

Women's Studies in Religion • STRS-4242

Graduate Theological Union • Spring Semester 2018 • Thursdays 7:10 – 9:40 PM

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Course Description

This seminar (required for students in the GTU Certificate in Women's Studies and open to all interested students) explores and analyzes emerging themes and issues in women's studies in religion, focusing on those that intersect with race, sexuality, gender, ethnicity, class, culture, nationality, and religious expression. This course will provide theoretical groundwork and common vocabulary for students interested in pursuing women's studies and womanist, feminist, *Mujerista* scholarship in theology/religious studies. The course introduces the issues that are raised by the field of women's studies, and explores how these issues relate to the study of religion. Evaluation based on Moodle participation, leadership of class discussion, and final project and presentation. This course is open to all degree programs at the GTU and has an inter-religious orientation. This course is taught from a liberationist pedagogy perspective.

Course Objectives

- Students will develop a facility in navigating some of the major issues and theoretical approaches related to women's studies in religion
- Students will demonstrate an understanding of various ways these issues and theoretical approaches are important for scholarship related to women's studies in religion and for application in religious, social, and political contexts
- Students will develop skill in explication and analysis within a transnational comparative feminist framework
- Students will apply insights gained from this course to their scholarship as well as to their own living/working contexts
- Students will plan and lead class discussions on selected topics
- Students will participate in collaborative teaching and learning

Course Texts [Prices listed below are from Amazon; feel free to use other sources for purchase]

- McCann, Carole R. and Seung-Kyung Kim, eds. *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives*. **4th edition**. New York: Routledge Press, 2017.
ISBN: 978-1-138-93021-6
For Rent from Amazon.com (about \$28 for the semester) or purchase (about \$52 new).
- Messina-Dysert, Gina, Jennifer Zobair, and Amy Levin, eds. *Faithfully Feminist: Jewish, Christian, & Muslim Feminists on Why We Stay*. Ashland, OR: White Cloud Press, 2015. ISBN: 978-1-935952-0. Cost \$12.05 [Kindle \$10.99]
- Women of WISDOM, *Friendship & Faith: The WISDOM of Women Creating Alliances for Peace*, **New and Expanded Edition**, Canton, MI: Read the Spirit Books, 2017. ISBN-13: 978-1942011934. Cost for paperback: \$20.00 [Kindle version \$9.99]
- Additional Readings posted to Moodle

Course Requirements (in brief)

- Attendance of class sessions and participation in class discussions and exercises
- Assigned readings to be completed before each class session
- Moodle participation – 40%
- Leadership of Class Discussion – 20%
- Final Project and Presentation – 40%

Course Requirements (in detail)

Attendance

An essential part of the learning experience is gathering together to reflect upon, engage, and develop ideas. Your presence is needed, not only for your own learning, but for your colleagues' learning as well. Therefore, it is expected that students will attend all regular class sessions and participate actively (see below).

If you are unable to attend class for any reason, please make a reasonable effort to notify the professor prior to the class session. My contact information is at the top of this syllabus.

Because your presence in class is deeply valued, regular attendance and full participation at class sessions will positively impact your final grade. Conversely, your final grade will be reduced by 1/3 for **every missed session beyond two absences** (excused or unexcused). For instance, if you have an A- average at the end of the semester, but were absent four times, your final grade would be a B.

Class Participation

Because this course is offered in a seminar format, it is expected that you will actively participate in class sessions by **listening attentively** to each participant, by **asking questions** and **offering your own comments and insights**, and by **interacting thoughtfully with the assigned readings**, showing evidence that you have completed them.

All participants in this course are co-learners. This requires everyone's thorough preparation and reflection prior to each session, and everyone's willing and dynamic participation in class discussions.

It also means **paying attention to the dynamic in the classroom, and how you are contributing to it**. If you have a tendency to jump in to be the first person to answer a question, or a tendency to speak for a long time, occasionally class participation for you will mean cultivating attentive listening, and **inviting others to speak**.

