**RS 304 Women and ReligionFall 2015**

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**Instructor: Xochitl Alvizo**

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 2:00-4:00pm

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**Required Course Readings**

1. *Women and Religious Traditions, 3rd edition,* eds. Leona M. Anderson Pamela Dickey Young, Oxford University Press, 2015; ISBN-13: 978-0199006199; ISBN-10: 0199006199.
2. *Faithfully Feminist: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Feminists on Why We Stay*, eds. Gina Messina-Dysert, Jennifer Zobair, Amy Levin, White Cloud Press, ISBN-10: 193595248X, ISBN-13: 978-1935952480
3. *Weaving the Visions: New Patterns in Feminist Spirituality*, eds. Judith Plaskow and Carol P. Christ, Harper San Francisco, 1989; ISBN-10: 0060613831, ISBN-13: 978-0060613839.
4. SUPPLEMENTARY: Articles and excerpts of sacred texts will be available on course Moodle.

**Course Description**

Cover for 
Women and Religious Traditions
The course will investigate women's experience, contributions, and participation across the major religious traditions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism and Daoism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam), along with newer religious movements such as Goddess Spirituality, and will do so through three lenses orienting the course: Authority, Experience, Subversion. The course will take an interdisciplinary and critical study approach to the study of religion, using textual analysis, sociological/ethnographic, historical, and autobiographical approaches and will emphasize feminist, womanist, and mujerista methodologies.

Required texts include two anthologies designed to allow students to focus on their own area of interest. Readings will be supplemented with occasional articles, book chapters, and primary sacred texts. Class assignments will emphasize short but close readings of text and will include creative writing projects designed with flexibility so that students may pursue and engage in their particular research interests, both in regard to a particular religious tradition and women's participation within it.

The class is designed to engage students using a variety of practices and activities. Its format is minimally didactic (lecture) with more emphasis placed on such constructivist activities as class discussion, reviewing films/documentary, possible field trips and hands-on activities. Guest visitors who are experts in their field and/or have substantial personal experience with the subject matter will occasionally join us either in class or via Internet-conferencing.

**Learning Outcomes**

**Student Learning Objectives** for Women and Religion RS 304**.** Students will:

1. Be able to think logically and analytically about various religious traditions;
2. Grasp the historical and lived-religions approach (as exemplified in the textbook) to the study of religion;
3. 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;
4. 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;
5. Define the concepts of "religion" and "religious" as they particularly apply to women and religion;
6. Demonstrate basic familiarity with select histories and contemporary experiences of women and religion in diverse global traditions;
7. 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;
8. 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. Become a more proficient and critical reader through careful study and discussion of primary texts and a written survey of selected religions.

This course is an **Information Competence** (IC) course and is available for **General Education, Arts and Humanities**.

**Student Learning Outcomes for RS 304 as an Information Competency Course— 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. **Outcomes**—Students will:

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

**Student Learning Outcomes for 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. **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.

**Assignments**

**Assignments**: Further details and instructions for each assignment can be found on the course Moodle.

**All Assignments DUE on Sundays by 11:55pm.**

* *In-class Reading Responses*—(5) to be completed in class throughout the semester in order to tests your understanding and engagement with the week’s reading.
  + The date for these will not be announced. If you miss class you may miss the *Reading Response* that day and there will be **no make-ups**.
* *Participant Profile*—present and submit a 3-page profile – using the lenses of Authority, Experience, and Subversion – of a woman public figure (living or historical) who actively participates/ed in and made an impact in her religious tradition. Due by **Sep 20**.
* *Blog Post—*a 600-900 word post on a relevant topic to be submitted for consideration to an appropriate blog. Due by **Oct 18.**
* *Annotated Media Bibliography*—on 10 online news articles that relate to women and religion, related to (at least) 5 different religious traditions. Due by **Nov 8**.
* *Term Paper*— 7-8 page research paper on topic of choice – pending professor approval. Due date TBD.
  + *Term Paper Précis –* you will present and submit a précis of your project outlining the topic, identifying the key questions and categories, the thesis, and a preliminary bibliography. Due by **Sep 27**
* *Site Visit—****Extra Credit—****Critical reflection and analysis on a visit to a religious site of a tradition other than one you belong to or have practiced – can be incorporated into the term paper (but will make term paper 9-`10 pages).* *Due by* ***Dec 6.***

**Evaluation**

**Grades**: Each assignment will be calculated on a 100 point scale with the corresponding letter grade as indicated below. Together, all the assignment will make up 100% of the final course grade – with an extra credit option.

