

RS 304; Fall 2014 WOMEN AND RELIGION
Tu/ Th 11:00AM - 12:15PM
Jerome Richfield 301

Dr. Saba Soomekh
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Office Hours: Tu / Th: 12:30-1:30; SN #233 or by appointment

This course explores the roles of women in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. We will examine the representation of women within religious texts, in the interpretative traditions, in theology, and law. If women were excluded from the official interpretative tradition, how did they gain access to power? We will examine the mystical experience, prayer, ritual, and the domestication of religion. Other issues that will be addressed are attitudes toward sexual practices, the adornment and covering of the body, and women's participation in religious leadership.

Course Requirements

- 1) Class attendance and active participation including two site visits with reflection paper: 20%
- 2) Papers: Final analytical paper; 6-8 pages in length. Proper documentation of sources in footnotes or endnotes is expected: 20%
- 3) 3 Exams: 20%

Recommended Texts

- 1- Course Reader. Available at Northridge Graphics and Printing Services; 9130 B. Reseda Blvd. Northridge, 91325. #818-775-0255.
- 2- K. Kvam et al., *Eve and Adam: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Readings on Genesis and Gender* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1999)
- 3- Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam* (New Haven, Yale Univ. Press, 1992).
- 4- **Recommended:** Translation of the Qur'an. Recommended translation: *The Koran*, trans. Arberry
- 5- **Recommended:** *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha* (New Revised Standard Edition)
 - a. **You can find Biblical and Qur'anic chapters online through Google.**

The course will cover the following Student Learning Objectives:

1. Students will be able to explain and reflect critically on the search for and evidence of the “feminine sacred” and its persistence, meaning, and expression in pre-history and history.
2. Students will be able to demonstrate their basic use of strategies to analyze and interpret the roles, symbols and concepts of and about women in religion in oral and literary cultures.
3. Students will define the concepts of "religion" and "religious" as they particularly apply to women and religion.
4. Students will demonstrate basic familiarity with select histories and contemporary experiences of women and religion in diverse global traditions.
5. Students will be able to analyze, interpret and reflect on the development of feminist theologies and theories in both the Western and Eastern religious traditions and societies.
6. Students will produce essays (following IC guidelines) on women and religion that utilize one or more of the several methodologies introduced in the course and the reading.

GE SLOs:

Arts and Humanities

Goal: Students will understand the rich history and diversity of human knowledge, discourse and achievements of their own and other cultures as they are expressed in the arts, literatures, religions, and philosophy.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students will:

1. Explain and reflect critically upon the human search for meaning, values, discourse and expression in one or more eras/stylistic periods or cultures;
2. Analyze, interpret, and reflect critically upon ideas of value, meaning, discourse and expression from a variety of perspectives from the arts and/or

humanities;

3. Produce work/works of art that communicate to a diverse audience through a demonstrated understanding and fluency of expressive forms;
4. Demonstrate ability to engage and reflect upon their intellectual and creative development within the arts and humanities;
5. Use appropriate critical vocabulary to describe and analyze works of artistic expression, literature, philosophy, or religion and a comprehension of the historical context within which a body of work was created or a tradition emerged;
6. Describe and explain the historical and/or cultural context within which a body of work was created or a tradition emerged.

Information Competence (GE Designation IC)

Goal: Students will progressively develop information competence skills throughout their undergraduate career by developing a basic understanding of information retrieval tools and practices as well as improving their ability to evaluate and synthesize information ethically.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students will:

1. Determine the nature and extent of information needed;
2. Demonstrate effective search strategies for finding information using a variety of sources and methods;
3. Locate, retrieve, and evaluate a variety of relevant information including print and electronic formats.
4. Organize and synthesize information in order to communicate effectively;
5. Explain the legal and ethical dimensions of the use of information.