Silence in the classroom, even in the midst of discussion, is beneficial and fruitful. Silence provides people with a moment to think, process, and gather their thoughts. On the other hand, if you have a tendency to hang back or not answer a question, occasionally class participation for you will be to contribute by venturing forth with your voice.

Assigned Readings

You are expected to prepare for each class by completing the assigned readings. I hope that you will engage these readings with a variety of critical hermeneutical approaches; namely, **generosity** (an empathetic reading of the text, attempting to inhabit the world of the author and understand the arguments from that point of view); **open-minded engagement** (noting the sound and compelling aspects of the author's work); **suspicion** (noting elements of the language, analysis, sources that may indicate blind spots in the author's analysis); **embodiment and experience** (remembering you are a body reading, taking breaks as needed, noticing bodily responses, and relating your own experience in strategic ways to the text); **suggestive critique** (commenting on incorrect or inadequate elements of the author's arguments and offering suggestions for changes). All these "moments" are necessary in scholarly reading, and I hope you will find them a helpful way to approach texts. I will also look at your Moodle written assignments to show evidence of some or all of these moments in some form.

Moodle Participation

Weekly Written Engagements (450-600 words)

Each week write 450-600 words in response to the reading assigned for that week. Your response can take several forms throughout the semester:

- Summary and critical evaluation of a main theme in one (or several) of the readings from the *Feminist Theory Reader*. Reflections on readings from *Faithfully Feminist* should be understood as supplemental to the theoretical readings.
- Exploration of an open question raised for you by the reading
- Articulation of a new insight gained from the reading, along with a reflection on the importance of that insight for your own developing understanding of women's studies in religion
- Exploration of a tension created between the reading and a position, perspective, or insight that is important to you

The most effective written engagements will directly address assigned reading(s) and show evidence of multiple critical hermeneutical approaches as described in the section above.

Moodle assignments will span ten weeks of the semester (class sessions February 9 through April 20). You may skip one week's Moodle entry and responses **without penalty**. However, your final grade will be reduced by 1/3 for **every missed Moodle entry beyond that**.

All Weekly Written Engagements (WWEs) must be posted no later than **Tuesday evening at 11:55 PM prior to that Thursday's class.**

Graded Moodle Responses (450-600 words)

Throughout the semester, I ask that you **submit four Moodle Written Engagements for comments and grading.** You may choose to submit these at any point during the semester, *but no later than the Moodle due date for that set of readings.* **I strongly encourage you to submit at least one of these four WWEs before spring recess** so that I can offer you feedback early on in the semester.

Please include in the subject line of your Moodle entry "Graded WWE" so that I know you are submitting the entry for a grade and comments. I will return these entries to you with comments and a grade. Each of the

graded Moodle entries will count for 10% of your grade, totaling 40% of the final grade. (Improvement over the course of the semester will also positively impact your grade.)

Leadership of Class Discussion

Students will be responsible for leading class discussion (about a 45-minute discussion period) once a semester. (Doctoral students will need to lead two sessions.) This will involve reading all the Moodle postings and integrating them into the class session, as well as formulating directions for and facilitating class discussion. Discussion leaders are not expected to be the “expert” on the subject, but rather to engage the class in dynamic conversation drawing on the readings of the day. I am available by appointment (please be sure to plan ahead!) for conversation as you make your preparations for leading the class. Evaluation will be based on quality of preparation, organization, incorporation of readings, and collaborative discussion (remember, this is not intended to be a lecture or presentation). Collaboration is always encouraged in this course. Depending on the number of students enrolled in the course, some people may have to work in pairs; however all course sessions need to be covered. Students are encouraged to sign up for more than the minimum required sessions.

Final Project

Choose any **one** of the following models/formats for the final project assignment. **By March 22** you must submit a proposal for a final project that is based on one of the models described below. Students who wish to collaborate on the final project are encouraged to do so. Details of the planned collaboration in regards both to the project and to the final project paper must be included in the proposal. Each student will present their project to the class in the final weeks of class. **Final Projects are due between April 26 and May 10 (you will select your own due date and tell me in your proposal).** All projects must be submitted electronically via Moodle.