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| **Highest** | **Lowest** | | | **Letter** |  | **Assignments** | | **Percentage** | |
| 100.00 % | 94.00 % | | | A |  | In-class Reading Responses (5 at 5% each) | | 25% | |
| 93.99 % | 90.00 % | | | A- |  | Participant Profile (3-page) | | 15% | |
| 89.99 % | 87.00 % | | | B+ |  | Blog Post (600-900 words) | | 10% | |
| 86.99 % | 84.00 % | | | B |  | Annotated Media Bibliography (10 entries, 1% each entry) | | 10% | |
| 83.99 % | 80.00 % | | | B- |  | Term Paper (7-8 pages) | | 30% | |
| 79.99 % |  | | | C+ |  | - Term Paper Précis | | 10% | |
| 76.99 % | 73.00 % | | | C |  | [Site Visit—Extra Credit] | | [10%] | |
| 72.99 % | 70.00 % | | | C- |  | **Total** | | **100 [110]** | |
| 69.99 % | 67.00 % | | | D+ |  |  | |  | |
| 66.99 % | 60.00 % | | | D |  |  | |  | |
| 59.99 % | 0.00 % | F |  |  | | |  | |

**This course is designed** togive you the opportunity to take ownership over your learning and pursue the specific topics that most interest you within the broad category of Women and Religion. I encourage you to engage the course material from your specific context, location, and interests. It is an opportunity for you to think contextually about the subject matter and to bring your insights, questions, and concerns to bear upon it. The assignments are designed for you to think creatively and dialectically about the religions of the world and women’s particular participations, contributions, and subversions.

***Remember—****any evidence of plagiarism will result in a failing grade, certainly for the item plagiarized, but also for the course.*



**Participation**: Appropriate class participation is key to meeting the course objectives; participation will be determined through thoughtful and critical class engagement and timely assignment completion.

Participation is an important part of this class. If the student is not actively participating, this can affect the student’s final grade —sometimes seriously. Appropriate class participation is a key to meeting the course objectives, and it speaks for itself —it is not merely one grade alongside the others with a pre-defined percentage value.

***Be advised that an ‘A’ is not easy to earn—at least not without effort.   
Do your best and strive always to do better.***

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| **Letter** | **Description**  As a general rule of thumb, I note that an earned grade of “A” reflects work of exceptional, faultless quality; an earned grade of “A-” reflects work of superior, almost perfect quality; an earned grade of “B+” reflects work of notable or noteworthy quality; an earned grade of “B” reflects work of solid, sound quality; an earned grade of “B-” reflects work of above average quality; an earned grade of “C+” reflects work of satisfactory quality; an earned grade of “C” reflects work f average quality; and an earned grade of “C-“ reflects work of passable quality. |
| A | excellent in all respects |
| A- | good in all and excellent in most respects |
| B+ | good in all and excellent in a few respects |
| B | good in all respects |
| B- | acceptable in all and good in most respects |
| C+ | acceptable in all and good in a few respects |
| C | acceptable in all respects |
| C- | minimally acceptable |
| D+ | attempted |
| D | not sufficiently attempted |
| F | inadequate |

**Weekly Course Schedule and Submission Tracker**

**NOTE - All Assignments DUE on Sundays by 11:55pm.**

**Class materials** and assignment instructions are all available on Moodle **– don’t wait until the last minute to complete your work. I do not accept late work.**

**Abbreviations:**WRT3 = *Women and Religious Traditions*, 3rd Edition, editors, Leona M. Anderson & Pamela Dickey Young

WTV = *Weaving the Visions*, Judith Plaskow and Carol Christ  
FF = *Faithfully Feminist*, Gina Messina-Dysert, Jennifer Zobair, Amy Levin

