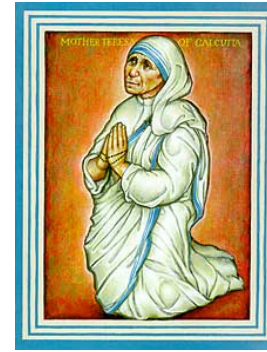


RST 280: Women and Religion

"One word of truth outweighs the whole world."- Russian proverb

Mentor: Dr. Alan Altany [[curriculum vitae](#)]

Email: altany@marshall.edu

Web Site: <http://webpages.marshall.edu/~altany/>

Office: Harris Hall 411

Phone/Voice Mail: 304.696.2702

FAX: 304.696.2703

Sessions: Tuesday/Thursday 12:30 - 1:45, Harris Hall 445

Office Hours : MW 10 - 11, 12 - 2, T/Thr 11 - 12:30, F 10 - 11

Office Email: Student email will be responded to within 24 hours

Texts: *Women and Religion*, Ferguson

Wise Women, Cahill

Pure Heart, Enlightened Mind, O'Halloran

Anthology of Sacred Texts by and about Women, Young

World-wide web sites for both assigned and free reading

Original web page: <http://webpages.marshall.edu/~altany/rst280-0101.htm>

Class size/type: undergrad/discussion; 30 students/2000

Hours of Instruction: 2 1/2 hours/week over 15 weeks

Pedagogical Reflections

- improved reading comprehension, written and oral expression
- gained a basic understanding of the nature, role and meaning of women in religious traditions from ancient times to the present
- evaluated the influence of the shift from a key role of the feminine in religions to very male dominated religions that are the major religions today and what it means for human self-understanding today
- learned what may be unique about the perspectives of women regarding human spirituality
- engaged in active, collaborative, computer enhanced learning
- gained a deeper insight into one's own worldview and perspectives
- become a more imaginative, contemplative and critical thinker
- learned that genuine learning is enjoyable as a lifelong process

[Religious Studies](#) is an academic discipline in which the [phenomenon of religion](#) in human experience is studied in a nonsectarian, unbiased manner using various kinds of historical-critical, analytical, comparative, phenomenological, interdisciplinary methodologies. Discussion should be conducted with honesty, enthusiasm, kindness, critical thought and respect for the worldviews and beliefs of others. This course is not only for learning, but is itself to be a model for how to learn, why to learn, and to learn to love to learn.

The following course explanation, in its totality, is a syllabus that is dynamic and flexible according to the needs of the learners and of the learning process. It is not presented as complete at the beginning of the study, but as an initial trajectory for the study. More specific guidance and resources will be available as needed along the way. You, the learner, have a key voice in the directions our study of world religions take so that our work will be significant for you and for the class as a whole within a learner/student-centered context.

[Course Description](#)

[Course Objectives](#)

[Computing in this Course](#)

[Attendance Policy](#)

[Drop Policy](#)

[Course Evaluation](#)

[Semester Schedule](#)

Course Description

This special topics course takes an historical and comparative look at the role, meaning and self-understanding of women in religious traditions from Paleolithic times to today, with an emphasis upon the modern world. The existence of matrilinear, goddess-focused ancient cultures will be examined in a global context as well as why and how those cultures and spiritual traditions were gradually displaced and replaced by patriarchal cultures and religions which continue to this day to be dominant influences upon the contemporary role and understanding of women in the major religions and in society in general. For example, why is the Ultimate or God, in the western religions in particular, referred to as male or masculine? What are the implications for the evaluation of women in both religion and culture? What does the experience of religious women contribute to an awareness of the sacred and the meaning of being human? What happens when that experience is not integrated into the religious traditions and cultures?

We will read selected writings by women about their experience and analysis of religion and the spiritual quest as it affects and is affected by women. We will also read poetry, scriptural writings and other sources in order to learn about the feminine in religious stories, symbolism, myth, ritual, mysticism, society, past and present and what it all means for a vision of not only being a woman in religion, but for being human today.