- **Academic Paper**

The academic paper is a research paper based on a topic of interest to you, and confined to an important theme explored in this course. The paper will need to follow Turabian style, 8th edition. Your paper should represent original research, insight, and interpretation. Approximately 10 pages in length for Masters students; 20 pages in length for doctoral students. *You will need to submit a starting bibliography for the research paper, and a one-page proposal for the paper and submit it to me for feedback and approval.*

- **Extensive Reading**

You may choose to read an additional 500-800 pages of material dealing with issues discussed in this class. This will be a good opportunity to read either “classic” material in the field or to read cutting edge work. You must submit an annotated bibliography, relevant notes, and evidence of thoughtful engagement with the readings you did. These notes might be around central ideas, questions, and insights. They might serve as notes for a future project you hope to complete in your program at the GTU. *You will need to submit a bibliography of the material you will be reading along with a one-page proposal addressing the questions that will be shaping your engagement with the reading.*

- **Professional Project**

This project offers you the opportunity to integrate the material of this course with your current or anticipated work/vocation/ministry. The extent of the work, original thought, and interpretive analysis must be equal to the assignments outlined above. Some ideas for possible projects are listed below, but this list is far from extensive:

- Create a syllabus and activities for a mini-course (whatever audience you choose) that incorporates ideas and issues from this course;
- Create a Forum Series or Workshop (whatever venue you choose) adapting themes and insights from this course for adult enrichment study;
- Create a communal ceremony/gathering/worship event that in some way(s) ritualizes a particularly meaningful theme or aspect of this course;
- Create an artistic expression related to themes of this course (paintings, poetry, etc)
- Create a staff training or information session for a women's services, non-profit organizing using and applying ideas or themes from this course
- Create a blog series based on various themes, readings, and ideas from this course

Students who choose this project option must also submit a 5-page analysis of their project that describes how it was informed by the insights gained in this course. This analysis should refer to readings and class discussion.

You will need to submit a one-page proposal specifying the goals, context, and scope of the project to me for feedback and approval.

- **Other Project Idea Submitted by You**

You may have another idea for a final project that is not covered in the options above. Your project must be of comparative effort to the above options (not much less work, and not much more work). It will also need to be clear to me the manner in which I can evaluate your project in order to assign a grade for it. *You will need to submit a one-page proposal specifying the goals, context, and scope of the project as well as evaluative criteria. I strongly encourage you to schedule an appointment with me to talk over your idea prior to submitting your proposal.*

Extra Credit

In order to help facilitate practices of health and self-care, students are able to receive 3 points of extra credit per month. You may do so each month by (a) attending a woman-centered event or activity [WSR-sponsored events count toward this; Meetup.com is also a neat website to find out about events in your area]; or (b) engaging in a self-care activity (to be determined by you). Examples of self-care activities might be getting a massage, going for a walk, taking a nap, practicing a Sabbath day, unplugging from electronic and social media for a day or weekend, painting, writing poetry, singing in choir. To receive extra credit, please submit an email or text a photo to me of you at the event or doing the activity (as appropriate! Use your discretion.) One event/activity per month is worth 3 points. Please submit your extra credit within the month you have done it. Please do not submit all four extra credit activities at the end of the semester.

Accessibility Policy

The GTU consortium-wide “Students with Disabilities” policy that can be found in full at <http://www.gtu.edu/admissions/life-at-gtu/students-with-disabilities>. The GTU Dean of Students serves as the Disabilities Resource Officer (DRO) for the consortium. The DRO serves as a consortium-wide resource to develop expertise, provide information and consultation, and answer questions. The student is responsible for fully participating in the process and exercising due diligence to ensure the provision of accommodations is successfully accomplished. Students should request accommodations in advance of when the accommodation is needed. Please see the link above for more complete details, forms, and instructions.