O = Other readings as specified, usually included as a pdf in Moodle

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| **WK** | **Week Begins** | **Topic** | **Read: Complete all week’s readings by Tuesday *before* class begins** | **Submit assignments by 11:55pm on the specified Sunday** | **DONE?** |
|  |  | **UNIT ONE: FOUNDATIONS—EXPERIENCE, CONTRIBUTIONS, PARTICIPATION** | | |  |
| **1** | Aug 25 | - Course Introduction - Define ‘women’ & ‘religion’ - Introducing Religious Studies | O: Syllabus – read *carefully*  O: “Insider/Outsider” O: “Troubling the categories” |  |  |
| **2** | Sep 1 | - Why study *Women* and Religion?  - Method and Approaches: feminist, womanist, mujerista | WRT3: Introduction, xi-xv WTV: Introduction, 1-13 WTV: D. Williams, 179-186 WTV: R.R. Ruether, 151-161 O: pfd, Isasi-Diaz, 237-250 O: pdf, bell hooks |  |  |
| **3** | Sep 8 | - Three lenses: Authority, Experience, Subversion | O: pdf, Mary Daly, 105-113 O: pdf, Chung H. K., 19-33 O: pdf, Carol Christ, 97-105 O: blog, X. Alvizo, FiR |  |  |
|  |  | **UNIT TWO: AUTHORITY** | | |  |
| **4** | Sep 15 | - Colonialism and World Religions - Power, Epistemology, Knowledge Production | O: pdf, Chryssides, 185-209 O: pdf, Aquino, 29-46 O: pdf, Chung H.K. 392-394 | DUE by Sep 20 1) Participant Profile |  |
| **5** | Sep 22 | - Start, Stop, Continue  - Women in Indigenous Traditions | WRT3: Chapter 5 WTV: P. Gunn Allen, 22-28 WTV: M. Gimbutas, 63-71 |  |  |
| **6** | Sep 29 | - Women in Chinese Traditions - “Listenings” and Unfamiliar Texts - Précis workshop | WRT3: Chapter 4 WTV: E. Schüssler-Fiorenza 29-38 O: Confucian Classics | DUE by Oct 4 1) Term Paper Précis |  |
|  |  | **UNIT THREE: EXPERIENCE** | | |  |
| **7** | Oct 6 | - Experience as Resource - Personal Narratives - Limits and Critiques | FF: Foreword, Introduction, xi-xviii O: pdf, A. Hidayatullah/T. Zamar, 49-76 FF: E. De la Rosa, 102-108 |  |  |
| **8** | Oct 13 | - Women in Christianity  - Metaphors | WRT3: Chapter 6 FF: essay of choice within the tradition | DUE by Oct 18 1) Blog Post |  |
| **9** | Oct 20 | - Women in Judaism | WRT3: Chapter 2 FF: essay of choice within the tradition |  |  |
| **10** | Oct 27 | - Women in Buddhist Traditions | WRT3: Chapter 3 O: blog post of choice within the tradition (FAR, [Feminismandreligion.com](http://www.feminismandreligion.com)) |  |  |
|  |  | **UNIT FOUR: SUBVERSION** | | |  |
| **11** | Nov 3 | - Revisioning, Reforming, Subverting the tradition - The Power of Anger - Uses of the Erotic | WTV: B.W.Harrison, 214-225 WTV: Audre Lorde, 208-213 FF: Kathryn House, 188-193 O: news, women’s mosque | DUE by Nov 8 1) Annotated Media Bibliography |  |
| **12** | Nov 10 | - Women in Hindu Traditions | WRT3: Chapter 1  O: Broom Goddess, Manushi Swachhnarayani  O: Site visit protocol |  |  |
| **13** | Nov 17 | - Women in Islam | WRT3: Chapter 7 O: Laury Silvers, “Reconstructions” |  |  |
| **14** | Nov 24 | - Women in Western Spirituality Movements | WRT3: Chapter 9 WTV: L. Teish, 87-92 WTV: K. Mc Brown, 226-234 O: FAR, Kate Brunner |  |  |
|  |  | **UNIT FIVE: CLOSING—CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION** | | |  |
| **15** | Dec 1 | - Intercultural Feminisms - Queering Religions | O: pdf, Aquino, 9-25 O: pdf, M. Althaus-Reid O: pdf, “Getting Religion” | DUE by Dec 6 1) **Extra Credit** |  |
| **16** | **Dec 8** | Last day of classes  Review **Term Paper** is due at the beginning of our scheduled exam period, TBD. | | |  |

**Course Policies**

**Late Work—**Since deadlines are stated clearly at the outset, I expect you to meet them. All papers/assignments must be turned in or posted on Moodle by the date and time listed. Extensions or make-up exams will be available only in extreme cases and must be arranged in advance. Otherwise, late work will not be accepted.

**Email Policy—**You may reach me via email, but be sure to review the syllabus first to assure that the information you need isn’t already there. **The Syllabus is Your Friend!** In the subject line please indicate your name, course number (RS 304), and the content of the email. Messages sent over the weekend will be read on Mondays. On weekdays, I will do my best to respond within 48 hours—please plan accordingly.