Format and Resources

Class format will include lectures and discussions, as well as fieldtrips. At times the course will be very reading intensive and at other times, there will be a lighter reading load. I will also lecture on material that is not in the readings, yet you are held accountable for this material and will DEFINITELY see it on exams. I will **NOT** put my lectures on the web nor will I lend them out to students; thus you will find that it is in your best interest to be here for lectures. I do not believe in giving “pop quizzes” yet if it becomes clear that the class has stopped reading the assignments in a

timely fashion, unannounced reading quizzes will become a part of your grade.

Attendance

Your presence is incredibly important in the class, therefore, I **WILL** take attendance and more than **TWO** unexcused absences will affect your grade. Borderline grades will largely be determined by class participation. Perhaps it goes without saying that if you are not here, you cannot participate. If, however, you are sick or have had some form of personal crisis and must miss, I ask that you contact me *prior* to class. If you are late to class, it is **YOUR** responsibility to let me know **AFTER** class so I can give you credit for attendance. If you miss an exam, again, it is your responsibility to let me know ASAP. The only excuse for missing an exam is a valid doctor's note!

Class Participation

When in class, cell phones **Must be off**. I do not want to see anyone text messaging or leaving the class in order to answer the phone or to send a text message. Students who bring their laptops to class may only use them to take notes. E-mailing and/or playing computer games are not acceptable (and yes, I can tell!)

Site trips

You are required to attend two religious sites for the class. You can attend any Mosque, Synagogue or Church that you wish (these are just suggestions). Your attendance at these sites is a part of your participation grade. You may go on your own or with a group from class and each of you are to type a 1 page paper describing the site trip.

Locations:

- Sinai Temple: **Saturday**

10400 Wilshire Blvd, Los Angeles, 90024 - (310) 474-1518 (This is NOT the Sephardic Temple on Wilshire Blvd.).

- Valley Beth Shalom

15739 Ventura Blvd.

Encino, CA 91436

(818) 788-6000

- Islamic Center of Southern California : **Friday,**

434 S Vermont Ave, Los Angeles, 90020 - (213) 382-9200.

Or

- Islamic Center Northridge: **Friday**<http://goicn.com/>
11439 Encino Ave
Granada Hills, CA 91344
(818) 360-3500

Essay Questions

You must write a 6-8 page paper on any subject that we have covered in class. It is up to you to decide what you want to write on, however, you must meet with me and get my approval for the topic.

Your paper will be graded on a 100-point scale as follows:

- (1) Produces a study that is approximately 1,800 words (about 6-8 pages), printed double spaced, in 12 point font, with proper grammar, spelling, and standard one-inch margins all around;
- (2) Is appropriately documented with *endnote/footnotes* following a standard bibliographic format;
- (3) Includes a *bibliography* of sources consulted, which contains at least four to five scholarly print items (meaning university press books, scholarly journal articles, and similar) and which is presented in a standard bibliographic format. On line resources such as Wikipedia is not considered to be a legitimate source.

Please note that papers without any notes or bibliography at all are considered incomplete and will be very seriously downgraded, if still acceptable. You are encouraged to use our text book or reader for your resources. Your paper *must* be submitted by the last day of class, Dec. 16. To combat the inevitable bad disk, faulty printer, or grumpy computer, please complete and print your assignments well in advance so that these technological glitches do not negatively affect your grade. *Late papers will be penalized and may not be accepted.*

If you need extra help to improve you academic performance, I strongly suggest taking advantage of The Learning Resource Center: *The Learning Resource Center (LRC), located in 408 Bayramian Hall, or # 677-2033.*

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you need alternative testing accommodations, please provide forms for me from *The Center on Disabilities, located at 110 Bayramian Hall, #677-2684.*

Academic Integrity Policy

Academic dishonesty, such as cheating or plagiarism, will result in failure on the assignment and may result in failure in the course.