Sexual Harassment and Discrimination (Title IX Resources)

ABSW upholds a zero tolerance policy for discrimination, harassment, and sexual misconduct. If you (or someone you know) have experienced discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, domestic or dating violence or stalking, we encourage you to tell someone promptly. For more information, please go to <http://www.absw.edu/about-absw/policies/> and click on the link titled ABSW and Title IX or contact the seminary’s Title IX Coordinator, Meagan Wood at 510-841-1905 ext. 229 or by email at mwood@absw.edu. Her office is located in Hobart Hall on the first floor. The GTU Title IX coordinator is Kathleen Kook, Dean of Students at 510-649-2464 or email kkook@gtu.edu. The GTU policy can be found here: <https://www.gtu.edu/gtu-title-ix>

Reporting Practices

While I want you to feel comfortable coming to me with issues you may be struggling with or concerns you may be having, please be aware that there are some reporting requirements that are part of my job at ABSW.

For example, if you inform me of an issue of harassment, sexual violence, or discrimination, I will keep the information as private as I can, but I am required to bring it to the attention of the institution’s Title IX Coordinator. Reports may be submitted online through the GTU Complaint and Intake Form ([Link](#)) or anonymously through Ethicspoint ([Link](#)).

If you would like to talk to the Title IX Coordinator directly you can reach Meagan Wood at 510-841-1905 ext. 229 or by email at mwood@abse.edu.

Pronouns

ABSW affirms the richness of diversity in our classrooms and expects that students practice civility and inclusion of all perspectives in respectful conversation and dialogue, which includes the use of students’ preferred names and pronouns. All students should be referred to by the names and pronouns they use for themselves (e.g., she, he, they, ze).

It is our responsibility to educate ourselves about gender neutral pronouns. Here is a good starting point if this is something new to you (or as a refresher for those who have already been exposed to this):

<http://www.brynmawr.edu/pensby/documents/AskingforNameandPronouns.pdf>

Gender-Neutral Bathrooms

There are several gender-neutral, single-use bathrooms in the main building (Hobart Hall) of ABSW. On the first floor, there is a gender-neutral bathroom by the main entrance just behind the stairs. On the second floor, there is one on the other side of the building (upstairs immediately above our classroom). On the fourth floor, there is a gender-neutral bathroom in the alcove off the main room. The third floor bathrooms are not gender-neutral.

Academic Integrity

Your voice, your perspective, your grappling with the materials in this course in relation to your context are the most valued things from my perspective. Therefore, all work submitted to fulfill requirements in this course is expected to be your own work. I want to know what *you* think. And I want to know it in the way you express it in your own words. Any quotation that is not original to you must be cited using Kate L. Turabian's *A Manual for Writers*, 8th edition style guide.

Ideas and quotes from other authors that are not properly cited are considered to be plagiarism. Sometimes students plagiarize by accident, by forgetting to use quotation marks, by incorrectly citing sources, or by forgetting to cite sources at all. Sometimes plagiarism is intentional, where students lift significant portions of published material (from books or the internet) and attempt to pass the work off as their own.

One excellent web-based resource to help students better understand what plagiarism is and how to avoid it is the Online Purdue Writing Lab, which can be found at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/01/>.

I am also always available for consultation if you have any questions about this at all. Plagiarism on an assignment leaves one liable to a failing grade on the assignment, a failing grade for the course, or even suspension by the Academic Dean from the academic program of the seminary.

Email & Texting Communication Policy

I welcome appropriate communication via email as questions arise. I will make every effort to respond in a timely manner; however, you should plan on about a 24-hour window for a response. Also, I will not be checking work email between 3:00 PM on Friday through 8:00 AM Monday morning.

I will occasionally use email to communicate with the class. It is your responsibility to check your email on a regular (preferably on a daily basis between Monday and Friday) in order to be sure that you are informed of any communication in a timely manner. Students for whom this presents undue hardship should partner with a colleague who agrees to relay communications to you.

