



Religion and Gender
Spring 2014

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Course Description:

This course will examine the role of women in Buddhism and Christianity. The primary goal of this course is to understand the vast multi-vocality of women in these traditions and how that is reconciled with the religious institutions within which they operated. The approach will be comparative and utilize a wide range of narrative, doctrinal, sociological, and anthropological sources.

Learning Outcomes:

Through completion of this course students will be able to:

- Examine and interpret primary texts
- Critically read and analyze scholarly articles
- Contribute effectively to discussion and group presentations
- Demonstrate analytical and creative thinking in written and verbal communication.

Required Books:

A Very Short Introduction to Buddhism (D. Keown, Oxford, 2013) [Optional]

First Buddhist Women (FBW) (Susan Murcott, Parallax Press, 2006)

Buddhist Women Across Cultures (Karma Lekshe Tsomo, NY Press, 1999).

Women and Christian Origins (WCO) (ed. Kraemer and D'Angelo, Oxford, 1999)

Illuminations of Hildegard of Bingen (Matthew Fox; Bear & Co, 2002).

God's Daughters: Evangelical Women and the Power of Submission (GD) (Griffith, R. Marie, Univ. of CA press, 2000)

Articles/chapters available on D2L (Please print copy and bring to class):

“Attitudes toward Women and the Feminine in Early Buddhism” (Alan Sponberg)

“What if God had Breasts?” from *When Women Were Priests* (Karen Jo Torjesen)

“Virgins of God” from *Virgins of God: The Making of Asceticism* (Susanna Elm)

“Why Nuns Cannot be Monks” (Kim Gutschow)

“Mothers and Sons” (Serinity Young)

“Christian Resources for Ecological Sustainability” and “Sustainability and Spiritual Discipline” (Rita Gross & Rosemary Ruether)

Course Requirements:

Engaged Participation (20%):

Engaged participation is the most important element of this course. You are expected to do the reading prior to each class period and, each day, you should come to class with *at least three* quotes from the reading to discuss. Come prepared to start discussion!

Attendance is mandatory!

Group Presentations (20%):

There will be two group presentations during the semester. You will be randomly sorted into groups of about six and have a discussion topic set up on D2L. You should collaborate early and often so that the presentation is smooth and cohesive. **All group members should take part in the preparation and/or presentation!**

Please prepare a 1-2 page outline of the main points or concepts. This outline will be posted on D2L for all students to use as a resource for their midterm and/or final. Then, *each* student should prepare *one* power-point slide [consolidate into one slideshow for class] that engages a major point or topic of the chapter. As a group, you should also plan to stimulate discussion about the chapter [for example, by inserting a question, point of comparison, quote or other medium].

MAXIMUM TIME: 30 minutes (approx. 5 minutes per person). *Please practice so you do not steal your classmates' time!*

Reading Journal (20%):

In order to facilitate critical reading of the material, you should keep an ongoing reading journal (in a composition notebook). After you read each selection for this class (except readings on group presentation days), I'd like you to sit down and spend at least half an hour talking--on paper--about what you've just read. Although you should use connected prose, you do not need to have a clear structure or organization. Rather, think of this as an opportunity to record your initial reactions. Some specific questions you may want to answer in your journal entry include the following: What connections to previous reading or information do you see here? Does it change any of your preconceived ideas? Would you argue with the author on any points? What seem to be the major concepts/key terms in this piece of reading?

Please include page numbers for specific points or quotes that you engage.

Finally, at the beginning or the end of each entry, you should write a 1-3 sentence statement (in your own words) of the main thesis of the chapter/article as you interpret it. Please distinguish this statement from your journal entry, such as with an asterisk, underline, different ink color, or subheading.

Although I plan to collect these journals only twice during the semester, I reserve the right to collect them at any time. Therefore, please keep up on your journals and bring them to class each day. Quickly reviewing your journal before class will also help prepare you to contribute fruitfully to discussion!

[*Note: For *Illuminations of Hildegard*, instead of writing a journal entry, please choose two of Hildegard's illuminations. Write a 1-2 page, SS response (include quotes and page numbers). Be prepared to discuss.]

Midterm Paper (20%):

Write a 3-4 page paper using *at least three* of the chapters/articles we have read in class. Your paper should be in traditional essay format: with a clearly stated thesis/claim in the introduction, three substantive points of support (1-2 paragraphs each) and a conclusion. Include page numbers/short quotes for support.

Final Paper (20%):

The final paper will be comparative and will ask that you directly engage the course materials. A prompt will be provided and we will have a peer draft review workshop. I will also have additional office hours available during finals week.