



Theo 278: Religion and Gender
John Felice Rome Center
Spring: Wednesdays 2.30 – 5.00 pm

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 5.00-6.00 pm or by appointment

Course Description

In Theo 278 you will be introduced to contemporary gender theory, and discuss how it can be applied as a critical tool for examining religion past and present. The contemporary perspective is woven consistently through parts 1 and 2 with analysis and discussion on sexualities, gender identities and feminist critique.

In the first part of the course we focus firstly on the Garden of Eden in biblical narrative, and study its history of interpretation in relation to female and male gender roles. Further biblical texts that relate to this narrative will be analysed, as well as how its content has impacted on Christian beliefs. This text is foundational, providing archetypes that both consciously and unconsciously inform gender identity in Western and Post-Colonial contexts. We will continue by exploring a selection of biblical texts that divulge how some biblical authors utilized gender in order to destabilize the given tropes of their times. You will be shown how these texts are interpreted in art and sculpture, and be encouraged to study examples in Rome and across Europe.

For the remainder of the course we move outside the biblical and Christian worlds to observe how gender has been constructed in a selection of the world's major religious traditions, namely Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Islam and Indigenous traditions. These foci will provide a broad global perspective of religious beliefs and practices.

A central feature on Theo 278 is the project. Your project, selected with consultation and supervised during the second half of the course, will provide a unique opportunity to delve in depth into a particular aspect of religion and gender. These projects highlight the distinctive roles and expectations prescribed for gendered identities, illustrated, for example, by sacred texts, rites of passage, leadership, festivals, pilgrimages and other ritual practices.

You will research your chosen subject's context in terms of its history, its concept of the divine and spirituality, its beliefs and practices, and its contemporary outlook and development – examined through the expectations and experiences of believers. As well as exploring your subject's origins and belief system, your project can include archival material, images, interviews and other appropriate empirical data.

Important note: At the outset you need to be aware that because this course examines religious beliefs and issues pertaining to gender roles and identities discussions will include sexual and gender expressions, body anatomy, sexual attitudes and behaviors. Exploring and challenging our own assumptions and expectations about both religion and sexual identity may produce a certain level of discomfort. The classroom should be a safe space where consideration of each student's individual expression is paramount for learning. Students' individual opinions and feelings are to be fostered, protected, and respected. Any personal opinion or experience shared within the class must and will remain within the class.

Learning Outcomes

Students who successfully complete this course will have the ability to:

- Apply their research skills to construct a well-informed argument in writing and orally
- Research and evaluate secondary sources in relation to primary texts
- Understand diversities and similarities in gender roles across major world religions
- Identify and explain key issues in gender studies and religion from an historical and global perspective
- Synthesize information from a variety of academic disciplines as it relates to the impact of religion on women and men's lives around the world

The Project

Work on the projects begins in earnest midway through the course, after consultations to select viable topics. In the class workshops we discuss developing project plans and schedules for completion. The workshops and consultations aim to ensure projects are underway and progressing.

Reading Responses

Each week you will be given questions based on the reading/s for that week posted on SAKAI Resources. Your responses to these questions create your 'reading log' for this course. The aim is to ensure that you are building up - and being tested on - your knowledge base in the subject week by week.

Assessment Components

Midterm assessment

Completed reading responses 1-5	(15%)
Written Paper	(20%)

Final assessment

Written Project	(35%)
Completed reading responses 6-11	(20%)
Participation and Project presentation	(10%)

Grading

94-100: A	90-93: A-	87-89: B+	84-86: B	80-83: B-	
77-79: C+	74-76: C	70-73: C-	67-69: D+	60-66: D	59 or lower: F

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are unacceptable at the JFRC and will be dealt with in accordance with Loyola University Chicago's guidelines. Please familiarize yourself with Loyola's standards here: http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml. You are responsible to comply with the LUC Student Handbook.

Late or Missed Assignments

Late or missed assignments will not be accepted for grading except with authorization.

