

Harvey Hill
Religion 320I
BIBLICAL WOMEN
Spring, 2005

Class Time: TTh 9:30-10:45
Class Room: Evans 135
Office Hours: MW 12:00-3:00; TTh 1:00-3:00

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Course Description:

This course will explore the representation of women in the Bible. We will begin by discussing a spectrum of feminist approaches to the interpretation of the Bible and will then survey the biblical and apocryphal writings that are most relevant for women.

Textbooks:

A Bible with Apocrypha
Tikva Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women of the Bible*. Schocken Books, 2002.
Letty M. Russell, ed., *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*. Westminster Press, 1985.

Books on Reserve:

Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger*. Ark Paperbacks, 1966.
Carol Meyers, *Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context*. Oxford University Press, 1988.
Carol Newsom & Sharon Ringe, *The Women's Bible Commentary*. Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1992.
Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*. Crossroad, 1984.
Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, ed., *Searching the Scriptures*. Vol. 2. Crossroad, 1994.
Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror*. Fortress Press, 1984.

Technology and Internet in the Classroom:

Some readings (marked with an asterix) will be on the internet. You can find them through the homepage of this course on the Vikingweb. The links are listed under Religion 320I and then "weblinks."

Academic Integrity

Mutual trust among Berry's students, faculty, and staff is essential to the successful operation of the college. All members of the Berry College community are responsible for working together to uphold an environment conducive to honorable academic endeavor. Any dishonest behavior in connection with class assignments may result in a lower or failing grade for the assignment, or a lower or failing grade for the course. See *Viking Code* for more information.

Statement on Disability

If you have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please discuss them with me and with Martha Van Cise of the Academic Support Center as soon as possible.

Purpose:

The purpose of the course is to help students think critically about the portrayal of women in the Bible.

Goals:

Students will:

1. learn about the various ways in which women are portrayed in the Bible.
2. reflect critically on the portrayal of women in the Bible.
3. deepen their understanding of biblical interpretation.
4. improve critical reading, writing, and thinking skills.

Requirements and Grading:

1. The first requirement is regular attendance. Students who miss more than three classes will lose one point off their final average for each additional day missed.
2. Preparation (10%): In order to guide your reading and prompt class discussions, I have provided a list of the primary questions to be considered for each day. On most days we will begin class with a few minutes during which you will answer the question for the day. You may use your Bible if you answer the question before class, but not if you answer the question in class. I will collect your answers and grade them on a three-point scale (check plus; check; X). I will calculate the total grade as follows: I will multiply the number of Xs by two, add the number of checks, subtract the total from the number of check pluses, and add 80 to reach a final grade on a 100 point scale. I will not normally accept late answers.
3. Participation (10%): Learning is necessarily an active process. You need to enter into that process with me and with the rest of the class, both for your own benefit and for the benefit of your classmates. That means participation in discussions. At the end of the semester, I will assess your participation on the following scale. An “A” (90-99) means you contributed frequently to discussions. A “B” (80-89) means you contributed occasionally (once or twice a session) to discussions. (I presume that this will be the average participation grade.) A “C” (70-79) means you participated rarely, if at all.
4. Journal (10%): The journal is your opportunity to show that you are actively reflecting on the readings and on the larger interpretive issues that we will discuss. What I envision as the typical (but not the only legitimate) topic of an entry is a critical reflection on the reading for a day. The journal should not simply repeat the things we discussed in class, but rather should represent your own thinking. The journal is due in two stages: March 1 and April 14. You may not turn in more entries after March 1 than before March 1. The grade will be calculated as follows:
 - A: at least 18 acceptable entries totalling 18 pages or more (standard page is typed, double-spaced, 1 inch margins, 12 point, normal font)
 - B: at least 15 acceptable entries totalling 15 pages or more
 - C: at least 12 acceptable entries totalling 12 pages or more
5. Oral presentation and paper (20%): Although we will concentrate in our discussions on the Bible itself, there are many important scholars currently working on the issue of women in the Bible. In an effort to gain some sense of the larger field, I would like everyone briefly (no more than 10 minutes) to introduce the rest of the class to the recommended reading for a single day. You should also write out the information for your presentation, due on the same day. The grade will be based on the accuracy, coherence, relevance, and interest of your presentation and paper.
6. Papers (25% each): Students will complete two five-seven page, typed, double-spaced papers. In the first, you should describe how the Old Testament portrays women, using a single story or issue to

illustrate your basic point. In the second, you should explain how the Apocrypha or the New Testament maintains or subverts the portrayal of women in the Old Testament. Again, use a single story or issue to illustrate your point. In neither case should you take as your primary story one of the stories we discuss in class. The first paper will be peer-reviewed in class on March 3. The final draft is due on March 10. You should do a peer review outside of class for the second paper. The draft to be reviewed is due on April 12, and the final version is due on April 19. If for some reason you cannot meet these deadlines, please talk to me ahead of time. Papers (including the peer reviews and drafts) turned in after the due date will lose 1/3 of a letter grade every day.

