

Women and Religion
RST 304
Fall 2017
ONLINE

PROFESSOR: R. C. Rodman, PhD
EMAIL: rrodman@csun.edu
OFFICE HOURS: Chat on Canvas Tues. 8-9pm

Is religion bad for women?

Because women are often denied leadership roles in major religions, and because patriarchy so thoroughly grounds many of those traditions, the answer would seem obvious. But is it? In this course, you will read, think, and write about the complex and fascinating intersection of gender and religion. In doing so, you'll also find yourself dealing with related concerns like race, ethnicity, class, politics, privilege. For example, you will read about Latinas, Buddhists, Muslims, and Native women – and as you do, you might find that your initial response to the question about women and religion changes.

How will this class help me in college and beyond?

What you learn to do in this class is to think, read, and write better and more critically – about anything, not just women and religion. Those are transferable skills that you can take with you and use in other college courses. Later, after you graduate, you will find these same skills put you head and shoulders above other job applicants. Plus, this class will sharpen your abilities to discern the complex uses of power. In a multicultural society such as our, this skill highly useful..

How much reading and writing?

Well, this *is* an upper division class, but the demands are very reasonable. Each week you'll have a **reading** assignment – usually essays – or a YouTube video. The vast majority of readings will be posted as PDFs or hyperlinks on Canvas. You are expected to READ EVERYTHING that is assigned. Many of the readings are difficult (this is a 300-level class) so you will find it helpful to print them out so that you can mark up the materials and jot notes in the margins and re-read them with ease. At the end of the class we will read Margaret Atwood's deservedly famous novel *The Handmaid's Tale*, recently made into a series on Hulu (ISBN: 978073553308). We will read this the last two weeks of class, so you've got time to track this down. You should be able to find a cheap used copy easily.

Keen, thoughtful, and engaged reading is the key to success in this course.

Then, **you'll write your response to a set of discussion questions** about the readings/materials. You can turn this in any time you want during the week, as long as you respond before midnight on the last day of the week (Sunday at 11:59pm). **You will also write three papers** (approximately 3-5 pages double-spaced) over the course of the term. I will provide a prompt and a rubric (a rubric is simple a statement of expectations that make clear how you can succeed, and why points get taken off), so you will know what is expected. On the weeks that papers are due, you will not have to respond to any discussion questions. All writing must meet basic scholarly standards appropriate for university level work. Not only does this include proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation, but also serious reflection on your topic. You do not need to cite your sources in discussion postings, but you must do so in your essays. There are many sources to help you with your writing assignments. The most important is the [University Writing Center in Oviatt Library](#) on the 3rd Floor. Please utilize this resource to improve your writing, but if you have questions about what is expected, direct those questions to your instructor.

Clear, concrete and well-organized writing is the key to success in this course.

Here's what it looks like in terms of points:

- **Discussion questions:** 5 points x 8 (there are 10 posting opportunities, you choose any 8). You can turn in your discussion postings anytime during the week, as long as they are in BEFORE 11:59pm on the last night of that week (Sunday night). ***Because you have so much flexibility about when you turn in your postings, no late discussion postings will be accepted.***
- **Essays:** (3 papers x 20) = 60

TOTAL: 100 Points

While I am on the subject, here is how your grade will be tabulated (take note of this, because I DO NOT ROUND UP at the end of the term).

Letter Grade Allocation

- 93-100 A
- 90-92.99 A-
- 87-89.99 B+
- 83-86.99 B
- 80-82.99 B-
- 77-79.99 C+
- 73-76.99 C
- 70-72.99 C-
- 60-69.99 D

Date & Topic	What to Read READ and RE-READ	Assignments
Aug 28-Sep. 3 Introduction to the course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to the course • Bio • Syllabus Quiz 	Read and understand the syllabus Take a short quiz about the syllabus; Write a brief bio introducing yourself to the class.
Sept 4-10 Definitions and Terms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patriarchy • Feminism • Womanism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bell hooks, “Understanding Patriarchy” • Patricia Hill Collins, “What’s in a Name? Womanism, Black Feminism and Beyond” • Chiminanda Agozi Adichie, “We Should All Be Feminists” <i>Ted Talks</i> 	Answer the discussion questions
Sept. 11-17 Gender & Social Roles: What is the difference between sex and gender?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sam Killerman, Understanding the Complexities of Gender, TedTalks. TedTalks • Susan Hill Lindley, “Gender and Social Roles,” in <i>Encyclopedia of Women and Religion in North America</i>, edited by Rosemary Skinner Keller and Rosemary Radford Ruether (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 23-33. 	Answer the discussion questions
Sept 18-24 Theories and Methods How does one employ a feminist and/or gender-aware approach to the study of religion and history?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rita M. Gross, “Women and Religion: Methods of Study and Reflection,” in <i>Encyclopedia of Women and Religion in North America</i>, edited by Rosemary Skinner Keller and Rosemary Radford Ruether (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 3-11. • Excerpts, Joan Scott, “Gender as a Category of Analysis,” pp. 1066-to the end. 	Answer the discussion questions
Sept. 25-Oct. 1 Roots of Erasure and Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Margaret Miles, “Violence Against Women in the Historical Christian West and in North American Secular Culture: The Visual and Textual Evidence” 	Answer the discussion questions
Oct. 2-8	Work on paper #1. Choose any two essays we have read so far (except for the videos). Compare and contrast them.	Paper #1 due before midnight on Oct. 8
Oct. 9-15 What (Not) to Wear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pamela K. Taylor, “I Just Want to Be Me: Issues in Identity for One American Muslim Woman” in <i>The Veil: Women Writers on Its History, Lore, and Politics</i>, edited by Jennifer Heath • Lila Abu-Lughod, “Do Muslim Women Need Saving?” • Women and the Veil PowerPoint 	Answer the discussion questions

