

RELIGIOUS STUDIES 258.01 – SPRING TERM, 2006
WOMEN IN WORLD RELIGIONS

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Office hours: MWF 10:10-10:50;
Tu Th 2:00-3:00
and by appt.

Course description, purpose, and method:

The course is an introduction to the religious beliefs, practices, and expressions of the major and some of the tribal religious traditions of the world, as they apply particularly to women. The methodology of the course is phenomenological: that is, insofar as possible, we will examine these traditions and the place of women within them “as they appear.” To this end, we will use first-person narratives extensively, as we listen to what women themselves reveal about the meaning of their own traditions for them, or how men have described the place of women within a religious tradition. The purpose of the course is twofold: first, to make the “unfamiliar familiar” by outlining religious traditions that may be unfamiliar to or misunderstood by most; second, to make the “familiar unfamiliar” by looking at religious traditions familiar to most “from the outside.” There will be some preliminary outlining of each religious tradition in lecture form at the beginning of each topical section; then our discussions will focus upon the readings assigned, the films viewed, or the presentations made.

Some necessary words of caution: the phenomenological perspective of the course requires that we attempt, *as far as we are able*, to suspend our own value judgments about the religious lives and beliefs of others, and in the process to become aware of how “others” see us. Thus we move from ignorance to appreciation and beyond mere toleration to respect. At the same time, this course will try to avoid a kind of “cheap essentialism,” in which all religions are “essentially the same” or a “cheap relativism,” in which all religious practices at all times are equally above criticism. These are particularly to be avoided when we raise the issue of gender. All of us need to be aware that this course has a built-in bias, one that results from the belief that gender plays a significant role in religion as a part of culture, that women’s roles in religion have not been adequately treated in most studies of world religions, and that many religious traditions have been and continue to be repressive of women’s perspectives. That being said, we must also be on our guard against redressing this imbalance by claiming a perpetual victim stance or bashing a perceived “enemy.”

Required Texts:

Falk, Nancy Auer and Rita M. Gross. *Unspoken Worlds: Women’s Religious Lives*. 3rd ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2001. **This edition only!**

Her Voice, Her Faith: Women Speak on World Religions. Edited by Arvind Sharma and Katherine K. Young. Westview Press, 2003.

Young, Serinity, ed. *An Anthology of Sacred Texts by and about Women*. New York: Crossroad, 1993.

Course Requirements:

1. Preparation and participation. You are expected to come to class prepared with the day’s assigned reading and to participate actively in class discussions. *There is a good deal of reading required for this course, so please keep up with your assignments!* For each day’s reading (i.e., not every reading for the day) come to class with one 3 X card that focuses on one of the following questions: 1) What was most intriguing to me about this reading/tradition/practice (may be several items)? 2) What was most difficult for me to understand, puzzling or shocking about this reading? 3) What roles do women play or what are their practices? (Are they subordinate, complementary, superior or exclusive to those of men?) These questions will form the basis for our in-class discussions and will also help you with:

2. Six (6) two-to-three page “reflection papers” on each religious tradition. These papers, submitted on the dates indicated on the calendar, will be a summary of your reactions to the various religious traditions presented, according to the way in which you answered the questions above. **Parts 1 & 2 constitute 30% of the total grade.**

3. Five (5) in-class tests (objective and essay). **20% of the total grade.**

4. One (1) final comprehensive examination, scheduled for Monday, May 1, at 5:30 p.m.. **15% of the total grade.**

5. One (1) short paper (descriptive essay, about 3-4 pages) describing your own religious tradition or practices or one most familiar to you. **15% of the total grade.**

6. One (1) longer paper (research, about 4-6 pages) on a topic related to a religious tradition that is unfamiliar to you. **20% of the total grade.**

Note: All six elements of the course MUST be completed to receive a grade. Tests must be taken as scheduled. LATE PAPERS WILL RECEIVE A GRADE 1/3 LOWER FOR EACH DAY OR PART OF A DAY THEY ARE LATE.

