

BIBL 6280: WOMEN, THE BIBLE, AND THE CHURCH

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course seeks to develop a biblical and theological understanding of several crucial topics: an overview of biblical texts on women, the divinely intended relationship of male and female with focus on sexual practice, issues of gender and ministry, headship and submission, leadership and theology, and issues relating to God and gender. The course pays particular attention to interpretation of major biblical texts and their relevance for leadership and ministry roles today. Three semester hours

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES

The successful student will:

1. Develop an awareness of the biblical and theological issues surrounding women in pastoral leadership, including:
 - Key biblical texts regarding women in pastoral leadership
 - Key biblical texts regarding authority and power
 - Exegetical arguments concerning women in pastoral leadership
 - Theological perspectives on female and male relationships
 - Hermeneutical issues central to the debate over women in pastoral leadership
 - Attitudes towards women in the biblical and modern world
2. Become familiar with the history of women in the church, including:
 - Leadership of women in the early church
 - Women and ordination
 - Biblical feminism
3. Be able to critically address issues of patriarchy, both ancient and modern.
 - Develop a Christian understanding of women, dynamics between male and female, and human sexuality
 - Develop awareness of the problems of abuse
4. Gain an appreciation for women as leaders and laity within the church, as well as themes relating to:
 - Women and leadership
 - Pastoral care issues for women in the church
 - The formation of Christian identity in women (and men)
 - Develop a healthy understanding of what it means to be an embodied person transformed by the gospel

III. REQUIRED COURSE READING MATERIAL (+/- 10%)

- Barr, Beth Allison. *The Making of Biblical Womanhood: How the Subjugation of Women Became Gospel Truth*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2021. ISBN: 978-1-58743-470-9. 256 Pages.
- Gupta, Nijay. *Tell Her Story: How Women Led, Taught, and Ministered in the Early Church*. IVP Academic. ISBN: 978-1514000748. 224 Pages.
- Westfall, Cynthia Long. *Paul and Gender: Reclaiming the Apostle's Vision for Men and Women in Christ*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016. ISBN: 978-0801097942. 368 Pages.
- See the course schedule for additional required essays and articles available on Canvas.

IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Pre-course Reading and Reflection Papers (due on Monday, June 2, 2025)

1. Write a 1000-word (+/- 25%) essay focused on the call-story of a Christian woman leader who lived any time prior to the 20th-Century. **You might consult the “Brief Survey of Women in Church History” document (in Canvas) if you need help getting started with this.**

- Highlight the influences (human, written, etc.) on that sister’s call
- Are there parallels to your story—or that of someone you personally know in Christian ministry?
- What about their experience contributes to your understanding of the role of women in the church?

Note: This paper requires a degree of research but is not meant to be an exhaustive biography. Our hope is for you to become acquainted with some women leaders of an earlier era and to consider the broader notion of “call” to ministry. Be prepared to discuss your essay on the first day of class, so we can learn from each other’s explorations.

2. Write an 800-word (+/- 20%) essay describing your own experiences related to women’s roles in church (or other ministry settings). Consider:

- What Scripture passages governed the role of women in your church/ministry experience?
- What ministries, responsibilities, tasks, or roles did women fill?
- Were there women who nurtured your Christian faith at some point? What forms did that nurture take?

3. Read the required texts by Barr, Gupta, and Westfall (if you don’t finish before June 2, you’ll need to finish by August 8, 2025):

Attendance and Active Participation

Because this is a week-long course, students are expected to attend all sessions. Please arrive prepared to engage actively in discussion. Class and small group conversations

should be comfortable spaces that encourage constructive contributions from everyone. To that end, students should come ready to listen, share space (take turns speaking), and respect the views of others.

