# SAMPLE SYLLABUS

# (tentative and subject to revision)

**Women in Western Religion**

**Religion 2981.80/WSTU 3981.80**

**Fall 2016**

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| --- | --- |
| instructor: Kelly Pemberton | classroom: Duques 361 |
| email: kpembert@gwu.edu | meeting times: T, R 11:10-12:25 |
| office: 2106 G St. NW, Dept. of Religion | office hours: T, R 3-4:15 pm & by appointment |
| office phone: (202) 994-6363 |  |

# COURSE DESCRIPTION

Using historical, theological, archaeological, ethnographic, literary, and confessional investigations of women in a variety of religious traditions, this class will examine women’s lives in relationship to the sacred. With a central focus on ancient goddess cults, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, we assess images, experiences, and roles of women as expressed in symbol, ritual, text, myth, and the realm of public discourse. While critically assessing the roles of women and meanings of the feminine through the lens of gender, this class investigates such topics as

a) texts about and by women;

b) feminist notions of spirituality;

c) women’s bodies and the sacred;

d) the dialectic of restriction and empowerment;

e) discourses about women vs. women's observed practices in the realm of the religious; and

f) postcolonial critical representations of women of ethnic and religious minority communities

# COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADE PERCENTAGES

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| **% of grade** | **ASSIGNMENT** |
| 20% | two 3-4 page “reflection” papers (10% each); you have a choice between topics I will provide, or you may choose your own, subject to the instructor’s approval. These papers are intended to get you to engage the texts we read in an analytical, comparative way. No outside research is involved. |
| 15%  | Annotated bibliography and synopsis. This assignment is in preparation for your final paper. The bibliography should consist of books you will use (or think you will use) for that paper, and the synopsis should convey the subject, key questions (or argument), and methodology of your final paper. |
| 10% | First draft of final paper (minimum length: 4 pages) |
| 15% | Panel presentation. Each panelist provides a critical evaluation of the assigned readings for the day. Panels will consist of up to 5 participants. |
| 5% | Summary:one student will present a quick (5 minute) summary of the previous session with the major discussion points. |
| 20% | final research paper, position paper, or dialogue paper: 10-12 pages |
| 15% | attendance (10%) and (general) participation (5%) |
| ungraded | brief in-class writing exercises to assess your comprehension of the reading |

**TEXTS AND READING**

**A. Required texts for purchase**

1. Ann Braude, *Radical Spirits* (2001)
2. Tivka Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddess* (1993)
3. Deborah Sawyer, *Women and Religion in the First Christian Centuries* (1996)

**B. Optional texts for purchase (assigned readings from these books are in the course reader or on Blackboard)**

Carol Newsom and Sharon Ringe, *The Women’s Bible Commentary*

**C. Additional Required Reading** is located on Blackboard, in the folder marked "Files" (**Bb** on syllabus means that the reading is located on Blackboard)

# COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1 (Aug 30-Sept. 1):

* Introductory Remarks & course overview
* Frymer-Kensky, pp. 1-31

Week 2 (Sept 6-8)

* Bb: “Inanna and the mes”
* Bb: “The Descent of Inanna” (Wolkstein-Kramer transl.)
* Frymer-Kensky, pp. 32-69
* Bb: Excerpts from the Gilgamesh epic

Week 3 (Sept 13-15):

* Frymer-Kensky, pp. 70-99
* Bb:excerpts from the *Enuma Elish*
* *Opt: Bb:**Baring and Cashford, pp. 273-98*
* Sawyer, pp. 1-48

Week 4 (Sept. 20-22):

* Bb: Fuchs, pp. 77-84
* *Opt:* **** *Women’s Bible Commentary (Ruth, Esther)*

Week 5 (Sept. 27-29):

* Bb: Fuchs, pp. 127-140
* Sawyer, pp. 73-90
* Bb: Levine, pp. 367-76
* Bb: read book of Judith, and Judges chapters 2, 4-5, 9-11, 13-16, and 19-21 in NRSV Bible (OT)
* *Opt:* *Bb:* *Bal, pp. 317-33*

Week 6 (Oct 4-6):

* Bb: Getty-Sullivan pp. 1-41
* Bb: read Luke chapters 1-2
*  *Women’s Bible Commentary (Luke)*
* Bb: Getty-Sullivan pp. 163-219
*  Women’s Bible Commentary (John)

Week 7 (Oct 11-13)

* Sawyer, pp. 91-116
* Bb: read Matthew chapter 1, chapter 9:18-26; chapters 27 and 28
* *Opt:***** *Women’s Bible Commentary (Matthew)*
* Bb: Qur’an 3: 195-96; 4: 1-36; 33:36; 42: 49-50; 58:2-7
* van Doorn-Harder, 1-24

Week 8 (Oct. 18-20):

* van Doorn-Harder, 50-83, 87-130
* van Doorn-Harder, 237-60

Week 9 (Oct 25-27):

