Course Description:

Do religions oppress women? Do they empower them? Do religions allow for or suppress gender norms and fluidities? Do they enforce the status quo or offer a vehicle for resistance?

Gender is a fundamental category addressed by all religions. From Hindu goddesses like Kali and Lakshmi, to Christian saints like Mary and Anne, and Muslim leaders like Aisha, female figures populate many traditions. Some explicitly serve as idealizations of womanhood, others have more complex functions and interpretive trajectories. Beyond such idealized figures, also lie deep histories of social negotiations over gender roles, power, and the limits of personal expression.

In America, historians of have long known that since the colonial period, women have outnumbered men in the services of many religions, from Christianity to Judaism to Buddhism. Yet while often acknowledged, women’s participation in religious activity has not yet significantly altered how we think about religion. What would happen to our understanding of religion in America in the past three-and one-half centuries if we refocused our historical attention on women?

For one thing, we quickly realize that the gender ideas attached to “women” have been fluid, understood in a variety of ways by different groups at different times. Moreover, we find that religions construct their gender understandings within complex and equally fluid matrixes of religious, social, and cultural meanings. Those matrixes shape religious understandings of women and men, of their roles in society and within the religion itself, particularly with respect to their respective access to spiritual power and religious authority.

The goal of this course is to examine the history of women and religion in America using gender as our category of critical analysis. Our investigations will cover Protestant (Puritan, evangelical and Mormon), Catholic, Jewish, and Muslim women, as well as women in Vodou, with an eye toward those who have threatened/challenged (witches), advanced/led/transformed (seers), and embrace/modeled (saints) orthodox ideals and practices. We will look at how both women
and gender ideologies have influenced religious beliefs and practices from the colonial period to the present, and we will flip the categories to explore the many ways that religion influences and works to define gender – feminine, masculine, and GLBT. Because no person’s experience of religion or gender occurs outside of other central components of identity, particularly ethnicity and race, these factors will also be taken into account in our explorations.

**Course Goals:**

- To gain an understanding of the history of women in the U.S. across several traditions, including Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Vodou
- To become familiar with examples of how religious constructions of gender have both oppressed and empowered women across these traditions
- To develop a set of analytical categories and methods that help shed light on the development and ramifications of religious constructions of gender and gender roles
- To engage with ethical consequences of the historical situations and trajectories regarding these gender constructs
- To develop an analytical perspective on how religious transformations regarding gender occur

**Writing Intensive:**

Learning in this class will be facilitated through regular writing, for it is through writing that we process information and develop our ideas and responses. Weekly Moodle posts of 2-3 paragraphs will provide a regularized vehicle for reflecting on the assigned readings. These posts will be public, and by reading the work of others in the class, students will gain critical insight into a wide range of writing strategies used by their peers. Evaluation of others’ writing, followed by adoption of those techniques that seem most effective, is a good way to improve one’s own writing. Posts will be regularly discussed in class, as will writing strategies for developing insightful commentaries.

Students will also develop their writing skills through the three essay examinations. These essays will require students to evaluate and analyze class materials and develop strong, insightful interpretive arguments. A number of short classroom writing exercises and the Moodle posts will provide models and practice leading to the essay exams.

Lastly, students will work on their research and writing skills in developing an 8-10 page research paper. In class, we will cover topic selection and narrowing strategies, research and data collection techniques, and outlining and drafting strategies. A draft of the paper will be read by a fellow student and by the instructor, and all students will meet with the instructor to discuss revisions.

**Required Texts: (available at University Bookstore)**


Several articles and chapters available on Moodle (see list below on pp. 9).

**Recommended Texts: (available at University Bookstore)**


**Requirements:**

*Participation* 20%.

This category encompasses students’ on-going effort in the class and includes attendance, participation in small and large-group discussions, short classroom writing exercises, and Moodle Forum posts.

One Moodle Forum post per week is required. Posts should be substantive and thoughtful reflections of 2-3 paragraphs in length on the readings assigned for the day. You may focus on one particular aspect of the reading or an overall theme or perspective. Your goal in the post should be to display your knowledge of the assigned material and your intellectual engagement with it. Not all posts will be graded although all will be read by the instructor and classmates. You will print and submit 4 posts at midterm.

3 take-home exams. (20% each) 60%

10-page research paper. 20%
Research Paper Option 1. Do original research on a specific topic related to women, gender and religion in America. Topics must be approved by the instructor.