This syllabus represents the intended course of study for the semester, but it may be changed at the discretion of the advisor

RS 304
First Site Visit

Location

Sinai Temple
10400 Wilshire Blvd.
Los Angeles, Ca. 90024
(310) 474-1518

****You should use Mapquest for exact directions****
or

Valley Beth Shalom
15739 Ventura Blvd
Encino, CA 91436
(818) 788-6000

If you go on the site visit with me to Sinai Temple:

When: Saturday,

Time: 10:30-12:30ish

Meeting: We will meet at 10:30 AM in front of the synagogue on the corner of Beverly Glen and Wilshire (big white building). We will have our bags checked by the security guard and then proceed inside to the main sanctuary.

Parking: The best place to park is on the street on Beverly Glen and definitely try to carpool!

Clothing Attire: This is a religious place so please dress appropriately, as you would in any house of worship. Women can wear shirts, pants, skirt (not too short), or a dress. Men do not have to wear a suite but nice slacks and shirt/sweater would be the most appropriate. Please, do not wear jeans, tank tops, flip-flops, revealing clothes etc. When we enter the main sanctuary, the men will have to put on a *kippah* = Jewish skullcap—which will be provided outside the sanctuary.

Attitude: Pay attention to people around you. Where are the women sitting? Where do the men sit? Are there women on the *bimah*? Do the women pray differently than the men? How are the women dressed? You do not have to sing along or partake in the rituals (kissing the Torah, bowing, covering your eyes—if you do that is great and entirely up to you). Please stand when the congregation is told to rise.

When we enter the synagogue, please make sure all cell phones are off!

Mosque Visit

Location: Islamic Center of Southern California

Date: Friday, .

Time: 12:45 –1:45 pm

Parking: On the street. Definitely try to carpool

Clothing Attire: It is **VERY** important that everyone dresses appropriately. Absolutely no T-shirts or tank-tops. Everyone must wear long sleeve shirts and ladies can wear a skirt or pants. The center has politely stressed that the ladies do not wear “belly shirts” or pants that are cut too low, exposing your back-side when sitting. Women should bring a shawl to cover their hair.

Attitude: This is a wonderful opportunity. Take some time to observe the Mosque, the prayers, which direction everyone is facing. Where do the women pray? How are they dressed and how does it display their ethnic origins? You are not required to pray or prostrate, just observe those around you.

Syllabus:

T: Aug. 26

Introduction

Th: Aug. 28

Women and Gender in the Hebrew Creation Myth

- 1- Bible: Gen. 1-5
- 2- *Adam and Eve*: pp 15-40, 431-444

T: Sept. 2

Women and Gender in the Hebrew Bible

- 1- Bible: Ex.: 15, 20, and 21. Numb. 12
 - 2- Reader: Biale, "Sexual Subversion in the Bible," in *Eros and the Jews*, pp. 13-32
- Bible: Ruth; 1 Samuel 18 and 25; 2 Samuel 11-13; Judges 4-5

Th: Sept. 4

Women and Jesus

- 1- Bible: Matt. 26, 28; Mark 6:1, 15:40f, 16:9; Luke 7,8, 10, 24; John 12, 20, 21; Acts. 10, 12, 21:9, 16
- 2- *Eve and Adam*: pp 120-121
- 3- *Women and Gender in Islam*, pp. 25-37

T: Sept. 9

Women in New Testament Communities

- 1- Reader: Constance F. Parvey, "The Theology and Leadership of Women in the New Testament" in *Religion and Sexism*, pp. 117-147.
- 2- Bible: Galatians 3:28; 1 Corinthians 7, 11, and 14:34-37; Romans 1:18-32; 1 Timothy 2; Titus 2; 1 Peter 3:1-7; Ephesians 5.

Th: Sept. 11

Women's Roles in Early Christian Churches

- 1- Reader: Fiorenza, "The Apostleship of Women in Early Christianity," in *Women Priests* pp. 135-140.

