

IST3024 / THEO6314 – Feminist Theology

Spring 2014

Thursdays 6:00-9:30pm

Instructor: Heike Peckruhn, Ph.D.

Office: Taylor Library, L-111

Office Hours: Mo, Tue, Wed, by appointment

Email: hpeckruhn@iliff.edu

Feminist, Womanist, Mujerista, African, and Asian Women's Theologies

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course seeks to familiarize ourselves with the themes in diverse feminist theological projects. We will study the emergence of feminist theological discourse, its relation to feminist theories and social movements, and thereby investigate interracial and intercultural dimensions and discussions within which various theological and ethical perspectives emerge. We will examine major issues and methods in diverse theologies from various social and geographical locations. We will cover a broad variety of feminist theologies and give attention to the major themes and intersections of diverse feminist theologies and discuss how they inform and intersect with our own life experiences. This course also aims to contribute to our understanding of practical dimensions of ministry, social justice organizing, and spiritual formation, as we are challenged by gender and sexual justice issues, ethnic, racial and colonization issues. We will aim to increase our awareness of doing theology amidst difference and explore possibilities for dialogue and solidarity among women in different (global) contexts.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES:

1. To gain a basic overview of the historical and methodological trajectories, common themes and commitments, and the challenges and contributions offered by various feminist theologies.
2. To distinguish between a variety of authors and perspectives in feminist theologies.
3. To articulate an in-depth understanding of at least one specific figure and/or topic in feminist theology.
4. To draw connections between and offer critiques of various perspectives in and methodologies of feminist theologies.

Course Texts (on reserve in the Library)

Required Text

Clifford, Anne M. *Introducing Feminist Theology*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001.

Choose ONE out of TWO book groups below (there are three groups)

Group A - Scripture / Biblical Interpretation / Language

Chopp, Rebecca. *The Power to Speak: Feminism, Language, God*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1991.

Dube, Musa W. *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*. St. Louis, MS: Chalice, 2000.

Johnson, Elizabeth A. *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse*. New York: Crossroads, 1994.

Kwok, Pui-Lan. *Discovering the Bible in the Non-Biblical World*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995.

Trible, Phyllis. *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984.

Group B – Systematic Theology / Constructive Theology

Aquino, María Pilar. *Our Cry for Life: Feminist Theology from Latin America*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1994.

Brock, Rita Nakashima. *Journeys by Heart: A Christology of Erotic Power*. New York: Crossroad, 1988.

Copeland, M. Shawn. *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009.

Heyward, Carter. *Touching Our Strength: The Erotic as Power and the Love of God*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989.

Isasi-Díaz, Ada María. *Mujerista Theology: A Theology for the Twenty-First Century*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1999.

Joh, Wohnee Anne. *Heart of the Cross: A Postcolonial Christology*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2006.

Williams, Delores S. *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2003.

Group C - Ethics / Social Justice / Spiritualities

Christ, Carol P. *Rebirth of the Goddess: Finding Meaning in Feminist Spirituality*. New York: Routledge, 1997.

Coleman, Monica. *Making a Way out of No Way: A Womanist Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008.

Gebara, Ivone. *Longing for Running Water: Ecofeminism and Liberation*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993.

McFague, Sallie. *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993.

Mollenkott, Virginia Ramsey. *Sensuous Spirituality: Out from Fundamentalism*. Pilgrim Press, 2008.

Ruether, Rosemary R., ed. *Women Healing Earth: Third World Women on Ecology, Feminism, and Religion*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996.

NATURE OF THE COURSE

This class is designed for students who are interested in learning more about feminist theologies or are looking for an opportunity to apply their skills in religious studies to a diverse and still developing field. The course will be divided into two sections.

- × The first section aims to provide a brief, basic overview of the emergence of feminist theology as a field, the historical contexts of specific challenges and contributions offered, some of the methodologies employed, and the interrelations with feminist movements and theories.
- × The second section will examine a variety of (sometimes radically different) contemporary feminist theologies, their context, interlocutors, and major themes.

Throughout the class, we will explore issues of identity, interpretation, methodology, and praxis. These explorations will also examine various ideas of being human, God/Goddess, what it means to be a “woman,” and other theological and theo-ethical issues.

The format of the class will be a combination of lecture, discussion, and other classroom activities. Students are expected to come to class prepared, having read and reflected thoughtfully on the assigned material, and ready to highlight key points or raise questions for discussion. The class is designed to be interactive, because (as feminist theologians argue) we each bring our own questions, perspectives, and resources to this sort of work, so active participation is expected of all members of the class.