**Accommodations for Disabilities**—If you have a disability and need accommodations, please register with the Disability Resources and Educational Services (DRES) office or the National Center on Deafness (NCOD). The DRES office is located in Bayramian Hall, room 110 and can be reached at (818) 677-2684. NCOD is located on Bertrand Street in Jeanne Chisholm Hall and can be reached at (818) 677-2611. If you would like to discuss your need for accommodations with me, please contact me to set up an appointment.

**Plagiarism**—Do not plagiarize. The CSUN Religious Studies Department is committed to the highest standards of academic excellence, honesty, and integrity. Students are expected to do their own work. Plagiarism and other forms of cheating will not be tolerated. Anyone caught cheating or helping someone else cheat will receive an F on the assignment and will be subject to disciplinary action such as suspension or expulsion. Find and read CSUN’s Academic Dishonesty policy (just type “academic honesty” in the Search CSUN box and then select the PDF titled “ACADEMIC DISHONESTY.”

**Remember, too, that much of the information posted on the Internet is protected by U.S. copyright laws**. Passing off this information as your own is plagiarism and carries the penalties outlined above.

**Writing Standards**—All papers must be written according to basic scholarly standards appropriate for university level work. Not only does this include proper citation as well as grammar, punctuation, and syntax, but also serious reflection on the topic. There are many sources available to you—the most important is the Writing Program at CSUN’s Learning Resource Center, 3rd floor/East Wing of the Oviatt Library: <http://www.csun.edu/undergraduate-studies/learning-resourcecenter/writing-center-and-freshman-writing-lab>.

**Inclusive Language**—The instructor will conscientiously attempt and all students are encouraged to use inclusive language, images, and metaphors in both their speaking and writing.

In order to cultivate an environment of inclusion and non-discrimination and to ensure clarity in written communication, students should use non-gendered pronouns and nouns when referring to mixed-gender groups (e.g., “humanity” rather than “man” or “mankind”) or when the gender of a subject is unknown.

Scholars agree that in regard to “God” or diety language is insufficient to capture the manifold understandings people hold. Moreover, sacred texts typically use masculine, feminine, and an expanse of metaphors to explain or speak of God. Students are encouraged to avoid using gender-specific pronouns for God or to use a variety of pronouns interchangeably. If the use of gender-specific pronouns is necessary to make an argument about a particular sacred text, that usage should be acknowledged in a footnote.

**Site Visit Guide (for optional extra credit)**

**Observe and participate** during a service at one of the following sites of a religion not your own. *This is not an exhaustive list – you may submit a different site to the professor for approval*.

**Write a 2-page paper; 1-page description and summary of event and 1-page critical response and analysis.** Further instructions on Moodle, but be sure to use the tools you have gained in class to make observations regarding myth, sacred text/sacred stories, sacred space, ritual, images of the sacred/divine, and cultural context.

**Please note:** For all visits, please wear typical ‘church’ clothing (Hindu temple: clothes comfortable to sit on the floor, if need be). For Islamic centers or mosque, women need to wear loose pants or full skirt and bring a large scarf for head covering. Please bring at least one dollar to all sites as an offering.

Hinduism: - Venkateswara Temple, 1600 Las Virgines Canyon Road, Calabasas, Ca.  
 - Hindu Temple Society, 18700 Roscoe Blvd., Northridge, CA  
 - Hindu Temple and Indian Cultural Center, 21213 Devonshire Blvd. Chatsworth, CA

Buddhism: - Hsi Lai Buddhist Temple, 3456 Glenmark Drive, Hacienda Heights, Ca  
 - West Los Angeles Buddhist Church, 2003 Corinth Avenue, West L.A., CA  
 - Wat Thai Temple, Corner of Coldwater Canyon and Roscoe Blvd.

Judaism: - Stephen S. Wise Reform Temple, 15500 Stephen Wise Dr. (Mulholland and 405), Los Angeles  
 - Valley Beth Shalom Temple, 15739 Ventura Blvd, Encino, CA  
 - Sinai Temple, 10400 Wilshire Blvd, West L.A.

Christianity: - Our Lady of Lourdes Church, 18405 Superior Street, Northridge, CA  
 - St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Church, 1324 South Normandie, Los Angeles, CA  
 - Mosaic Church, 7107 Hollywood Blvd, Los Angeles, CA, or another Protestant church, your choice

Islam: - The Islamic Center of Granada Hills, 11439 Encino Ave., corner of Encino and Rinaldi, Granada Hills  
 - The Islamic Center of Southern California, 434 South Vermont Avenue, Los Angeles

Other: - You can propose something to professor for approval – have fun!