I am also providing you with my cell phone number for you to be able to reach me via text. Please use this information responsibly. Depending on what is going on when you text, or time of day, I still may not be able to respond to you immediately. My contact information is listed at the top of the syllabus.

FOR INFORMATION ABOUT OTHER POLICIES, PLEASE CONSULT THE GTU STUDENT HANDBOOK

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Reading Schedule

Items in blue are posted to Moodle; all other readings are from the textbooks

February 1 Amanda Kaminsky

Beginning Together

February 8 Leslie Bowling-Dyer

Creating a Learning Community

- bell hooks, "Creating a Teaching Community" in *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. New York: Routledge, 1994: 129-165.
- Linda Martín-Alcoff. "The Problem of Speaking For Others" originally published in *Cultural Critique* (Winter 1991-92): 5-32
- Michele Tracy Berger and Cheryl Radeloff, "The Birth of Women's and Gender Studies," in *Transforming Scholarship: Why Women's Studies and Gender Studies Students Are Changing Themselves and the World*. New York: Routledge, 2011: 31-70.

February 15 Amanda Kaminsky

Alcoff and hooks revisited

- **Re-read** bell hooks and Linda Alcoff, and come prepared to discuss your deepening insights
- Weimer, Maryellen, "Questions that Promote Student Engagement," Feb. 6, 2017, adapted from Magna Publications, 2014.

In Faithfully Feminist

- "#realtalk" by Jafreen M. Uddin, 223-228
- "Owning My Voice," by Rabbi Rebecca W. Sirbu, 229-233

In Friendship & Faith

- Preface, Introduction, and Part 1: "Forming the Circle & WISDOM Co-Founders," xvi-17

February 22: Amanda Kaminsky and Jennifer Davidson

Getting Our Bearings

NOTE: Tonight we will gather at SFTS for the event But I'm Still Here featuring Rev. Dr. Teresa Fry Brown. 105 Seminary Road in San Anselmo. Prepare the readings below, and we will discuss them after the lecture.

- Introduction to the course text, *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives*, 4th edition: 1-8.
- Wendy K. Kolmar & Frances Bartkowski, eds. "Lexicon of the Debates" in *Feminist Theory: A Reader*, 2nd edition. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2005: 42-58.
- Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Emilie Townes, eds. "Roundtable Discussion: What's in a Name? Exploring Dimensions of *What Feminist Studies in Religion Means*." *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, 11.1 (1995): 111-136. [Note: roundtable participants are Miriam Peskowitz, Maria Pilar Acquino; Sheila Davaney; and Judith Plaskow.]

In Friendship & Faith

- Part II: Making Friends, 17-44

March 1: _____ and _____

Feminist Movements

- Introduction: Theorizing Feminist Times and Spaces : 11-15 (you may want to scan remaining intro, which will be assigned for the following week)
- Yosano Akiko, "The Day the Mountains Move" 32
- Linda Nicholson: "Feminism in 'Waves': Useful Metaphor or Not?" 43-50
- Becky Thompson, "Multiracial Feminism: Recasting the Chronology of Second Wave Feminism" 51-62
- Amritu Basu, "Globalization of the Local/Localization of the Global: Mapping Transnational Women's Movements" 63-71

In Faithfully Feminist

- "Resilience," by Sabina Khan-Ibarra, 127-132
- "The Faith of My Mothers and Sisters," by Elise M. Edwards, 20-26
- "My Mother's Bat Mitzvah," by Miriam Peskowitz, 14-19

March 8: _____ and _____

Local Identities and Politics

- Introduction: Theorizing Feminist Times and Spaces: 15-29
- Muriel Rukeyser, "The Poem as Mask" 88
- T. V. Reed, "The Poetical is Political: Feminist Poetry and the Poetics of Women's Rights" 89-102
- Elizabeth Martinez, "La Chicana" 112-114
- The Combahee River Collective, "A Black Feminist Statement" 115-121
- Emi Koyama, "The Transfeminist Manifesto" 150-160

In Faithfully Feminist

- "To Be Young, Feminist, Muslimah, and Black" by Nia Malika Dixon, 133-137
- "I am CHURCH," by Corinna Guerrero, 240-245.