Determination of Final Grade:

The percentages of graded work are noted as above. The range of grades is as follows:

A (93-100), A- (90-93), B+ (87-89), B (83-86), B- (80-82), C+ (77-79), C (73-76), C- (70-72), D+ (67-69), D (63-66), D- (60-62), F (below 60).

Please note: Grades are not the result of a negotiation process between you and me. A grade will be re-examined *only if there is substantial evidence that it was wrongly calculated.* Scholars are not “given” grades; they earn them.

Honor Code:

All work for this course is to be pledged according to the Rhodes Honor Code. “Plagiarism” is a violation of the Honor Code and defined under Article III, Section C of the Code in your handbook. This definition also applies to *any material taken from the Internet.* As supporters of the Honor Code, we are all bound to report any and all cases of cheating or plagiarism as well as to refrain from them ourselves.

The following “Inclusive Language Policy Statement” is in effect in all Religious Studies classes:

In accordance with the editorial policy and practice of the majority of publications in our field, and consistent with the policy of official Rhodes publications, the department of Religious Studies will require students in their written work to avoid the use of the term “man” (including also “men,” “mankind,” “family of man,” “brotherhood,” and the compounds of “chairman,” “clergyman,” etc.) as a generic term, and to use inclusive terms (e.g., “human being,” “human,” “humanity,” “humankind,” “people,” “minister,” etc.) to designate both individuals and groups. [This applies to humans only and not to the deity.]

Consistent with this policy, the pronoun “he” is not regarded as generic. Sound policy is to use appropriate pronouns when the antecedent is known. The MLA Handbook is recommended as a guide to good inclusive style for both editors and authors.

Quotations are of course to represent the original exactly. Translations are to reflect as precisely as possible the translator's understanding of the original text with regard to gender.

PLEASE READ ALL OF THE ABOVE INFORMATION BEFORE YOU PURCHASE BOOKS FOR THIS COURSE.

*SCHEDULE OF CLASSES, TOPICS, READINGS**

JANUARY:

Religion and Gender

Wed., Jan. 11: Introduction: Study Religion; Gender Matters

Fri., Jan. 13: **Read:** Young: Introduction, ix-xxviii; Her Voice, Her Faith, "Introduction" by Arvind Sharma and "Introduction" by Katherine K. Young

Women in Indigenous Religions

Mon., Jan. 16: NO CLASS, MLK jr. HOLIDAY OBSERVED

Wed., Jan. 18: Introduction to Shamanism and World-Maintenance Religions; **Read:** Young, "Shamanism," 216-217

Fri., Jan. 20: *Australian:* **Read:** "How Women Lost Sacred Power" (Young, 254-256); "Brother and Sister," Young 256-258; "Menstruation and Childbirth" (#25 in Falk & Gross)

Mon., Jan.23: *Native North American:* **Read:** Eskimo/Inuit: "Sedna, A Sea Goddess" (Young, 226-227); Hopi: "Creation & Spider Woman" (Young, 225); Comanche: "Sanapia" (Young, 232); Zuni: "The Corn Maidens" (Young, 233-235); Sioux/Lakota: "The Sacred Pipe" and "Sioux Ritual for Preparing a Girl for Womanhood" (Young, 228-231); Apache," The Presence of Isanaklesh" (#24 in Falk & Gross)

Wed., Jan.25: *Native Central and South American:* **Read:** Amazonian: "How Women Lost Their Power," (Young, 242); "Three Women's Songs" (Young, 243); Aztec: "Coatlicue," "Instructions to a Daughter," and "A Woman's Poem" (Young, 235-239); "Rosinta, Rats, and the River" (#20 in Falk & Gross); "Women's Religious Space" (#21 in Falk & Gross)

Fri., Jan. 27: **First (short) "tradition" paper due;** discussion.

