

RELS 185 Women and Religion
Spring 2018

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Office Hours: MWF 11:00-12:00 W 2:00-3:00 and by appointment

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Course Description: In this course students will examine two aspects of "woman" as she has been encountered in human religious history, i.e., through the religious roles of women, and representations of the divine feminine. Attention will be paid to religious and cultural gender constructions and role expectations. These roles include the priestess, the holy virgin, the saint, the martyr and the mystic. Treatment of the divine feminine will focus on images of the goddess through various historical time periods and cultures. The methodology will consist of analysis through historical, comparative and feminist criticism. Both primary and secondary texts will be utilized.

Course Objectives:

The following course objectives echo the learning outcomes established by the RELS department: Students will understand the implications of a text's rhetorical strategy and recognize meanings beyond the author's explicit message. Students will recognize that the development of women's roles in the particular religion under study is linked to specific identities; historical and cultural gender expectations and, issues of power. Students will become aware of their own judgments in their encounters with diverse traditions. These competencies will be assessed through the student's ability to articulate an academic approach to the study of religion in their written work.

This course also satisfies the General Education requirements for a course in the Humanities, which address these two additional Learning Outcomes: 1) Students analyze how ideas are represented, interpreted or valued in various expressions of human culture; 2) Students examine relevant primary source materials as understood by the discipline and interpret the material in writing assignments.

Students will demonstrate successful mastery of the General Education Learning Outcomes #1 and # 2 by writing a well-organized paper that analyzes how ideas of "white Southern Christianity" are represented and valued in the primary text *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* by Harriet Jacobs. Students will also contextualize Jacobs's view within the structure of institutionalized slavery as she experienced it through the particularity of her gender. This paper is worth 25 points.

Required Texts:

The Myth of the Goddess: Evolution of an Image, Anne Baring and Jules Cashford (AB)
Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion, Carol Christ and Judith Plaskow, eds. (WR)

Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Harriet Jacobs

Electronic readings on OAKS

Course Requirements:

- 3 Exams (300 points)
- 4 3-page papers on selected **readings (100 points)

Grading:

Each set of 100 points will be worth 25% of the final grade.

Numerical and letter grades will be based upon the following scale:

	A	100-92	A-	91-89	
B+	88-86	B	85-82	B-	81-79
C+	78-76	C	75-72	C-	71-69
D+	68-66	D	65-62	D-	61-59
F	-58				

Class Schedule and Assignments***Introduction and Methodology***

“What you see depends upon where you stand.” Elisabeth Schussler-Fiorenza

01/08 Introduction and syllabus review

01/10, 01/12 Methodology in the academic study of religion

01/15 No class meeting- MLK Jr. Day

01/17 Methodology Continued

Introduction: Womanspirit Rising (1-16 WR)

****01/19 Paper #1: Self-description and Goals Statement (due in class)**

For this paper, react to these questions: 1) Who are you? 2) How has your life been affected by your gender? (e.g., any advantages, disadvantages or limitations?) 3) Do other demographic variables significantly affect your life (e.g., sexual orientation, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, religiosity, etc.)? 4) What are your reactions to the terms feminism, feminist? Do you describe yourself as one? Why or why not? 5) Do you participate in organized religion? Has your experience included teachings on gender roles, i.e., what men and women are “supposed” to be? 6) What are your goals for the course?

Your paper should be 2-3 pages long, typed, double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font and 1” margins. Grammar, spelling and following directions count.

01/22 Read: *Feminist Theology: Methodology, Sources and Norms* Rosemary Radford-Ruether, from *Sexism and God-Talk* (OAKS)

In the Beginning... The Paleolithic and Neolithic

”Sweet Goddess born of a blinding light and a changing wind,

Now, don't be modest, you know who you are and where you've been.”

Bob Dylan, “Tough Mama,” 1974

01/24 Video: *Goddess Timeline* by Constance Tippett

01/26 *In the Beginning: the Paleolithic Mother Goddess*, Chapter 1 (AB)

01/29 *Paleolithic figurines* PowerPoint

01/31 *The Neolithic Age*- PowerPoint

The Neolithic Great Goddess of Sky, Earth and Waters, Chapter 2 (AB)

02/02 *When God was a Woman* by Merlin Stone (120-130 WR)

The Beginning of the End: The Fall of the Goddess and the Rise of Patriarchy

"She wears an Egyptian ring that sparkles before she speaks." Bob Dylan

02/05, 02/07 *Tiamat of Babylon: The Defeat of the Goddess* Chapter 7 (AB)

02/09 Film *Goddess Remembered* @ nfb.ca

**** 02/12 Paper #2 *The Iron Age: The Great Father God...* Chapter 11 (AB)**

02/14 Images of God: A Critique

What Became of God the Mother? (105-117 WR)

Why Women Need the Goddess by Carol P. Christ (273 WR)

Divine Sophia: PowerPoint

02/16 First Exam

Hidden but Not Forgotten: Divine Images and Women in Hebrew Scripture

"It started long ago in the Garden of Eden, When Adam said to Eve, baby, you're for me. So come on baby let's start today, come on baby let's play The game of love, love, love, love, la la la la la love." Wayne Fontana, "The Game of Love"

02/19 *The Hidden Goddess in the Old Testament* Chapter 12 (AB)

02/21, 02/23 *Genesis 1-3* (OAKS)

and *Eve: The Mother of All The Living* Chapter 13 (AB)

02/26 *Greece: Demeter and Persephone*- PowerPoint

The Jesus Movement and the Early Christian Movement: Maidens, Martyrs and Marys

"Magdalene is trembling, like a washing on a line, trembling and gleaming.

