

# **Women, the Bible, and the Church**

BIBL 6280

Spring 2023

North Park Theological Seminary

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Mondays – 1:00 – 4:00 pm

## **Course Description**

A study of the Old and New Testament texts that bear on the roles and status of women and other marginalized people. This course reflects on a wide range of historical and theological perspectives relevant to the issues of marginalized people, the Bible, and the church. Biblical Emphasis-Old and New Testament, but students may use and engage other sacred texts.

## **Course Objectives**

1. Students will be able to identify key texts about women's roles in religious communities in both the Old and New Testaments.
2. Students will be able to describe how various methods of feminist biblical hermeneutics come to bear on key texts and critically analyze texts in light of those methods.
3. Students will be able to explain the scholarly debate around the role of women in various Ancient Near Eastern and Greco-Roman religious communities.
4. Student will be able to clearly express their ideas in writing.

## **Required Readings**

Elizabeth A. Johnson, ed., *The Strength of Her Witness: Jesus Christ in the Global Voices of Women*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 2016

Nyasha Junior, *An Introduction to Womanist Biblical Interpretation*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015.

Phyllis Trible and Letty M. Russell, eds., *Hagar, Sarah, and Their Children*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006.

Additional readings will be handed out in class

## **Assignments**

1. **Participation (20%):** Part of the participation grade will be based on discussion of the readings in class. Participation does not always mean talking – good listening is part of

participation. Regarding attendance, students are expected to attend all classes, arrive promptly and well-prepared, and to conduct themselves respectfully in their interaction with class members. If you must miss a class, please notify either instructor. If you miss a class for any reason, make sure that you get the notes from the day you missed from a classmate.

2. **Identity Presentation (15%):** Students will do a 3-5 min presentation that describes their identity (on student's own terms) and discusses how their identity shapes their reading and contributes to the interpretative community.

3. **Three Papers (20% each)**

The purpose of each of the 3 papers is to critically engage a topic in a personally interpretive way interacting with 1-2 scholarly resources (undergrad students) or 3-4 scholarly sources (seminary students). Articles will be provided. *Paper 2/Paper 3:* Prompts for these short papers will be handed out in class. Length: 1250-1500 words

*Paper 1:* Choose FOR or AGAINST ONE of the moral claims that you think the Bible clearly addresses from the choices below\*. Your task is to write a biblical argument for your position. Your paper should include specific biblical texts as well as an analysis of those texts more broadly (e.g., looking at the broader framing of the text and the connections between the texts and the larger story of Scripture).

\*Moral Claims (choose ONE and argue for or against):

All human beings will eventually be saved.

Marriage is only between one man and one woman.

Capital punishment can be justified in some circumstances.

Interracial marriage is unethical.

Only men can be ordained pastors.

Slavery is a justified form of work.

\*If there is another moral claim you would like to work on, let me know!

## **Reading Schedule**

*Readings should be completed before the Monday class session each week and are listed in italics.*

### **January 24**

Introduction to Feminism and Feminist Theology

Introducing the Biblical Text

*Junior – Introduction and Chapter 1*

*Trible and Russel – Chapter 1*

*Junior – Chapters 2 and 3*

*Junior – Chapters 5 and 6*

### **January 30**

Feminist Biblical Hermeneutics

*Bring "Trible – Genesis 2-3" to class this week (you do not need to read it in advance)*

*Women's Bible Commentary on Jephthah's Daughter*

*Judges 11*

*Women's Bible Commentary on the Levite's Concubine*

*Judges 19*

### **February 6**

Wives and Daughters: Women, Sex, and Violence in Biblical Tradition

An Unnamed Woman

The Daughter of Jephthah

*Bring "Reeder-Wives and Daughters" to class today (you do not need to read it in advance)*

*Women's Bible Commentary on Tamar*

*2 Samuel 13-18*

### **February 13**

Tamar

*Johnson – Chapter 7*

### **February 20**

Religious activities of Greco-Roman and God-fearing Women

Religious activities of Jewish and Christian Women

*Johnson – Chapter 2*

### **Paper 1 Due**

### **February 27**

Jesus and Women I

### **March 6**

**Midterm Exam (to take outside of class)**

*Johnson – Chapter 6*

### **March 13**

Jesus and Women II

*Johnson – Chapter 6*

*Johnson – Chapter 15*

*Johnson – Chapter 10*

### **March 20**

Jesus and Women III

*Johnson – Chapter 17*

### **March 27**

Paul and Women

*Johnson – Chapter 21*

### **Paper 2 Due**

### **April 3**

#### **Women in the Early Church**

Women as Martyrs

*Kramer and D'Angelo – Chapter 12-14*

### **April 10**

Women as Heretics

Women in Church Leadership

*Trible and Russel – Chapters 2-3*

### **April 17**

The Church Fathers on Women

*Trible and Russel – Chapters 4-5*

### **April 24**

Case Study: Hagar

*Trible and Russel – Chapters 6-7*

### **Paper 3 Due**

## **May 1**

Hagar II

## **May 8**

Wrap-up

### **Identity Presentations in class**

#### Grading

The following grading standards provide further guidance for your written work.

- “A” work: (1) Responds fully to the assignment; (2) Expresses its purpose clearly and convincingly; (3) Is directed toward and meets the needs of a defined audience; (4) Begins and ends effectively; (5) Provides adequate supporting arguments, evidence, examples, and details; (6) Is well-organized and unified; (7) Uses appropriate, direct language; (8) Correctly acknowledges and documents sources; (9) Is free of errors in grammar, punctuation, word choice, spelling, and format; and (10) Maintains a level of excellence throughout and shows originality and creativity in realizing (1) through (7)
- “B” work: Realizes (1) through (9) fully and completely—and demonstrates overall technical excellence—but often shows little or no original insight or creativity.
- “C” work: Realizes (1) through (9) adequately—and demonstrates overall competence—but contains a few, relatively minor errors or flaws. A “C” paper may show great capacity and originality, but those qualities don’t make up for poor or careless writing. A “C” paper usually looks and reads like it would benefit from some additional drafts or research.
- “D” work: Fails to realize some elements of (1) through (9) adequately—and contains many serious errors or flaws, and usually many minor ones, as well. A “D” paper often looks and reads like a first or second draft.
- “F” work: Fails to realize several elements of (1) through (9) adequately—and contains many serious errors or flaws, and usually many minor ones, as well. An “F” paper looks and reads like a first draft written the day before the paper was due.