Research Paper Option 2. Focus on a film, novel, or personal narrative that deals explicitly with gender issues related to religion and write a paper analyzing the issues and perspective taken on them using class readings and material discussed in class. Topics must be approved by the instructor.

Students will submit a draft of the paper, which will be read by the instructor and at least one other student. All students will meet with the instructor at least once during the writing and revision process.

Important Due Dates:

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<tr>
<td>Take Home Exam 1</td>
<td>Monday, Oct 9</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 Moodle Posts Due</td>
<td>Monday, Oct 16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Take Home Exam 2</td>
<td>Monday, Nov 13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Paper Draft Due</td>
<td>Monday, Nov 27</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Paper</td>
<td>Friday, Dec 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 Moodle Posts Due</td>
<td>Wednesday, Dec 13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Take Home Exam 3</td>
<td>Monday, Dec 18</td>
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Tentative Calendar

Changes to these assignments will be announced in class and posted on Moodle. Students are responsible for keeping apprised of all changes.

Week 1
Wed 9/6 Why study gender and women’s religious experience?
Reading: Ann Braude. “Women’s History Is American Religious History” (Moodle)

Part I: Christian Theology, Gender, and Authority

Week 2
Mon 9/11 Anne Hutchinson: Saint or Satan?
Primary source: Excerpts from the Trial or Anne Hutchinson and other commentaries on Women. Women and Religion in America, Vol. 2 (Moodle)
Secondary Readings: Susan Hill Lindley, You Have Stept Out of Your Place (hereafter Lindley), pp. 1-7
Lyle Koehler. “The Case of the American Jezebels: Anne Hutchinson and Female Agitation During the Years of Antinomian Turmoil, 1636-1640” (Moodle)
Marilyn Westercamp, “Prophesying Women: Pushing the Boundaries of Patriarchy” (Moodle)
Wed 9/13
Salem Witch Trials: Victim or Witch?
Primary source: selected letters and sermons http://salem.lib.virginia.edu/home.html
Secondary Readings: Lindley, pp. 16-26
Marilyn Westercamp, “The Devil's Minions” (Moodle)
Carol Karlsen, “Brands Plucked out of the Burning” (Moodle)

Week 3
Mon 9/18
Interpretive, small group discussion of the two sets of trials.

Wed 9/20
Evangelical women: submission, power, and race
Primary Source: The Life and Religious Experience of Jarena Lee http://digilib.nypl.org/dynaweb/digs/wwm9716/@Generic__BookView
Primary Sources: SBC resolution on women in the ministry, 1984.
SBC positions on gender, sex, gay marriage, homosexuality
http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/search/
Susan Juster, Disorderly Women, Introduction and chpts 4 and 5. (Moodle)
R. Marie Griffith, God’s Daughter’s, chpts 5 and 6 (Moodle)

Week 4
Mon 9/25
Women and leadership/ordination
“The Safeguarding of the Sanctity of the Sacraments" (revision, July 2010)
http://www.catholicnews.com/data/stories/cns/1002915.htm
Readings: Lindley, 385-406
Mark Chaves, Ordaining Women, chapter 4, “The Changing Meaning of Women's Ordination” (Moodle)
Read: Pamela S. Nadell, Women Who Would be Rabbis, chpts 4 and 5 (Moodle)

Wed 9/27
Interpretive discussion: women and Christian authority

Part II: Sexuality, Marriage, Family Roles, and Religion

Week 5
Mon 10/2  Theoretical perspectives on gender and sexuality
Secondary Readings: Lindley, 252-74
Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, chpts 1 and 3 (Moodle)

Wed 10/4
Celibacy, the Second Coming and the Shakers
Primary sources: “A Virgin Life” [http://www.passtheword.org/shaker-manuscripts/Abstinence/shaker-abst-x1.htm](http://www.passtheword.org/shaker-manuscripts/Abstinence/shaker-abst-x1.htm)

Week 6
Mon 10/9
Exam #1 Due in Class
Mormons and plural marriage
Primary Sources: Joseph Smith, *Doctrines and Covenants*, Section 132.
LDS Church on the “Divine Institution of Marriage”
Secondary Readings: Lindley, 262-67

Wed 10/11
Italian Catholic women and the Domus-centered life
Primary Source: Ralph Fasanella, “Family Supper” and “Festa” paintings
Secondary Readings: Lindley, 197-226
Robert Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street*, chapters 4 and 5 (Moodle)