* Braude, Radical Spirits pp. 1-31
* Braude, Radical Spirits pp. 82-116
* Bb: “the Cult of True Womanhood”

Week 10 (Nov. 1-3):

* Braude, *Radical Spirits* pp. 117-41
* Braude, *Radical Spirits* pp. 162-202

Week 11 (Nov 8-10):

* Bb: Donaldson in Castelli and Rodman, pp. 237-56
* exercise: find an example of NANA online and post to the discussion board.
* Bb: Talamantez in Hernández-Avila, pp. 219-50

Week 12 (Nov 15-17):

* NO CLASS – PROFESSOR OUT

Week 13 (Nov 22):

* Recap previous discussion on representation and frame upcoming themes on the body

Week 14 (Nov 29, Dec 1):

* Basarudin, Mohammed and Shaikh in Husain, 129-159
* Bb: Yadgar, 353-79

Week 15 (Dec 6-8):

* Bb: Walker-Bynum, 113-49, Walker-Bynum. 189-218
* Bb: watch film **“**the Burning Times” before today’s class
* Bb: Federici, pp. 163-218 and wrap-up of class

## Table of Contents

Reading materials posted to Blackboard (excluding the Bible and the Qur’an)

1. “Inanna and the mes” titled “Innana and Enki: The Transfer of Divine Knowledge from Eridu to Uruk,” in James W. Bell’s *Ancient Sumeria: When the Gods Walked Upon the Face of the Earth.* [Http://www.jameswbell.com/m011inannaandenki.html](http://www.jameswbell.com/m011inannaandenki.html) (dead link)
2. “The Descent of Inanna” (Wolkstein-Kramer transl.) <http://www.piney.com/InanasDescNetherKram.html>
3. Bb: Excerpts from the Gilgamesh epic, with summary by Richard Hooker <http://www.wsu.edu/~dee/MESO/GILG/HTM> (dead link).
4. excerpts from the *Enuma Elish*, from N.K. Sandars, transl.,*Ancient Near Eastern Texts.* Princeton: Princeton U Press, 1955.
5. Esther Fuchs, “Status and Role of Female Heroines in the Biblical Narrative,” pp. 77-84 in *Women in the Hebrew Bible*, Alice Bach, ed. New York and London: Routledge, 1999.
6. Esther Fuchs, “The Literary Characterization of Mothers and Sexual Politics in the Hebrew Bible,” pp. 127-40, in *Women in the Hebrew Bible*, Alice Bach, ed. New York and London: Routledge, 1999.
7. Amy-Jill Levine, “Sacrifice and Salvation: Otherness and Domestication in the Book of Judith,” pp. 367-76, in *Women in the Hebrew Bible*, Alice Bach, ed. New York and London: Routledge, 1999.
8. Mary-Ann Getty-Sullivan, “Women of Expectant Faith: Elizabeth, Mary of the Infancy Narratives, Anna,” pp. 1-41, in *Women in the New Testament.* Collegeville, MN: The Order of the St. Benedict, Inc., 2001.
9. Mary-Ann Getty-Sullivan, “Women and Discipleship,” pp. 163-219 in *Women in the New Testament.* Collegeville, MN: The Order of the St. Benedict, Inc., 2001.
10. Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood 1820-1860” *American Quarterly* vol. 18 no. 2, part 1 (summer 1966): 154-74.
11. Laura Donaldson, “On Medicine Women and White Shame-Ans: New Age Native Americanism and Commodity Fetishism as Pop Culture Feminism,” pp. 237-53. In Elisabeth Anne Castelli and Rosamond C. Rodman, *Women, Gender, Religion: a Reader*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2001.
12. Ines Talamantez, “Seeing Red: American Indian Women Speaking about their Religious and Political Perspectives,” pp. 219-50. In *Reading Native American Women: Critical/Creative Representations*. Inés Hernández-Avila, ed., Lanham, MD: Altamira Press, 2005.
13. Azza Basarudin, Maddy Mhammed, and Khanum Shaikh, “Our Memories of Islam: Pakistani, Malaysian, and Palestinian Women (Re)imagine “Muslim” and (Re)define Faith,” pp. 129-59. In Sarah Husain, *Voices of Resistance: Muslim Women on War, Faith, and Sexuality.* Emeryville, CA: Seal Press, 2006.
14. Yaacov Yadgar, “Gender, Religion, and Feminism: the Case of Jewish Israeli Traditionalists.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* vol. 45 iss 3 (2006): 353-370.
15. Caroline Walker-Bynum, “Food in the Lives of Women Saints,” pp. 113-49. In *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women.* Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987.
16. Caroline Walker-Bynum, “Food as Control of the Self,” pp. 189-218. In *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women.* Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987.
17. Silvia Federici, pp. 163-218 (“The Great Witch-Hunt in Europe,” In *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body, and Primitive Accumulation.* New York: Autonomedia, 2004.