In Friendship & Faith

- Selections from Part III "Surprised by the Neighbors"

March 15: _____ and _____

Intersectionality

- Introduction: Theorizing Intersecting Identities, "Intersectionality" 163-166 [scan remaining intro for a sense of this overall section]
- Jennifer C. Nash, "Re-Thinking Intersectionality," 194-203
- Vrushali Patil, "From Patriarchy to Intersectionality: A Transnational Feminist Assessment of How Far We've Really Come," 204-212.
- Alicia Garza, "A Herstory of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement," *The Feminist Wire*.
<http://thefeministwire.com/2014/10/blacklivesmatter-2/>

In Faithfully Feminist

- "Say Something. I'm Giving Up on You," by Angela Yarber, 138-143.
- "The Life of a Secret Feminist," by Aisha C. Saeed, 176-181

In Friendship & Faith

- Part IV "Spiritual Transitions," pages 95-114

March 22: _____ and _____

Social Processes/Configuring Differences

Note: Final Project Proposals Due Tonight

- Introduction: Theorizing Intersecting Identities, "Social Processes/Configuring Differences" 166-173
- Rhacel Salazar Parreñas, *Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration, and Domestic Work*, 229-244
- Lila Abu-Lughod, "Orientalism and Middle East Feminist Studies" 245-253
- Mrinalini Sinha, "Gender and Nation," 254-272
- Raewyn Connell, "The Social Organization of Masculinity," 288-299
- [View: Genderless in Japan \(on Moodle\)](#)

Faithfully Feminist

- "How Feminism Saved My Life," by Emily Maynard, 115-120
- "From Outside In, From Inside Out," by Tamara R. Cohen, 121-126
- "Speaking Tradition," by Leiah Moser, 194-199

April 5 _____ and _____

Boundaries and Belongings

- Introduction: Theorizing Intersecting Identities, "Boundaries & Belongings," 173-179
- Donna Kate Rushin, "The Bridge Poem," 302-303
- June Jordan, "Report from the Bahamas," 304-312
- Minnie Bruce Pratt, "Identity: Skin, Blood, Heart," 313-319
- Leila Ahmed, "The Veil Debate—Again," 335-346

Faithfully Feminist

- "Girl, I am So Over Church," by Nikki Bailey, 259-263
- The Sub-Veil: Perversities from the Side with the Seams," by Tasneem Mandviwala, 77-83

In Friendship & Faith

- Selections from Part V "Not Enemies After All"

April 12: _____ and _____

Standpoints and Situational Knowledge | Subject Formation and Performativity

- Introduction: Theorizing Feminist Knowledge and Agency, 351-365
- Patricia Hill Collins, "Defining Black Feminist Thought," 384-400
- Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes' Revisted: Feminist Solidarity through Anticapitalist Struggles," 401-418
- Cathy J. Cohen, "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics," 419-435

In Friendship & Faith

- Selections from Part VI "Weaving Creative Ideas"

April 19: _____ and _____
Solidarity Reconsidered

- Introduction: Imagine Otherwise/Solidarity Reconsidered 495-507
- Paula M. L. Moya, "Chicana Feminism and Postmodernist Theory," 558-575
- Na-Young Lee, "The Korean Women's Movement of Japanese Military 'Comfort Women': Navigating Between Nationalism and Feminism," 576-585
- Angela McRobbie, "Beyond Post-Feminism," 622-625
- Malika Ndlovu, "Out of Now-here" 627

Faithfully Feminist

- "What Has Remained: The Testimony of a *Mujer Mestiza*," by Erica Granados De La Rosa, 102-108
- "The Pen Has Been Lifted: You Will Survive," by Samar Kaukab, 109-114

In Friendship & Faith

- Selections from Part VII "Widening Our Vision of the World"

April 26

Student Presentations

May 3

Student Presentations

May 10

Student Presentations & Synthesis