FEBRUARY:

Mon., Feb. 1: *Native African*: **Read:** Fang: "A Woman's Vision" (Young, 248); !Kung, "A Woman Healer" (Young 248); Bambara, "The Ambivalence of Women's Power" (Young, 251-253); "Julia" (#1 in Falk & Gross); "Alineistoué" (#15 in Falk & Gross)

Women in Transplanted Religions:

Wed., Feb. 3: Film: "Voodoo from the Inside"; **first reflection paper due.**

Fri., Feb. 5: *Afro-Caribbean*: **Read:** Santeria, "Spells" (Young, 432-433); Voodoo, "Mama Lola" (Young, 434-435); "Mama Lola" (#23, Falk & Gross); "Garifuna Women" (Falk & Gross, #10)

Mon., Feb. 6: Possible guest talk, site visit or film. **Read:** "Goddess Spirituality and Wicca," by Wendy Griffin, *Her Voice*.

Wed., Feb. 8: **Second reflection paper due; FIRST TEST**

Women in Hinduism:

Fri., Feb. 10: Introduction to Hindu traditions. Read: "Hinduism," by Vasudha Narayanan, *Her Voice*.

Mon., Feb. 13: **Read:** Young, 266-268; *The Kana Upanishad* (Young, 273); *The Laws of Manu* (Young, 277-279); *The Ramayana* (Young, 286-292); "Radha & Krishna" (Young, 294-296); "The Great Goddess" (Young, 298-305).

Wed., Feb. 15: **Read:** "Mother Guru" (#4 in Falk & Gross); "Golden Handprints" (#7 in Falk & Gross); "Hindu Women's Family" (#8 in Falk & Gross); "The Ladies of Lord Krishna" (#9 in Falk & Gross).

Fri., Feb. 17: **Third reflection paper due; SECOND TEST (Instructor will not be present; at conference)**

Women in Buddhism:

Mon., Feb. 20: Introduction to Buddhist traditions. **Read:** "Buddhism," by Rita M. Gross, *Her Voice*.

Wed., Feb. 22: **Read:** Young, 306-313; Theravada: "Ordination of the First Nuns" (Young, 313-314); Psalms of the Buddhist Nuns" (Young, 315-316); Mahayana: "Can Women Achieve Enlightenment?" (Young, 320); "Kuan Yin" (Young, 321); "A Buddhist Queen" (Young, 322); Tantra: "Wisdom As Feminine" (Young, 326-328); "A Female Disciple" (Young, 335).

Fri., Feb. 24: **Read:** "The Case of the Vanishing Nuns" (#16 in Falk & Gross); "Accomplished Women" (#19 in Falk & Gross).

Mon., Feb. 27: **Fourth reflection paper due; THIRD TEST**

MARCH:

Women in East Asian Traditions: China, Japan, and Korea

Wed., Mar. 1: Introduction to Chinese Religious Traditions: Confucianism. **Read:** “Confucianism,” by Terry Woo, *Her Voice*

Fri., Mar. 3: **Read:** Confucianism: Young, 340; “Creation” (Young, 340-341); From “The Book of Changes” (*I Ching*) (Young, 341-347); From “The Book of Rites (*Li Chi*)” (Young, 349-352): “Pan Chao” (Young, 357-359)

Mon., Mar. 6: Introduction to Chinese Religious Traditions: Taoism. **Read:** “Taoism,” by Eva Wong, *Her Voice*.

Wed., Mar. 8: **Read:** Taoism: From “The *Tao te Ching*” (Young, 379); Chuang Tzu (Young, 381); “Female Sages”(Young, 385-391); Hso Hsien Ku” (Young 394-395)

Fri., Mar. 10: Introduction to Japanese and Korean Religious Traditions

SPRING BREAK

Mon., Mar. 20: **Read:** Native: China: The *Ch’u Tz’u* (Young, 217-218); “Harmonizing Family & Cosmos” (#6 in Falk & Gross); Korea: “Yongsu’s Mother” (Young, 218-219); “Possession Sickness” (#5 in Falk & Gross); Japan: Shinto (Young, 219-225); “No Women’s Liberation” (#14 in Falk & Gross).

