
DePaul University

Department of Religious Studies

Syllabus

REL 332: Gender and Family in Early Christianity (cross listed w/HST329)

Dr. J. Albert Harrill Spring, 1998 Section 301 MWF 1:10-2:10

Office: SAC447

Instructor's Office Hours are Mondays 9:30-10:30 a.m. and 2:30-4:00 p.m., Wednesdays 9:30-10:30 a.m., or by appointment if these times are impossible for you. To make an appointment call (773) 325-1283 or send an e-mail message to me at jharrill@condor.depaul.edu, World Wide Web: www.depaul.edu/~jharrill

Course Description.

What were the "family values" of the first Christians? What were their ethics and moral teachings? How did the institution of marriage -- and divorce -- operate in the early church? How did the presence of slaves affect domestic and public affairs? What attitudes did believers hold about their sexuality, body, masculinity or womanhood? Why was ascetic behavior so appealing to many, like Paul? What positions did men hold in congregations? What positions did women hold? Were some women empowered to lead early congregations? Why or why not? This course seeks to answer these intellectually compelling questions using gender as a category of historical analysis. It takes the concept of gender to family and household experience. Yet this course also connects the concept to other social systems of economy, politics and power, such as slavery. Of particular interest is the role of women in early Christian domestic and political structure. The result yields a revealing look at the daily life of the earliest Christians and their appropriation of "pagan" morality and certain family values found in wider Greco-Roman society. After an introductory review of the New Testament writings and of the concepts "family" and "gender," we will go in search of the Greco-Roman family. Topics include housing and city life, education and occupations, family relations and the law. We will then examine early Christian moral teachings in the context of Jewish and Greco-Roman popular morality, with special attention to a comparison of Pauline ethics and "pagan" ethics. We will be understanding the early Christian family as a Greco-Roman family, focusing on slaves and children, marriage and divorce. An examination of ancient gender constructions of masculinity and homosexual behavior is an integral component of this inquiry. We will then investigate the position of women in the early church, and the challenge of modern feminist theology in the modern church. In the last week of class, the instructor will turn the class over to the students, who will give oral presentations of their research papers.

Required Texts: (on order at the DePaul Bookstore and on reserve in the Library)

The HarperCollins Study Bible, ed. Wayne A. Meeks et al.

Suzanne Dixon, The Roman Family

Carolyn Osiek and David Balch, Families in the New Testament World: Households and House Churches

Karen Jo Torjesen, When Women Were Priests: Women's Leadership in the Early Church and the Scandal of Their Subordination in the Rise of Christianity

There is also a COURSE READER of photocopied materials, available for a fee (to cover the photocopy cost only). Purchase from the Religious Studies Office Secretary, SAC 4th Floor.

Requirements:

1. **READINGS.** The schedule on the following pages indicates the required reading assignments. You must read them by the day indicated. Take notes on your reading directly in the margin of your book (including your Bible) or in a separate notebook. I expect you to reflect your preparation in class discussions.
 2. **SHORT ESSAY.** This is to be 3-4 pages, typed (or computer printed with 12-point font) and double-spaced. Do not exceed 4 pages. Due April 22, in class. Be sure to read my essay, "How To Write an Essay," found in the Course Reader.
 3. **RESEARCH PAPER (AND ORAL PRESENTATION).** This is to be 15 pages, plus bibliography (1-2 pages). More on this later. Due June 8, by 5:00 p.m. in my mailbox in the Religious Studies Office. This paper is in lieu of a final examination. Your paper grade will depend not only on the final written draft, but also the oral presentation in class. In the oral presentation, a fellow student will be assigned to give a formal response. You must submit a draft to that student and the instructor one week before your scheduled presentation.
 4. **ATTENDANCE POLICY.** It is a requirement of this course that you attend every class session and that you arrive on time. Three absences for any reason will cost a grade step (e.g., a final grade of B- will be lowered to a C+). Four times tardy equals one absence. A word of warning: You had better save your absences for times when you are truly ill or otherwise incapacitated.
 5. **ACCEPTANCE OF LATE PAPERS.** It is a requirement of this course that you submit written work on time, that is in class the day a paper is due. A paper submitted after the end of class is late. Late papers will result in the loss of a grade step for every school day after the due date (e.g., a paper with the grade of B will become B- if one school day late, C+ if two school days late, and so forth). A medical excuse does not exempt you from your responsibility to submit work on time. Assignments can be turned in at any time before the final deadline. The final, research paper must be submitted before the final examination. If it is not, you will receive the grade F. No incompletes (the grade IN) will be given.
 6. **INTERNET POLICY.** While there is an increasing number of webpages devoted to the Bible and scholarly research, the information is often not reliable or better than what is available in the library book and journal collections. Therefore, you are not to use or cite any source from the Internet unless you have consulted with the instructor. DePaul's plagiarism policy includes presenting as one's own writing or research information simply downloaded from the Internet. On a related issue, E-Mail is not an acceptable option for submitting papers.
 7. **GRADING.** 25% Short Essay 50% Research Paper (and Oral Presentation) 25% Class Preparation and Discussion
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Class Schedule