Attendance Policy

In accordance with the JFRC mission to promote a higher level of academic rigor, all courses adhere to the following absence policy:

- For all classes meeting once a week, students cannot incur more than one unexcused absence.

Unexcused absences beyond this will result in 1% lowering of the final course grade for every absence after the “approved limit”. The collective health of the JFRC is everyone’s responsibility. DO NOT ATTEND CLASS IF YOU ARE ILL.

Accessibility Accommodations

Students registered with the Student Accessibility Center requiring academic accommodations should contact the Office of the Dean at the John Felice Rome Center, the first week of classes.

Email Communication I will do my best to reply to emails sent during business hours (**Monday to Friday, 9.00 – 18.00**). Emails sent after 18.00 will be considered received the next day. The best way to communicate is directly, during my office hour or by making an appointment.

Computer, Phone & Internet Use in the Classroom Use of phones is always prohibited. Please turn your phones off when in class. Use of laptop computers during class time for note taking is not permitted unless permitted by the instructor. This includes checking emails and use of social networks.

Course Schedule

WRT refers to Anderson, Leona M. and Dickey Young, Pamela (eds) Women and Religious Traditions, Oxford: Oxford University Press. The set readings may change during the course of the semester, all readings will be made available in good time on Sakai Resources

Week One 01/18 Introduction to the course and the subject: gender studies and religion

Reading 1: Posey, Lauren, ‘Gender’, pp.94-96

Week Two 01/25 Introduction to the biblical account

Reading 2: Text: Genesis 3

Fewell, Danna Nolan and Gunn, David M. ‘Shifting the Blame’, Gender, Power and Promise: The Subject of the Bible’s First Story, pp.22-38.

Week Three 02/01 The Biblical legacy of the Garden of Eden

Reading 3: ‘The Bible and Sex’, David H. Jensen, in The Embrace of Eros: Bodies, Desires, and Sexuality in Christianity, Editor, Margaret D. Kamitsuka, pp.15-31

Week Four 02/08 Female and Divine alliances – Biblical examples

Reading 4: Text: Judith 8-16

Bellis, Alice Ogden, Helpmates, Harlots and Heroes, pp.206-223

Week Five 02/15 Introduction to Islam

Reading 5: McCloud et al Ed., 'Ethics and Law, the Five Pillars' from An Introduction to Islam in the 21st Century, pp.41-49

Riley, Alexander '9/11 Myths, Islam, and American Cultural Conflict', *Society* (2018) 55:329–332

Week Six 02/22 Women and Islam

Reading 6: Abu-Lughod, Lila, 'Do Muslim Women (Still) Need Saving?' From Do Muslim Women Need Saving? pp.27-53

Week Seven 03/01 Midterm Assignments – completion and submission

Week Eight Spring Break

Week Nine 03/15 Judaism and Gender

Reading 7: Goldstein, Elyse, 'Jewish feminism and "new" Jewish rituals', *Canadian Woman Studies*; Downsview Vol. 16, Iss. 4, (Fall 1996): 50-52.)

Kuikman, Jakoba, 'Women in Judaism', in WRT, 2 pp. 51-73

Week Ten 03/22 Introduction to Hinduism

Reading 8: 'Historical Overview', 'Worship and Festivals' and 'Family and Society' from Tim Dowley ed. A Brief Introduction to Hinduism

Week Eleven 03/29 Hinduism and Gender

Reading 9: Anderson, Leona M., 'Women in Hindu Traditions' pp. 20-36 WRT

Goel, Ina. "Hijra Communities of Delhi." Sexualities 19.5-6 (2016): 535-46

Week Twelve 04/05 Buddhism and Gender

Reading 10: Neumaier, Eva K., 'Women in the Buddhist Traditions', pp.93-112 WRT

Week Thirteen 04/12 Indigenous Spiritual Traditions and Gender

Reading 11: Martin-Hill, Dawn, 'Women in Indigenous Traditions', pp.152-177 WRT

Week Fourteen 04/19 Project Presentations

Week Fifteen - beginning 04/24 Finals