Post-course Assignments (due August 8, 2025)

1. Read the remainder of the required reading and turn in a reading report.
2. Exegesis Paper (3000 words +/- 30%) on one of the significant texts regarding women in ministry:
 - Your paper should focus on **one** major passage, with references to additional passages that both support and challenge your interpretation.
 - Your paper should have a section on how this passage relates to the church today. This may include how the passage has been interpreted within the church, how it shapes the role of women in the church, how you would teach it in the church, or a specific ministry issue related to women (i.e., domestic violence, men and women leading together, body images/issues, empowering girls for discipleship, etc.) that overlaps with your passage and its practical implications for the church today.
 - ♦ ***Your choice of passage should be approved by the instructors by the last day of class: June 6, 2025. Guidelines for exegesis papers are in Canvas.***
 - ♦ ***This is a class on Women, the Bible, and the Church. So, all three topics need to be addressed in your paper. There should be a biblical component, an ecclesial component, and a component that addresses the relationship or impact on women.***

All papers should be double-spaced and follow standard academic formatting, using Turabian style. They will be turned in via Canvas.

Your exegesis paper should include a bibliography citing at least seven major sources—at least one of which should be a periodical article. (Bibles, concordances, and lexica do not count!) Quotations, if they must be included, should be confined in footnotes or endnotes rather than in the body of your paper.

V. GRADING

Attendance and Participation	15%
Reading	10%
Call Story Paper	25%
Reflection Paper	20%
Biblical Exegesis Paper	30%

GRADE SCALE, following the scale printed in the [Seminary Academic Catalog](#), p. 21.

A: Superior work (A = 95–100; A- = 93–94)

This grade applies to exceptional work, the quality achieved through excellence of performance, not merely the fulfillment of the course requirements.

B: Above average (B+ = 91-92; B = 88-90; B- = 86-87)

This grade applies to meritorious work, definitely above average, applied to more than the fulfillment of requirements.

C: Average (C+ = 84-85; C = 80-83; C – = 78-79)

This grade applies to average work that still fulfills the course requirements.

D: Unsatisfactory (D+ = 76-77; D = 72-75; D – = 70-71)

This grade, while indicating the student has completed a course, is to be understood as reflecting below average work. Course work receiving this grade will not be counted toward a degree.

F: Failure (69 and below)

To receive credit in the subject, the course must be repeated.

VI. STUDENT RESOURCES AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

ATTENDANCE

If you experience difficulties, please speak to the instructor about it. Illness and other unforeseen circumstances beyond your control will be regarded sympathetically, but poor planning on your part is not a good excuse. Poor attendance without good reason will affect your class participation grade. The same principles apply to requests for extensions for reports and papers. Late submission without good reason will result in grade reduction.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

In keeping with our Christian heritage and commitment, North Park University is committed to the highest possible ethical and moral standards. Just as we will constantly strive to live up to these high standards, we expect our students to do the same. To that end, cheating of any sort will not be tolerated. Students who are discovered cheating will receive a failing grade on the assignment and are subject to discipline up to and including failure of a course and expulsion. Our definition of cheating includes but is not limited to:

1. Plagiarism – the use of another’s work as one’s own without giving credit to the individual. This includes using materials from the internet.
2. Copying another’s answers on an examination.
3. Deliberately allowing another to copy one’s answers or work.
4. Signing an attendance roster for another who is not present.

For additional information, see the [Seminary Academic Catalog](#), pp. 25–27.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact their program's office (773-244-5619) as soon as possible to ensure accommodations are implemented in a timely manner. For further information, see [Seminary Catalog](#), p. 17 and “[Disability Resources](#)” provided through North Park’s Office of Student Enrichment Services and Support.

TITLE IX

Students who believe they have been harassed, discriminated against, or involved in sexual violence should contact the Dean of Students (773-244-5565) or Director of Human Resources (773-244-5599) for information about campus resources and support services, including confidential counseling services. As members of the North Park faculty, we are concerned about the well-being and development of our students and are available to discuss any concerns. Faculty are legally obligated to share information with the University’s Title IX coordinator in certain situations to help ensure that the student’s safety and welfare is being addressed, consistent with the requirements of the law. These disclosures include but are not limited to reports of sexual assault, relational/domestic violence, and stalking.