BRING YOUR BIBLE TO EVERY CLASS An asterisk (*) indicates an assignment found in the COURSE READER.

March 30 I. Introduction and Background: Introduction to the New Testament writings.

April 1 Understanding the concepts of "family" and "gender." Read: *Ehrman, New Testament, pp. 51-78.
*Joan Wallach Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," in idem, Gender and the Politics of History, 28-50.

April 3 The "family values" of Jesus. Read: The Gospel of Mark. Osiek and Balch, Families in the New Testament, pp. 123-55.

April 6 II. In Search of the Greco-Roman family. Read: Dixon, The Roman Family, pp. 1-35.

April 8 Read: Osiek and Balch, Families in the New Testament, pp. 5-47.

April 10 Good Friday -- NO CLASS Read: Osiek and Balch, Families in the New Testament, pp. 48-87.

April 13 Read: Dixon, The Roman Family, pp. 36-60. Osiek and Balch, Families in the New Testament, pp.91-102.

April 15 III. Marriage and Celibacy. Read: 1 Corinthians Osiek and Balch, Families in the New Testament, pp. 103-18.

April 17 Read: Dixon, The Roman Family, 61-97.

April 20 Read: Ephesians, Colossians, 1 Timothy, 1 Peter Osiek and Balch, Families in the New Testament, pp. 118-23.

April 22 SHORT ESSAY DUE IN CLASS. Be sure to read "How To Write an Essay," in course Reader.

April 24 IV. Children, Education, and "Pagan" Moral Values. Read: Dixon, The Roman Family, pp. 98-132.

April 27 Read: Osiek and Balch, Families in the New Testament, pp. 156-73.

April 29 Read: Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 6:9; *Dale Martin, "Arsenokoitês and Malakos: Meanings and Consequences," in Biblical Ethics and Homosexuality, ed. R. Brawley, pp. 117-36. *Bernadette J. Brooten, "Paul's Views on the Nature of Women and Female Homoeroticism," in Immaculate and Powerful, ed. C. Atkinson et al, pp. 61-87.

May 1 VI. Slaves and Family Life. Read: Philemon; 1 Corinthians 7:20-24; Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:22--4:1; 1 Timothy 6:1-2. Osiek and Balch, Families in the New Testament, pp. 174-92.

May 4 Read: Dixon, Roman Family, pp. 133-63.

May 6 Read: Osiek and Balch, Families in the New Testament, pp. 193-222.

May 8 VII. Women and the Challenge of Feminist Theology Read: Torjesen, When Women Were Priests, pp. 1-50.

May 11 Read: Torjesen, When Women Were Priests, pp. 53-109. May 13 Read: Torjesen, When Women Were Priests, pp. 111-76.

May 15 Read: Torjesen, When Women Were Priests, pp. 179-271.

May 18 Read: *Wayne A. Meeks, "The Image of the Androgyne: Some Uses of a Symbol in Earliest

Christianity," *History of Religions* 13 (1974): 165-208.

May 20 Read: *"Acts of Paul and Thecla," in *Silent Voices, Sacred Lives*, ed. Barbara Bowe et al, pp. 288-99. *Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew*, pp.180-200 (with endnotes).

May 22 Read: Schüssler Fiorenza, *Bread Not Stone*, "Introduction" and pp. 1-22.

May 25 Memorial Day --NO CLASS Read: Schüssler Fiorenza, *Bread Not Stone*, pp. 23-42.

May 27 Read: Schüssler Fiorenza, *Bread Not Stone*, pp. 43-92.

May 29 Read: Schüssler Fiorenza, *Bread Not Stone*, pp. 93-149.

June 1 Student oral presentations.

June 3 Student oral presentations.

June 5 Student oral presentations.

June 8 Research Paper Due, 5:00 p.m in the Religious Studies Office.