Schedule of Topics and Readings

| <u>Date</u> | <u>Topic</u> | <u>Reading</u> |
|--------------|------------------------------|---|
| 1/6 | Introduction | No reading |
| 1/11 | Feminist Interpretations | Russell, 111-136 |
| 1/13 | Frymer-Kensky (F-K) | F-K, xiii-xxvii; 350-354 |
| 1/18 | Eve | Genesis 1-3 |
| 1/20 | Hosea and Gomer | Hosea 1-3; T-K, 333-338 (Russell, 86-95) (Dr. Susan Shaw will lead the class) |
| 1/25 | Sarah and Hagar | Genesis 12:1-25:18; T-K, 93-98, 225-237 (Trible, 9-36) |
| 1/27 | Rebekah and Jacob's wives | Genesis 25:19-35:29; T-K, 5-23 (Newsom, 15-21) |
| 2/1 | Dinah and Tamar | Genesis 34, 37-39 (40-50); T-K, 179-198, 264-277 (Newsom, 21-24) |
| 2/3 | Miriam and the midwives | Exodus 1-15, Numbers 12; T-K, 24-33 (Russell, 73-85) |
| 2/8 | Law | Lev 10:10-12:8, 15, 17-18, 21; Numbers 27, 29, 36; Deut 22-24; (Douglas, 41-57) |
| 2/10 | Judges | Judges 1:11-15; 4-5; 11; 13-16; 19-21; T-K, 45-57, 77-84, 102-117, 118-138 (Meyers, 47-71, 139-188; Trible, 65-87) |
| 2/15 | Ruth | Ruth; T-K, 238-256 (Newsom, 78-84) |
| 2/17 | Husbands and Wives | 1 Samuel 1-2, 18-19, 25; 2 Samuel 3, 6, 11-14; 1 Kings 1-2; T-K, 139-156, 157-169, 301-309, 315-323 (Trible, 37-63; Newsom, 85-94) |
| 2/22 | Kings and Queens | 1 Kings 10-11, 16, 21; 2 Kings 9, 11, 22 T-K, 85-88, 209-214, 324-326 (Newsom, 96-109) |
| 2/24 | Song of Songs | Song; (Newsom, 156-160) |
| 3/1 | Lady Wisdom & the good wife | Proverbs 1-9; 31 (Newsom, 145-152) (journal due) |
| 3/3 | Peer review | Drafts of paper due |
| 3/8 | Wisdom of Solomon | Wisdom 1-11* (<i>Searching the Scriptures</i> , 17-38) |
| 3/10 | Review | T-K, 339-349 (paper due) |
| Spring Break | | |
| 3/22 | Judith | Judith* (<i>Searching the Scriptures</i> , 455-469) |
| 3/24 | Gospels | Matt 15:21-28; Mk 7:24-30; Lk 7:36-8:3; 10:38-42; John 4; 7:53-8:11; 11-12 (Newsom, 390-396; Russell, 65-72; <i>In Memory of Her</i> , 160-204) |
| 3/29 | Gospels | Matt 26-28; Mark 14-16; Luke 23-24; John 19-21 (Newsom, 252-304) |
| 3/31 | Women in the Earliest Church | Acts 1-2; 5:1-11; 6:1-6; 9:36-43; 12:6-17; 16; 18 (<i>Searching the Scriptures</i> , 763-799; Newsom, 305-312) |
| 4/5 | Paul on Women | 1 Cor 7, 11, 14; Galatians 3 (<i>In Memory of Her</i> , 205-241) |
| 4/7 | Acts of Paul and Thecla* | Acts (<i>Searching the Scriptures</i> , 800-828) |
| 4/12 | Pastoral Epistles | 1 Timothy 2:8-3:7; 5:1-16; Titus 2:1-10 (<i>Searching the Scriptures</i> , 361-380) (Peer review draft due) |
| 4/14 | Mary | Protevangelium of James* (<i>Searching the Scriptures</i> , 708-727) (Journal due) |
| 4/19 | Discuss papers | No reading; paper due |

Daily Questions

- 1/11 What is the role of women's experience in biblical interpretation for Reuther or Schussler Fiorenza?
- 1/13 What does T-K think the Bible says about women's subordination?
- 1/18 What is the original relationship of the genders? How does sin change that relationship?
- 1/20 What does the portrayal of Israel in Hosea suggest about women?
- 1/25 What is Sarah's role in Abraham's story?
- 1/27 In what area do women have power?
- 2/1 In what ways do men control women?
- 2/3 What is Miriam's role in the exodus?
- 2/8 How is the law good for women? In what ways does it limit women?
- 2/10 How do the later women compare and contrast to the earlier ones in terms of how they exercise power?
- 2/15 How does Ruth reinforce/subvert gender stereotypes?
- 2/17 What role do women play in David's rise and fall?
- 2/22 Are women positive or negative influences in Kings? How?
- 2/24 How does sexual love relate to gender hierarchy?
- 3/1 What religious significance does Wisdom have?
- 3/8 How important is fertility in the Wisdom of Solomon?
- 3/22 How does Judith embody wisdom? How does she embody folly?
- 3/24 What is Jesus' relationship with women?
- 3/29 What role do women play in the crucifixion and resurrection narratives?
- 3/31 What is the role of women in Peter's ministry? In Paul's?
- 4/5 In what way is Paul egalitarian? How is he not?
- 4/7 What was Thecla's attitude toward sexuality?
- 4/18 What is the attitude toward women's leadership in the pastoral epistles?
- 4/23 What is the attitude toward sexuality and maternity in the Protevangelium?