Week 7
Mon 10/16
Submit 4 Moodle posts for Midterm Grade
Jewish Immigrant Women’s Experience of Family Life
Readings: Lindley, 227-52
In-class film screening: *Hester Street*
Primary Source: Anzia Yezierska, *Bread Givers*, pp. 1-154

Wed 10/18
*Bread Giver*, pp. 155-297
**Week 8**
**Mon 10/22**
Interpretive discussion of immigrant women’s experiences

**Wed 10/25**
Muslim women in the US
Primary sources: 
Film: *What’s With the Hijab?* [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Iz4XjLKvzo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Iz4XjLKvzo)

**Week 9**
**Mon 10/30**
Secondary Reading: Lindley, 418-21
Jamilla Karim, *American Muslim Women*, chapters 1-3

**Wed 11/1**
Secondary Reading: Karim, chapters 4-6
Interpretive discussion

**Week 10**
**Mon 11/6**
Part II wrap up discussion. Exam handed out.

**Part III. The Body, Suffering, Healing, and Religious Authority**

**Wed 11/8**
Jewish and Muslim women’s bodies and authority in religious spaces –
Readings: Lindley, 421-24

**Week 11**
**Mon 11/13**
Exam #2 Due in Class

Christian Science and Pentecostal Healing: Mary Baker Eddy and Aimee Semple McPherson
Readings: Lindley, 267-

**Wed 11/15**
Catholic women and suffering

Paula Kane. “‘She Offered Herself Up’: The Victim Soul and Victim Spirituality in Catholicism,” *Church History* 71 (Mar. 2002): 80-119 (Moodle)

**Week 12**
**Mon 11/20** No class. Instructor out of town at AAR conference. Work on Research paper.

**Wed 11/22** No class. Thanksgiving Holiday

**Week 13**
**Mon 11/27**
Research Paper Draft Due
Vodou, gender and healing
“True Voodoo Meet Mama Lola. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DB0mUYpDeZg

**Wed 11/29**
Paper draft discussion
Loa, gender, social class, and getting by.
*Secondary Reading: Mama Lola*, chpt. 4-5

**Week 14**
**Mon 12/4**
Gender politics and GLBTQ participation in Vodou. Hougans, mambos, and loa.
*Secondary Reading: Mama Lola*, chpt 6-12

**Wed 12/6**
GLBTQ ordination/religious leadership
Readings: Congregation for Catholic Education, “Instruction Concerning the Criteria for the Discernment of Vocations with regard to Persons with Homosexual Tendencies in view of their Admission to the Seminary and to Holy Orders”

Week 15
Mon 12/11
Gay marriage across traditions.
Primary sources: TBA

Wed 12/13
4 Moodle Posts Due
Wrap-up Part III and course conclusions
Course evaluations


POLICIES AND PROTOCOLS

Assistance

Students are encouraged to converse with the instructor! You may drop by during office hours with or without an appointment. I am also available by appointment if you are unable to visit during office hours. Feel free to talk with me after class or email to set up an appointment. If you have questions, don’t hesitate to ask them and do not wait until the last minute to contact one me (e.g. the day before a paper is due). Students are responsible for all information disseminated in class and all course requirements, including deadlines and examinations.

If you have a disability that requires special accommodations or other classroom modifications, please notify both Disability Services as soon as possible. They will give you a letter to give to me. I am happy to discuss accommodations on a case-by-case basis. Disability Services: 612-626-1333 (on campus, X6-1333), email: ds@umn.edu, http://ds.umn.edu/index.html.

Writing Resources

Effective writing is a necessary life skill. Everyone can use help with it. Even well published authors rely upon the careful editing skills of numerous professional editors. The U of M Center for Writing provides excellent one-on-one assistance with papers, but get there early in the semester to start a relationship with a tutor. The other two sites listed here provide useful tips for all aspects of writing.

- Purdue Online Writing Lab. http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/

Protocols – General
• Students should come to class having read the day’s readings and prepared to discuss them.
• Bring the day’s reading assignment to class. Bring the book or print out the Moodle readings and bring them to class on the day they are assigned.
• Students must complete all assignments to receive a final grade in the course.
• At the instructor’s discretion, papers will be docked up to 1/3 of a letter grade (± or – equivalent) for each day late without instructor’s approval. Let me know if you need an extension.
• Attendance is expected. Three absences are freebies, no questions asked. Further unexcused absences may reduce your participation grade. Please inform instructor or TA ahead of class (through email), if possible, about extended absences.
• Late arrivals and early departures. Both late arrivals and early departures disrupt the class and should be avoided. Please notify the instructor ahead of time if a late arrival is unavoidable. Similarly, students who need to leave the classroom before the end of the session should also inform the instructor before the class begins. Unless there are extenuating circumstances, students who leave the classroom more than 15 minutes before the end of the period will be marked absent for the day.

