Castelli, "Paul on Women and Gender," in Kraemer & D'Angelo, pp. 221-235.

May 9th (Session 15): Paul and His Letters, Part Three

Readings:

(1) Victor Paul Furnish, "Women in the Church," in *The Moral Teaching of Paul: Selected Issues* (rev. ed.; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1985), 83-114.

(2) David W. Kling, "'One in Christ Jesus': Women's Ministry and Ordination," in *The Bible in History: How the Texts Have Shaped the Times* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 269-308.

May 11th (Session 16): The Gospel of John, Part One

Primary Reading: John

Secondary Reading: Gail R. O'Day, "John," in Newsom & Ringe, pp. 381-393.

May 16th (Session 17): The Gospel of John, Part Two

Reading:

(1) Raymond E. Brown, "Roles of Women in the Fourth Gospel," *Theological Studies* 36 (1975): 688-699.

(2) Mona West, "The Raising of Lazarus: A Lesbian Coming Out Story," in *A Feminist Companion to John, Volume 1* (ed. Amy-Jill Levine; Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2003), 143-158.

May 18th (Session 18): The Gospel of John, Part Three

Reading:

(1) Musa W. Dube, "Reading for Decolonization (John 4:1-42)," *Semeia* 75 (1996): 37-59.

(2) Adele Reinhartz, "A Nice Jewish Girl Reads the Gospel of John," *Semeia* 77 (1997): 177-193.

(3) Jean K. Kim, "A Korean Feminist Reading of John 4:1-42," *Semeia* 78 (1997): 109-119.

IV. Synthesis and Conclusion(s)

May 23rd (Session 19): Mary Magdalene: A Case Study

Primary Reading:

- (1) Mark 15.40-16.8; 16.9-11
- (2) Luke 7.36-8.3; 10.38-42; 24.1-12
- (3) John 7.53-8.11; 11.1-12.8; 19.25b-27; 20.1-18
- (4) *The Gospel of Thomas* 114
- (5) *The Gospel of Philip* 59.6b-11; 63.34-64.10
- (6) *The Gospel of Mary*

Secondary Reading:

- (1) Mary Rose D'Angelo, "Reconstructing 'Real' Women in Gospel Literature: The Case of Mary Magdalene," in Kraemer & D'Angelo, pp. 105-128.
- (2) Susan Haskins, "De Unica Magdalena," and "Companion of the Saviour," in *Mary Magdalen: Myth and Metaphor* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1995), 1-54.

May 25th (Session 20): Conclusion to Course

***** Final Paper due by noon in my office on June 1st *****