T: Sept. 16

Women and Gender in the Qur'an

- 1- Qur'an: 2:222-242; 4: 1-59; 4:127-134; 7: 1-25; 66:11-12; 28:1-25; 19: 16-40; 49:11-18; 33: 4-55; 24:11-26 (skim through)
 - 2- *Women and Gender in Islam*, pp. 41-78
- Adam and Eve*, pp. 413-419; 463-477 (skim through)

Th: Sept. 18

Continue with *Women and the Qur'an* and Review

T: Sept. 23

**** First Exam ****

Th: Sept. 25

Rabbinic Judaism and Women

- 1- Reader: Baskin, "Rabbinic Judaism and the Creation of Women," in *Judaism Since Gender*, pp. 125-130
- Eve and Adam*, pp. 69-100 (skim through)

T: Sept. 30

Women in Traditional Jewish Law

- 1- Reader: Hauptman, "Images of Women in the Talmud," in *Religion and Sexism*, pp. 184-211.
- 2- *Eve and Adam*, pp. 161-164, 216-220

Th: Oct. 2

Women Martyrs in Early Christianity and Asceticism

- 1- Reader: Miles, "Becoming Male," in *Carnal Knowledge*, pp. 53-62
- 2- *Eve and Adam*, pp. 123-128, 131-132

T: Oct. 7

Interpretation of Genesis in Early Christianity

- 1- *Eve and Adam*, pp. 133-147
- 2- Reader: Ausustine
- 3- *Adam and Eve*, pp 147-155

Th: Oct 9

Medieval Islamic Society and Women

- 1- *Women and Gender in Islam*, pp. 79-101
- 2- *Eve and Adam*, pp. 185-199

T: Oct 14

Women in Islamic Law

- 1- *Women and Gender in Islam*, pp. 102-123

Th: Oct 16

****Exam 2****

T: Oct 21

Women and Islamic Mysticism

- 1- Reader: Margaret Smith, "Rabi'a the Mystic and Her Fellow-Saints in Islam," in *Women and World Religions*, pp. 271-292.
- 2- *Eve and Adam*, pp. 199-203

Th: Oct 23

Women and Christian Mysticism

- 1- *Eve and Adam*, pp. 169-172
- 2- Reader: Bynum, "And Women His Humanity: Female Imagery in the Religious Writings of the Later Middle Ages," in *Gender and Religion*, pp. 257-288.

T: Oct 28

Women and Jewish Mysticism

Skim through:

- 1- Reader: *Zohar: The Book of Enlightenment*, pp.153-162
Eve and Adam, pp. 165-169,220-225

Th: Oct 30

Women and Piety: Judaism

Reader: Soomekh, "Iranian Jewish Women: The Domestication of Religion and Pilgrimage as the Center of Religious Life"

T: Nov. 4

Women and Piety: Christianity

Reader: Jeaneete Rodriquez, *Our Lady of Guadalupe: Faith and Empowerment among Mexican-American Women*, pp 31-36, 127-142.

Th: Nov. 6

Islam and the Veil

- 1- *Women and Gender in Islam*, pp. 144-168, 188-248

T: Nov. 11 Campus Closed for Veteran's Day

Th: Nov. 13

Christianity and the Ordination of Women

- 1- *Eve and Adam*, pp. 280-287
- 2- Reader: "The Struggle for the Right to Preach," in *Women and Religion in America*, pp. 193-214, 223-229

T: Nov. 18

Challenges to traditional Catholic Interpretations

- 1- Reader: Catholic “Declaration on the Question of the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood” (Rome, 1976)
- 2- Reader: Fiorenza, “The Twelve,” in *Women Priests*, pp. 114-122

Th: Nov. 20

Challenges to traditional interpretations in Judaism

- 1- *Eve and Adam*, pp. 401-412, 422-430
 - 2- Reader: Rebecca Alpert, *Like Bread on the Seder Plate*, pp. 37-52
- Reader: Rita Gross, “Female God Language in a Jewish Context,” pp. 167-73

T: Nov. 25

Movies and Work on Final Paper

Th: Nov. 27 Campus Closed for Thanksgiving Break

T: Dec. 2

Movies and Work on Final Paper

Th: Dec. 4

Movies and Work on Final Paper

T: Dec. 9

Third Exam

Exam Date: 12/16/2014, Tuesday

Final Paper is Due