Protocols – Academic Honesty

Students will be held to the highest standards of academic honesty. Plagiarism or cheating in any fashion will be reported to the Dean’s office.

Student Academic Integrity and Scholastic Dishonesty: All students enrolled in University courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else’s work as your own can result in disciplinary action. The University Student Conduct Code defines scholastic dishonesty as follows:

Scholastic Dishonesty: Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering, forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis.

Within this course, a student responsible for scholastic dishonesty can be assigned a penalty up to and including an "F" or "N" for the course. If you have any questions regarding the expectations for a specific assignment, ask the instructor.

Students are expected to express themselves in their own prose. Do not submit written work that does not properly acknowledge transcription or quotation of the work of others. To quote from a published work, you must put the passage in quotation marks and cite the reference. To express an author’s thought in your own words, you should cite the author you paraphrase to
indicate that the ideas are someone else’s and not yours. If you are not clear about the differences between scholarly citation, collaboration, and paraphrase—or about any other aspect of your assignments for this class—please consult the instructor during office hours or by appointment.

Writing Resources on Plagiarism:

- [http://writing.umn.edu/sws/quicktips/online_resources.htm](http://writing.umn.edu/sws/quicktips/online_resources.htm)
- [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/02/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/02/)
- [http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml](http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml)

Protocols – Classroom

- All participants in this course will demonstrate the highest levels of respect and consideration for ALL perspectives under consideration in the course.
- All participants in this course will employ the **highest standards** of ethical discourse and interaction.
- Efforts to transform or shape the religious views of individual students will not be tolerated.
- As we attempt to understand these various religious perspectives, analytical disagreement over issues is welcome, but passing value judgments on other perspectives or individuals is not.
- **Electronic devices may be used in class but ONLY to support activities directly related to the course.** You may NOT check your email, text a parent, read the assignment for another course, work on a paper for another course, play chess, etc. Be present! Fully! This is your education we’re talking about. It’s important. Further, studies show that unauthorized use of electronic devices in class (playing games, doing email, web surfing) disrupts and significantly affects the work of students near the user, not just the users themselves. Don’t allow your work to suffer because someone else is violating this policy.
- Repeated violations of the electronic devices policy will result in a ban on all electronic devices in this class.

Grading Criteria:

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<th>Description of achievement level</th>
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<td>A</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>Represents achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements. <strong>Papers:</strong> the paper satisfies all of B (below) but the analysis presented is also particularly creative, insightful, significant, compelling, well researched, or persuasively argued. The paper has NO punctuation, grammatical or usage errors, and it is fully and correctly documented.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
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<td>B+</td>
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<td>Grade</td>
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| B     | 3.0   | Represents achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.  
**Papers:** the paper demonstrates a sound understanding of the subject, has logical arguments and compelling supporting information is effectively organized, is correctly documented, and is generally free of punctuation, grammatical and usage errors. |
| B-    | 2.68  | |
| C+    | 2.33  | |
| C     | 2.0   | Represents achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.  
**Papers:** the paper demonstrates a correct understanding of the subject but lacks one or more of the features in B (above) |
| C-    | 1.68  | |
| D+    | 1.33  | |
| D     | 1.0   | Represents achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to meet the course requirements.  
**Papers:** The paper demonstrates little understanding of the topic and lacks several of the features in B (above). The paper does not satisfy minimum requirement for the assignment. |
| F     | 0     | Represents failure and signifies that the work was either (1) completed but at a level of achievement that is not worthy of credit or (2) was not completed and there was no agreement between the instructor and the student that the student would be awarded an I. |
| S     |       | Represents achievement that is satisfactory, which is equivalent to a C- or better; all lab assignments must be submitted. |
| N     |       | Represents failure (or no credit) and signifies that the work was either (1) completed but at a level of achievement that is not worthy of credit or (2) was not completed and there was no agreement between the instructor and the student that the student would be awarded an I. |
| I     |       | (Incomplete) Assigned at the discretion of the instructor when, due to extraordinary circumstances, e.g., hospitalization, a student is prevented from completing the work of the course on time. Requires a written agreement between instructor and student. |