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Goddess Traditions

Instructor

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Institution

Fordham University
Private, Roman Catholic

Course Level and Type

Upper-level lecture course

Hours of Instruction

3 hours a week /17 weeks

Enrolment and Last Year Taught

Spring 1998: 20 students

Description

This course is designed to emphasize the many different kinds of goddesses that are found in the history of religions. Our sources fall into three basic categories: images, sacred stories and other literary expressions, and secondary scholarship. We will begin by looking at feminine symbolism found in the archeological finds of prehistoric Europe. Then we shall look at goddesses worshiped in numerous cultures of the historical period. Finally, we shall examine the survival of goddess symbolism in the world religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Buddhism.

Requirements

Your grade will be based on four factors: participation (25%); term paper (25%); two written exams (50%).

Participation means being in class on time and prepared. In addition to the required readings, there will be homework assignments, including a written report on a site visit to a temple where goddess worship takes place. Guidelines for the report will be provided. Attendance is required. After 2 unexcused absences, your grade will be affected; 5 absences (unexcused or not) will mean an automatic "F."

Each student will be required to write a term paper on a goddess known from the historical religions. Students will present oral reports on the research in progress.

Exams will include identifications, short-answer questions, and essay questions. Review at the beginning of each class will be designed to help focus on material that will appear in the exams.

Bibliography

Marija Gimbutas. The Language of the Goddess: Unearthing the Hidden Symbols of Western Civilization. HarperSan Francisco: San Francisco, 1995.

Diane Wolkstein and Samuel Noah Kramer. Inanna, Queen of Heaven and Earth: Her Stories and Hymns from Sumer. Harper & Row: New York, 1983.

David R. Kinsley. Hindu Goddesses: Visions of the Divine Feminine in the Hindu Religious Tradition. University of California Press: Berkeley, 1988.

Christine Downing. The Goddess: Mythological Images of the Feminine. Crossroad: New York, 1981.

Campus Course Pak for Goddess Traditions [articles, out-of-print material, etc.]

Calendar

January 14

Goddesses: Feminine Images of the Divine [introductions, including a slide presentation of different kinds of goddesses from all over the world]

FEMININE SYMBOLISM IN PREHISTORIC ART

January 21

Gimbutas, pp. 1-137

January 28

Gimbutas, pp. 138-321

GODDESSES KNOWN FROM HISTORY

February 4

Inanna, Queen of Heaven and Earth

February 11

Hindu Goddesses, pp. 1-94

February 18

Hindu Goddesses, pp. 95-211

February 25

Greek Goddesses

(read all of The Goddess by Downing)

March 4

Midterm Examination

March 11

Readings from Course Pak

- C. J. Bleeker: "Isis and Hathor, Two Ancient Egyptian Goddesses"
- Joseph M. Murphy: "Oshun the Dancer"
- Åke Hultkrantz: "The Religion of the Goddess in North America"

March 18
No Class/Spring Recess

March 25
FIELD TRIP: meet 6:30 at Metropolitan Museum of Art to view numerous goddesses in the Southeast Asian Gallery

April 1
Discussion: site visits and class field trip

April 8
Readings from Course Pak

- Kyoko Motomochi Nkamura: "The Significance of Amaterasu in Japanese Religious History"
- Suzanne Cahill: "Performers and Female Taoist Adepts: Hsi wang Mu as the Patron Deity of Women in Medieval China"

April 15
Term papers due: reports on research.

GODDESS SYMBOLISM IN WORLD RELIGIONS

April 22
Judaism [Course Pak]

- Raphael Patai: "The Goddess Asherah"
- _____ "Astarte-Anath"
- _____ "The Sabbath—Virgin, Bride, Queen, and Goddess"

April 29
Christianity & Buddhism [Course Pak]

- E. Ann Matter: "The Virgin Mary: A Goddess?"
- Diana Paul: "Kuan-Yin: Savior and Savioress in Chinese Pure Land Buddhism"

May 6
Final Examination

Select a location 

http://www.wlu.ca/~wwaar/syllabi/goddess_traditions-moon.html

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