**Guidelines for Writing Assignments**

***Students are advised to keep the following details in mind when completing writing assignments –not everything listed applies to all the assignments for this class, but take note, these are important.***

It is expected that students weave together insights gleaned from scholarly sources and their own critical and constructive thoughts in the development of any writing assignment. Furthermore, students should aim to make use of a variety of bibliographic sources.

While there are subjective components in any grading process, most professors are concerned that you become well educated in eight basic qualities of solid academic work – these guidelines reflect this professor’s expectations of your written work:

1. ***The presentation of a clear point of view or central argument – i.e. the thesis you will advance.*** In most of the writing you will do, you are expected to formulate a thesis statement or central point of view and to articulate it early on. Often this is conveyed through an explicit or recognizable thesis statement that provides a sense of your purpose and point of view or argument in the opening material. Think of the thesis as the plot of your written piece – that which keeps your writing moving forward step-by-logical-step toward a predetermined end.

2. ***Demonstration of unity and coherence.*** In well-written text, one thought is connected to another. The words, sentences, and paragraphs are arranged logically and coherently. As a result, the reader moves easily from one point to the next and understands how the individual points relate to the whole.

3. ***The offering of support for assertions and conclusions.*** In any type of writing, but especially in academic writing, it is important to support one’s assertions and conclusions. This can be done through the use of facts, statistics, experiential anecdotes, and direct quotes from credible sources.

4. ***Demonstration of an understanding of the content of texts and resources used—(Reading Comprehension).*** Your essay should provide a fair description and a clear understanding of the texts and resources it makes use of. In other words, grasp the ideas of or the points being made by the authors you use to support your assertions. This will be apparent in your ability to discuss precisely or accurately what an author has written or a speaker has said.

5. ***Appropriate documentation of sources.*** In academic writing, it is important that you cite the sources of any quotations, paraphrases, and facts or ideas that are not common knowledge. The three most commonly used styles are those of the Modern Language Association (MLA); the American Psychological Association (APA); and the Chicago Manual of Style. The MLS and APA styles are similar, in the sense that they use parenthetical references for in-text citations. The Chicago Manual Style uses footnotes at the bottom of the text or endnotes following the text. Because it is used extensively in the field of religious studies, I encourage students to familiarize themselves with the Chicago Manual Style. Find a “quick guide” reference sheet here: <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html>

6. ***Evidence of clear critical thinking that weighs the merits of viewpoints and conclusions.*** This involves and is conveyed through a) the ability to recognize the assumptions that underlie the ideas of authors; b) the ability to assess the strengths and potential limitations of other people’s ideas as well as of your own ideas and conclusions; and c) the willingness to imagine or to remain open to alternative perspectives.

7. ***Creativity that moves beyond reporting someone else’s ideas.*** This suggests that you should work to find your own voice and perspective in your writing. Your creative addition to academic discourse might include questioning, evaluating, or criticizing the ideas of others in a way that is objective and fair. But it can also include the development of your own viewpoint or the viewing of an issue from a unique perspective. The minimal requirement of academic work is correctly reporting what is read or discussed. Excellent work moves beyond repetition of another’s idea to the offering of unique questions, insights, perspectives, or correlations of ideas.

8. ***Sound grammar, spelling, and form.*** Good writing is a product of proofreading and clear communication. A brilliant idea can be lost in a paper that obscures its ideas with careless writing. Keep this in mind: Your readers and listeners should not have to guess what you mean. Help them by writing and speaking well. You can work towards this by making sure a) that generally accepted rules of grammar and syntax are followed; b) that correct words are used to convey the intended meaning; c) that spelling is correct; d) that punctuation (e.g. the placement of commas, apostrophes, and quotation marks), reflects standard usage, and; d) that you define any important terms you are using for your reader – don’t assume your understanding of the term coincides with theirs.

P.S. **Final note on Formatting*.*** Except for creative assignments, such as the *Seminar Handout*, papers should be typed in Microsoft Word format, **double-spaced**, using a standard 12-pt. font (Times New Roman) with 1” margins all around. Use footnotes in [Chicago Manual of Style](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html), and always include a Works Cited/Bibliography page at the end of the paper [<http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html>].