The learners in the class will also have the opportunity for one-to-one and email discussion list dialogue with students in a class on "Intercultural Communications" at a college in Sweden.

This course is a reading, discussion and writing oriented course. On-line [writing resources](#) are available. All writings are to be completely the work of the individual or the group doing the writing, thus avoiding all [plagiarism](#). Through the media of telecomputing we will be able to have a semester-long contemplative focus upon the writings, interpretation and evaluation of those writings, and upon our own thinking and thinking about our thinking. The goal is not simply the accumulation of information, but the growing into wisdom with the help of the writers, cultures and religious traditions we will encounter and engage.

[Return to Top](#)

Course Objectives

The goals of this course include the following:

- improve reading comprehension, written and oral expression
- gain a basic understanding of the nature, role and meaning of women in religious traditions from ancient times to the present
- evaluate the influence of the shift from a key role of the feminine in religions to very male dominated

- religions that are the major religions today and what it means for human self-understanding today
- learn what may be unique about the perspectives of women regarding human spirituality
- engage in active, collaborative, computer-enhanced learning
- gain a deeper insight into one's own worldview and perspectives
- become a more imaginative, contemplative and critical thinker
- learn that genuine learning is enjoyable as a lifelong process

[Return to Top](#)

Computing in this Course

Each student needs to have the basic ability to use email that is web-sensitive such as Netscape Messenger or Microsoft Outlook and to be able to find and utilize world-wide-web resources that are available for the study of religion and religions through use of a web browser such as Navigator (4.0 or higher) or Internet Explorer (4 or higher). The course will include sending and receiving email, web site readings and research, an electronic discussion list (with web archive) and electronic publication of student writings, both individual and collaborative.

The educational use of telecomputing will facilitate ongoing asynchronous discussion, submission and revision of student writings, peer review of student writings, collaborative group writings and projects, individual communication with the professor, or among students, and publication of an electronic course journal with student contributions.

Telecomputing tutorials are available as is guidance on how to [engage in respectful communication](#) on the Internet ([netiquette](#)). In using web sources, please refer to [documenting sources from the World Wide Web](#).

The purposes of the using of computer technology in this study are as follows:

- Participation in the archived, asynchronous class discussion list (maillist)
- Anytime communication of questions, comments, problems, etc. with the professor/mentor via individual email
- Engage in a semester-long discussion with other learners in the course via the class discussion list
- Submit individual & collaborative writings electronically to the class list or professor
- Investigate relevant World-Wide Web sites
- Collaborate with other students in the course on projects/writings via email
- Expand opportunities for reflective participation in the study, beyond classroom time & place
- Encourage learners/students to become more central to the learning process and more responsible for their own, and others', learning
- Develop computer skills
- Allow learning to become more enjoyable, valuable, enduring, self-directed, active and expansive beyond just a transfer of information

[Return to](#)

[Top](#)

Attendance Policy

Attendance at every class is expected and necessary to best benefit the act and art of learning through the discussion and writing orientation of this course on a very complex subject. Anyone not willing to be responsible for attending all classes and for fully participating in all discussions is advised not to take this course.

[Return to Top](#)

Drop Policy

The official withdrawal policy is observed where the withdrawal ("W") period for an individual course begins August 28th and ends October 27th.

[Return to Top](#)

Course Evaluation

Discussion List, Swedish Dialogue & Selected Writings	-	20%
Group Project	-	20%

[Course Journal](#)

- 30%

[Final Essay](#)

- 30%

* Voluntary participation in the writing, editing & publishing of issue of the course journal is available

All writings need to be received on time (allowing for computer system outages) for full evaluation.

[Return to Top](#)

[Semester Schedule](#)

"Truth is so obscure in these times, and falsehood so established,
that, unless we love the truth, we cannot know it." - Pascal

[Courses](#) | [Resources](#) | [Altany Home](#) | [RST Department Site](#)