This class will not try to convert you into a feminist theologian (or discourage you from that occupation). Rather, it will look at a variety of mainly scholarly sources to help you come up with your own understanding and analysis of the place of feminist thought in the field of theology. Due to the limits of this class, as well as available textual sources, the emphasis of this course will be primarily (though not exclusively) on Christian theology. Students who have an interest in learning more about a particular non-Christian tradition (or any specific area within feminist theology) are encouraged to address this with the instructor during office hours, so that additional resources or alternate assignments may be offered.

Due Dates: Assignments need to be completed and turned in on the dates specified on the syllabus, unless arrangements have been made with the instructor in advance. Penalties will be assigned for late assignments. As contingent faculty, I will **not grant incompletes**. If a situation arises where you believe you will not be able to complete the course requirements, please see me as soon as possible.

Pass/Fail: Students wishing to take the class *pass/fail* should discuss this with me by April 10.

Academic Integrity: All students are expected to abide by Iliff's statement on Academic Integrity, as published in the Masters Student Handbook, or the Joint PhD Statement on Academic Honesty, as published in the Joint PhD Student Handbook, as appropriate.

Accommodations: Students with disabilities who may need academic accommodations should discuss options with the instructor during the first two weeks of class.

Masters Degree Learning Goals Supported By This Course

MDiv Learning Goals:

- 1.2. Students will demonstrate awareness of Christianity as a historically-situated movement that interacted and changed in relationship to its surrounding cultures and subcultures over time, resulting in various expressions of Christianity located within and influenced by social structures, historical events, and ethnic and cultural ideologies
- 3.3. Students will identify and articulate their constructive theological position on an issue, current event, or traditional Christian doctrinal category with clarity

MASC Learning Goals:

1. Students will engage in social, historical, and political analysis in order to identify key factors impacting situations in which social change is desired and potential contradictions within these settings that open up the possibility for change.
2. Students will articulate and critically evaluate a range of social change strategies engaged by historical and contemporary communities and identify the meaning and value systems (religious and secular) that undergird them.

MAPSC Learning Goals:

2. Students will identify and critically evaluate the ways in which their personal, religious, and cultural experience, along with their activities in pastoral and spiritual care, shape their theology, moral orientation, and vocational formation.

MA Learning Goals

4. Establish enough of a breadth of awareness of historic and contemporary thinkers within their particular discipline that they will be able to identify and choose good conversation partners within their field to engage their research question.

MTS Learning Goals

1. Articulate the spiritual and social complexities of religious and cultural traditions related to the area of their specific focus/interest.
2. Demonstrate theological fluency with one or more of the academic disciplines involved in theological studies (historical theology, practical theology, biblical interpretation, ethics, etc.)

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

(all class sessions subject to change, as announced in class and posted on Canvas)

Part 1 – Contexts, Emergences, Methodologies

Week 1 (March 27)

WTF: Women, Theology, Feminism

Introductions “Theology” “Feminism” and its methodologies	Clifford, Introduction & Chapter 1
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Week 2 (April 3)

Contexts and Theories of (Women’s) Experience

Defining Experience What kinds of experiences? Intersectionality, Difference, Agency	Jones, “Women’s Nature?” (26 pgs) Kwok, <i>Unbinding our Feet</i> (18pgs) <i>Start reading your selected books!</i>
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Week 3 (April 10)

Experiencing Histories

Christian History, Feminist Foremothers Historical Texts of Terror	Clifford, Chapter 4 (37pgs) <i>You really want to read your selected books!</i>
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Part 2 – Themes, Contexts, Projects

Week 4: April 17

Texts, Stories, Scriptures

Recovering experience in/with texts and Histories Approaching texts from experience	Clifford, Chapter 2 (40pgs) <i>Choose Two:</i> Donaldson, <i>Sign of Orpah</i> (12pgs) Zaru, <i>Biblical Teachings</i> (15pgs) Yee, <i>She Stood in Tears</i> (20pgs)
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Summit: Kwok, Dube, Tribble, Williams

Week 5: April 24

Language, Symbols, Imaging

Structure / Structuring Experience Experiencing the Divine Expressing Experience	Clifford, Chapter 3 & 5 (60 pgs) Keller, <i>Apophysis of Gender</i> (26pgs)
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Summit: Johnson, Christ, Chopp