Please refer to North Park’s [Safe Community site](#) for contact information and further details.

VII. COURSE SCHEDULE: TBD

VIII. BIBLIOGRAPHY

▪ *Required Reading*

Barr, Beth Allison. *The Making of Biblical Womanhood: How the Subjugation of Women Became Gospel Truth*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 202.

Becker, Carol E. *Leading Women: How Church Women Can Avoid Leadership Traps and Negotiate the Gender Maze*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995. Pages 143-60.

Bowens, Lisa M. *African American Readings of Paul: Reception, Resistance, and Transformation*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020. Pages 73-97.

Branch, R. G. “Women,” in [Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry & Writings](#). Edited by Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns. Downers Grove / Nottingham, England: IVP Academic / Inter-Varsity Press, 2008. Pages 916-25.

Cohick, Lynn H. "Women, Children, and Families in the Greco-Roman World," in *The World of the New Testament: Cultural, Social, and Historical Contexts*. Edited by Joel B. Green and Lee Martin McDonald. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013. Pages 179-87.

Deasy, "Reframing the Issue: Women's Ordination in the ECC"

Gee, Tracy. "Becoming Leaders." In *More Than Serving Tea: Asian American Women on Expectations, Relationships, Leadership and Faith*, edited by Nikki A. Toyama-Szeto. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2006. Pages 174-91.

Gonzalez, Michelle A. *Created in God's Image: An Introduction to Feminist Theological Anthropology*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2007. Pages 85-107.

LaCelle-Peterson, Kristina. *Liberating Tradition: Women's Identity and Vocation in Christian Perspective*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008. Pages 73-94.

MacHaffie, Barbara J. *Her Story: Women in Christian Tradition*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986. Pages 129-65.

Pierre, Elizabeth O. "Sexual Violence: The Sacred Witness of the Church," in *Review and Expositor* 2018, Vol. 115(3): 362 –371.

Mitzi J. *Womanist Sass and Talk Back: Social (in)Justice, Intersectionality, and Biblical Interpretation*. Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2018. Pages 7-26.

St. Clair, Raquel. "Womanist Biblical Interpretation," in *True to Our Native Land: An African American New Testament Commentary*. Edited by Brian K. Blount, Cain Hope Felder, Clarice J. Martin, and Emerson B. Powery. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007. Pages 54-62.

Walker-Barnes, Chanequa. *Too Heavy a Yoke: Black Women and the Burden of Strength*. Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2014. Pages ??

Westfall, Cynthia Long. *Paul and Gender: Reclaiming the Apostle's Vision for Men and Women in Christ*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016. Pages 243-78.

▪ Recommended Reading

Benckhuysen, Amanda W. *The Gospel According to Eve: A History of Women's Interpretation*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2019.

Epp, Eldon Jay. *Junia: The First Woman Apostle*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005.

Köstenberger, Andreas J., Thomas R. Schreiner, and H. Scott Baldwin, eds. *Women in the Church: A Fresh Analysis of I Timothy 2:9–15*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995.

Lee, Dorothy A. *The Ministry of Women in the New Testament: Reclaiming the Biblical Vision for Church Leadership*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021.

Payne, Philip. *Man and Woman: One in Christ*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009.

Tidball, Derek, and Dianne Tidball. *The Message of Women: Creation, Grace and Gender*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2012.

Tucker, Ruth. *Black and White Bible, Black and Blue Wife: My Story of Finding Hope after Domestic Abuse*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016.

Webb, William J. *Slaves, Women & Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis*. NSBT. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001.

Winter, Bruce W. *Roman Wives, Roman Widows: The Appearance of New Women and the Pauline Communities*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003.

Works, Carla Swafford. "Women and the Pauline Mission," in *The Least of These: Paul and the Marginalized*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2019. Pages 52-86.