Never before was a man so kind, never so redeeming." Joni Mitchell, Passion Play

02/28 *Miriam of Nazareth*

The Return of the Goddess Chapter 14 (AB)

03/02 *Mary Magdalene*

The Gnostic Gospels

The Gospel of Mary Magdalene (OAKS)

03/05 *Subverting Slander: The Iconography of Mary Magdalene* PowerPoint

03/07 *Women in the Early Christian Movement* (84-92 WR)

03/09 *Women's Religions and Religious Lives in the Greco-Roman City* (OAKS)

Women in Early Christianity- PowerPoint

****03/12 Paper #3** *Violence Against Women in the Historical Christian West and in North American Secular Culture: The Visual and Textual Evidence*, Margaret R. Miles (OAKS)

03/14 Discussion on Miles essay continued

03/16 Second Exam

03/19-03/23 Spring Break

Medieval Christendom: Mystics, Saints and Witches

Raven hair and ruby lips sparks fly from her finger tips

Echoed voices in the night she's a restless spirit on an endless flight.

Wooo hooo witchy woman see how high she flies. The Eagles, Witchy Woman, 1972

03/26 Selections from *The Malleus Maleficarum* (OAKS)

Witchcraft and Women's Culture (259-268 WR)

03/28 Film: *The Burning Times* @ nfb.ca

03/30 *The Christian Past* (93-105 WR)

Medieval Women Religious- PowerPoint

04/02 *Feminist Spirituality, Christian Identity and Catholic Vision*, Elisabeth Schussler-Fiorenza, 136-147 (WR)

04/04 *Sacred Space and Profane Bodies* – PowerPoint and Paper Presentation

04/06 Video: *The Apple Thief*

Ain't I a Woman?-Abolitionists and the "First Wave" of the U.S. Feminist Movement

"But I ask no favors for my sex. I surrender not our claim to equality. All I ask of our brethren is that they will take their feet from off our necks and permit us to stand upright on that ground which god had designed for us to occupy."

Sarah Grimke, 19th century abolitionist and feminist

04/09 *Ain't I a Woman?*

Abolitionist Feminists, Rosemary Ruether (OAKS)

04/11 *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*

****04/13 Paper #4 on *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl***

04/16 *The Feminist Thought of S. Grimke, SMG Manuscript (OAKS)*

04/18, 04/20 Film: *Not for Ourselves Alone: The Story of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony*, by Ken Burns, Films on Demand

04/23 Last Day of Class

Third Exam: Wednesday 04/25 @ 12:00

** This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.

Additional Course Notes

Attendance Policy

Class attendance is vital to your success in this course, as well as to your ability to synthesize the reading material, engage in the public discourse of issues involved in the study of this complex topic and generally, to the overall satisfactory completion of course requirements. **Therefore, be advised that five absences will be allowed. Six or more absences may result in a lower final grade but MAY be excused with proper medical documentation. Eight absences will result in your being dropped from the class, which will earn you an F for the course.** Please note that a memo from CofC Health Services does NOT *automatically* qualify as an 'excused absence.' Final determination of an excused absence always lies with the instructor.

SNAP If you have a disability that qualifies you for academic accommodation, please present a letter from the Center for Disability Services at the beginning of the semester. For more information regarding accommodation and the SNAP program, see: <http://www.cofc.edu/~cds/index.htm>.

Honor Code Lying, cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism are violations of our Honor Code that, when identified, are investigated. Each incident will be examined to determine the degree of deception involved. Incidents where the instructor determines the student's actions are related more to a misunderstanding will be handled by the instructor. A written intervention designed to help prevent the student from repeating the error will be given to the student. The intervention, submitted by form and signed both by the instructor and the student, will be forwarded to the Dean of Students and placed in the student's file.

Cases of suspected academic dishonesty will be reported directly by the instructor and/or others having knowledge of the incident to the Dean of Students. A student found responsible by the Honor Board for academic dishonesty will receive a XF in the course, indicating failure of the course due to academic dishonesty. This grade will appear on the student's transcript for two years after which the student may petition for the X to be expunged. The F is permanent. The student may also be placed on disciplinary probation, suspended (temporary removal) or expelled (permanent removal) from the College by the Honor Board.

Students should be aware that unauthorized collaboration--working together without permission--is a form of cheating. Unless the instructor specifies that students can work together on an

assignment, quiz and/or test, no collaboration during the completion of the assignment is permitted. Other forms of cheating include possessing or using an unauthorized study aid (which could include accessing information via a cell phone or computer), copying from others' exams, fabricating data, and giving unauthorized assistance. Research conducted and/or papers written for other classes cannot be used in whole or in part for any assignment in this class without obtaining prior permission from the instructor.

Students can find the complete Honor Code and all related processes in the *Student Handbook* at <http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/honor-system/studenthandbook/index.php>

Classroom Code of Conduct

—Selections taken from the Student Handbook, published by the President's Advisory Committee in cooperation with the Office of the President.

Your professor expects that you as a student:

1. Will be attentive and courteous during class.
2. Will complete the assigned work according to the course schedule.
3. Do not cut classes, come in late, or leave early. If you ever are late for class, enter in complete silence and do not walk between the class and the professor. Never leave during class unless you absolutely must. Leaving for a short break and then returning is not acceptable. The professor is not a TV set, but is a person addressing the class, and it is rude to leave when someone is addressing you.
- 4. Turn off cell phones, pagers, and all other electronic devices. Should you need to leave the classroom during an exam, you will be required to leave your cell phone with the Instructor.**
5. Visible and noisy signs of restlessness are rude as well as disruptive to others. If you cannot sit still or stay awake, you should not be taking a college class. Do not begin packing your book bag or otherwise indicate that you think it is time for class to come to an end; wait for the professor to dismiss class. If the class period has ended but the professor has not finished and you cannot stay any longer, leave in complete silence.