Oct. 16-22 Buddhism and Patriarchy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rita Gross, <i>Buddhism After Patriarchy: A Feminist History, Analysis, and Reconstruction of Buddhism</i> 	Answer the discussion questions
Oct. 23-29 There Is Something About Mary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jane Schaberg, "How Mary Magdalene Became a Whore," in <i>Biblical Studies Alternatively</i> Richard Covington, "Mary Magdalene was None of the Things a Pope Claimed," in <i>US News and World Report</i> 	Answer the discussion questions
Oct. 30-Nov. 5 Natives and Cultural Appropriation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laura Donaldson, "On Medicine Women and White Shame-Ans" "What is Cultural Appropriation?" Feminist Fridays Adrienne Keene, "Native Re-Appropriations," Brown University Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, video 	Answer the discussion questions
Nov. 6-12 Latinas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kristy Nabhan-Warren, "Little Slices of Heaven and Mary's Candy Kisses: Mexican American Women Redefining Feminism and Catholicism" (<i>The Religious History of Women: Reimagining the Past</i>, Catherine A. Brekus, ed., University of North Carolina Press, 2007) Virgin of Guadalupe Power Point 	Answer the discussion questions
Nov. 13-19 WRITE	Work on paper #2. RE-READ the essays Choose any two essays assigned since October 9 th (except for the essay by Covington, the Powerpoints, or the videos). Compare and contrast them.	Paper #2 due before midnight on
Nov. 20-26	THANKSGIVING WEEK, NO ASSIGNMENTS	
Nov. 27- Dec. 3 <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i>, pp. TBA 	Answer the discussion questions LAST DISCUSSION OPPORTUNITY
Dec. 4-10 <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i>, pp. TBA 	
Dec. 13 WRITE	<i>The Handmaid's Tale</i> Paper due before midnight	Paper #3 due before midnight on

The Fine Print

Student Learning Outcomes for Arts and Humanities: 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. 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.

Familiarity with Canvas: This class will employ Canvas for student assignments, class updates, and communication. It is your responsibility to learn and use Canvas. For information and instructions about Canvas, go to: <http://www.csun.edu/it/studentCanvas-help/>

Participation: Even though this is an online class, your participation is a critical part of your success. You are expected to check in every week, to post to our discussion forums and by asking/answering questions, fully participating in discussions, and fully engaging in any other activities of the class. You are always welcome at office hours – virtual or actual

Written Work: You will be also doing a lot of writing. Some of the writing will be in discussion postings, but much of it will be in formal academic papers. All writing must meet basic scholarly standards appropriate for university level work. Not only does this include proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation, but also serious reflection on your topic. You do not need to cite your sources in discussion postings, but you must do so in your essays. There are many sources to help you with your writing assignments. The most important is the [University Writing Center in Oviatt Library](#) on the 3rd Floor. Please utilize this resource to improve your writing, but if you have questions about what is expected, direct those questions to your instructor.

Deadlines: Because you have some choice about submitting discussion postings, no late discussion postings will be accepted. No late papers will be accepted without consultation and express permission of the instructor.

Plagiarism/Cheating: Evidence of plagiarism will result in a failing grade, certainly for the item plagiarized, but potentially also for the course. Plagiarism is one form of cheating, but not the only one. Other examples include “borrowing” stealing, buying or otherwise procuring papers and exams, or having someone else take an exam or write an essay for which you take credit. All instances of cheating will result in no credit for the assignment and will be reported to the Office of the Vice President of Student Affairs.

Special Accommodations: If you have a documented learning disability and/or a physical disability and need special accommodations in order to complete course requirements, please make sure the instructor is informed. I happily cooperate with [CSUN’s Disability Resources and Educational Services](#) office.

Contact with the Professor: I urge you to take advantage of my office hours. I don’t bite – it isn’t even a video chat. Just type your questions and I will respond in real time. Press the “CHAT” link any Tues. night at 8pm.