Wed., Mar. 22: **Fifth reflection paper due; FOURTH TEST**

Women in “Religions of the Book”: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam

Fri., Mar. 24: Film: “Women Serving Religion”

Women in Judaism:

Mon., Mar. 27: Introduction to Judaism; **Read:** Young, 1-2; “Judaism” by Susannah Heschel, *Her Voice*.

Wed., Mar. 29: **Read:** “Biblical Period” (Young, 1-20); including “Lilith and Eve in the Later Tradition” (Young, 5-6); Song of Songs (Song of Solomon), NOAB; From the *Mishnah* (Young, 22-24); “Beruriah” (Young, 25)

Fri., Mar. 31: **Read:** “Mystical Writings” (Young, 28-31); “Sara Copia Sullam of Venice” (Young, 32-33); “Glückel of Hameln” (Young, 34-35); “Folktales” (Young, 35-39); “Tradition and Innovation” (#18 in Falk & Gross)

APRIL:

Mon., Apr. 3: **FIFTH TEST**

Women in Christianity:

Wed., Apr. 5: Introduction to Christianity; **Read:** Young, 41-43; “Christianity,” by Mary Gerhart, *Her Voice*.

Fri., Apr. 7: NO CLASS: INSTRUCTOR AT CONFERENCE

Mon., Apr. 10: **Read:** 1 Corinthians 7 & 11” (Young, 44); “The Gospel of Mary” (Young, 55-56); “The Martyrdom of Perpetua” (Young, 46-47); “Egeria’s Pilgrimage” (Young, 51-52); “Ordination of a Deaconess” (Young, 60); “The *Akathistos*” (Young, 61)

Wed., Apr. 12: **Read:** Hildegard of Bingen (Young, 64-65); “Excerpts from the *Malleus Maleficarum* (Young, 79-80); “Argula von Grumbach” (Young, 88).

Fri., Apr. 14: NO CLASS; EASTER RECESS

Mon., Apr. 17: **Read:** “Dissenting Christian Movements” (Young, 403-410); “Bones of Contention” (#17 in Falk & Gross); “When Christ Is a Woman” (#22 in Falk & Gross); “The Catholic Earth Mother” (#2 in Falk & Gross); “Religious Responsibility” (#3 in Falk & Gross)

Women in Islam:

Wed., Apr. 19: Introduction to Islam; Film: “Women in Islam”. **Read:** “Islam,” by Riffat Hassan, *Her Voice*.

Fri., Apr. 21: **Read:** Young, 95-96; “Creation, Adam & Eve” (*Qur’an*); “Eve in Later Tradition” (Young, 96-101); “Rabi’ah” (Young 110-112)

Mon., Apr.24: **Read:** A Shi’ite Women’s Ritual” (Young, 120-121); “The Controversial Vows” (#11 in Falk & Gross); “Women, Saints & Sanctuaries” (#12 in Falk & Gross); “Islam & Tribal Women” (#13 in Falk & Gross)

Wed., Apr. 26: **Sixth reflection paper due.** Possible guest lecture TBA.

Fri., Apr. 28: NO CLASS; Awards & URCAS. **Second (longer) “tradition” paper due.**

****Please note that the dates on this schedule are subject to change as our work requires. You will always receive advance notice of any necessary changes.***

Please read the following declaration, sign it, and turn it in on Friday, January 13, 2006, if you intend to remain in the class.

DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE

I have received a copy of the syllabus and requirements for the course, Women in World Religions, and they have been fully explained to me. I understand that by continuing in this course and section I have given my consent to abide by the course structure, requirements and guidelines.

Signature:

January 13, 2006