Week 6: May 1

Anthropology and other Body Things

Being Human, Naming Ourselves Embodied Theologizing	Ruether, <i>Anthropology</i> (23pgs) Betcher, <i>Becoming Flesh of My Flesh</i> (11pgs) Creamer, <i>Embracing Limits, Queering Embodiment</i> (5pgs) <i>Chose One:</i> Bal, <i>Sexuality, Sin, and Sorrow</i> (24pgs)
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	Kamitsuka, <i>Feminist Postmodern Postcolonial Interpretation of Sin</i> (33pgs)
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Summit: Aquino, Copeland

Week 7: May 8

Oppression/Suffering & Justice

Experiencing Suffering Christ Experiences Bringing about just experiences	Jones, <i>Oppression</i> (25pgs) Bong, <i>The Suffering Christ and the Asian Body</i> (6pgs) Oduyoye, <i>Jesus Christ</i> (16pgs) Skye, <i>Australian Aboriginal Women's Christologies</i> (9pgs) Smith, <i>Dismantling the Master's House</i> (12pgs)
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Summit: Joh, Brock, Coleman, Isasi-Diaz

Week 8: May 15

Sin(s) of (Hetero)Sexism: More Sex(y) Things

Experiencing Sexuality Experiencing as sexual beings Sexual Theologies	Hero, <i>Toward a Queer Theology of Flourishing</i> (20pgs) Harrison & Heyward <i>Pain and Pleasure</i> (14pgs) Hero Califia <i>Sadomasochism and Spirituality</i> (13pgs) Althaus-Reid <i>Pussy, Queen of Pirates</i> (11 pgs)
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Summit: Heyward, Mollenkott

Week 9: May 22

Ecofeminism/Ecowomanism

Experiencing beyond ourselves as humans Experiencing Creation	Clifford, Chapter 6
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Summit: Ruether (ed), Gebara, McFague

Week 10: May 29

Feminist Theology Party

Concluding discussion & wrap-up	
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****All readings & dates may be adjusted after the summit schedule is determined****

Take-home final will be distributed on May 15 & is due in my email inbox by Thursday, May 29th 6pm – late exams will not be accepted.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

Summit Expert (35%): Obviously, there is more to “Feminist Theology” than we can cover in one quarter. Throughout the quarter, we will distribute some of the facilitation of learning and have each of you be the expert on a topic/issue/author for an in-class summit. You will all have chosen two books from our book list. For each book, together with the classmates who have chosen this particular book as well, your assignment is to teach the class about it. In addition to reading your primary source, you will learn background information, reflect on key points (on and beyond the summit topic outlined), and think about how to share this material with the class in an interesting way. As summit experts, you will teach the class what they need to know about the book in regards to the summit topic, as well as interesting issues beyond the guiding questions. Your summit should include audience involvement (your classmates will have participatory requirements from the instructor as well). Creativity is highly encouraged. Hand outs or visual aids are recommended. I will be glad to consult with you about the material or your presentation.

The goal of these summits is to highlight the significance of feminist theology and the unique contribution of your chosen author. As summit expert, this also allows you to learn something new and to be guided by your own interests, not just those of the instructor. While each summit has a theme, you are encouraged to make connections to other themes, and follow the paths the author inspires you to think and imagine.

Details will be posted on canvas. A portion of our first class will be spent discussing the assignment, identifying summit expert groups, and beginning the calendar negotiations. *Presentations schedules will be confirmed and posted on canvas by April 4.*

Expert Cheat Sheet (15%): For the author/work that you are not serving as a summit expert, you are required a “cheat sheet” that compiles information and insights, as to serve you in case you would be called upon as an expert. Details will be posted on canvas.

Take-Home Final Exam (20%): A take-home exam will be distributed on May 26 and is to be uploaded to canvas by **May 29th** at 6pm. E-mail submissions are allowed, but do not assume the instructor has received the paper unless you receive an e-mail confirmation from her. Late exams will not be accepted. The exam will draw on all sections of the course and allow you to make connections between and offer critiques of the perspectives we explore this quarter. The exam should be typed, 4-6 pages total. You may consult notes and books; however, it is not meant to be a research paper, and will be graded based on your ability to draw conclusions and to offer your own scholarly interpretation of course topics.

Attendance & Classroom Participation (20%): The interactive nature of this course makes regular attendance essential. Credit will be given for involved participation (quality, not quantity) in lecture, discussion, in-class activities, and presentations (your own as well as those of other students), as well as for class attendance. In-class activities may not be made up. Contact the instructor as soon as possible if extraordinary circumstances arise that will affect your attendance or participation in class.

SPECIAL NOTE TO JUNE GRADUATES: Please see the instructor about modified due dates to meet the requirements for June graduation.
