

Department of Religion and Philosophy
Berry College
Religion 382A/Hon 250 HD: Women and Religion
Spring 2009

Class Time & Place:

Tu/Th 2-3:15, Evans 123

Office hours: MWF 1-2;

T & Th 12:30-2 ; 3:30-5

Jeffrey S. Lidke

Evans 136 / x-6928 / jlidke@berry.edu

Course Description and Purpose

This seminar is a comparative inquiry into the role of women in the religious history of the world. As we move from class to class, week to week, reading to reading, tradition to tradition, we seek, as a group, to understand both the vast (albeit often unrecognized) contributions of women to our global religious heritage and also the core challenges that have lessened the potential impact of these contributions, some times in tragic ways. While striving to understand respective women and (their) traditions in and on their own terms, we are also challenged to ‘think globally’ about the universal treatment of women. The expected outcome is that each student will complete this course with an informed sense of the contribution of women to the major world religions and also a deepened appreciation of the value of feminist discourse as a catalyst for social change.

Course Structure

The seminar is divided into three units. In Unit 1 we investigate leading theories in the fields of feminist discourse and religious studies through a careful reading of the works of Riane Eisler and Rita Gross. In Unit 2 we consider the place of women in Abrahamic traditions with a particular focus on Joan of Arc. In the third and final unit we turn our gaze towards Asia and the example of the 20th century Hindu saint, Anandamayi Ma. Classes will combine discussion of reading with lectures and student presentations. Each unit includes a film germane to the topic of that unit. Unit essays provide an opportunity for students to formulate their ideas culminating with the final exam, which includes both a take home essay and collaborative, creative, and culminating academic exercise.

Objectives and Expected Outcome

There are four objectives for the class. First, the course introduces students to feminist discourse in the study of religion. Second, it provides an in-depth study of the significance of women in Christian and Hindu traditions with particular emphasis on, respectively, Joan of Arc and Anandamayi Ma. Third, it should help students reflect critically and collaboratively on the key questions that drive intra- and inter-religious dialogue. Finally, this course, like all religion courses, should help students to become better readers, writers, thinkers, and public speakers.

Texts

CB. *The Chalice & the Blade: Our History, Our Future*, by Riane Eisler.

FR. *Feminism and Religion: An Introduction*, by Rita Gross.

JA. *Joan of Arc: Her Story*, by Regine Pernoud and Marie-Veronique Clin.

MB. *Mother of Bliss: Anandamayi Ma*, by Lisa Hallstrom.

Grading Grid

All assignment will be given a numerical value equal to 100. The percentage value of each assignment is given above. At the end of the semester I will determine the overall grade by calculating those percentages in order to give a final score according to the following grid:

A	100-94	C	76-74
A-	93-90	C-	73-70
B+	89-87	D+	69-67
B	86-84	D	66-60
B-	83-80	F	59 and below
C+	79-77		

Academic Integrity

While group work is an important part of the class each student is expected to produce his or her own work on all quizzes, exams and field work write-ups. Any violations of this expectation will be treated in accordance with the Viking Code of Conduct.

Accommodation Statement

Students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodation in this course are encouraged to contact the Academic Support Center in Krannert Room 301 (ext. 4080) as soon as possible to ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion.

Course Activities

Attendance and Participation	5%
Unit Essays	15% each x 3 = 45% total
Research Paper	20%
Student Presentation	15%
Final Exam	15%

1. *Attendance and Participation* (5%) A primary expectation for students is regular attendance and participation. Students are expected to come to class prepared to ask question and engage in dialogue with the teacher and their peers. Students who engage regularly in class will do well with this requirement.

2. *Unit Essays* (15% each = 45%): At the culmination of each unit, students will write 3-4 page take home essays. These essays are your opportunity to demonstrate your grasp of the materials covered in the readings, lectures and discussions.

3. *Research Paper* (20%): Each of you is required to engage in original and independent research on a topic of your selection related to the general theme of women in religion. This research should culminate in a well-written thesis essays due no later than April 23rd in class. Essays should be a minimum of 8 pages long, double-spaced with one-inch margins and grammatical and syntactical precision throughout. You are strongly encouraged to incorporate an anthropological component dimension to your research: i.e., engage living women and their practices/ideas. Additionally, you are required to utilize a minimum of four secondary texts, one primary text, and two scholarly journal articles.

(Course Activities [cont.])

4. *Student Presentations* (15%). Students will work in groups of two in developing and presenting an in-class multi-media lecture on one of the nine topics listed in the course outline. Through these presentations each student will play a major role in co-teaching the seminar. Presentations should be a minimum of a half-hour, incorporate multi-media, well researched, germane, and facilitate dialogue. In addition, students are asked to provide a (relatively brief) reading relevant to their presentation at least one week in advance. This reading will be made available to the class.

5. *Final Exam* (15%). The final will be dyadic: a take-home essay of 4-5 pages (minimum) in which you articulate your comparative and culminating reflections on the place of women in religion and a collaborative project that will be determined by the class as a whole and 'performed' on the date and time of the final (see Academic Calendar).

Course Outline and Reading Schedule

Unit 1: Feminism and Religion

Th	1/15	Introductions	
Tu	1/20	Feminism and the Study of Religion	FR 5-28; CB xiii-xxiii.
Th	1/22	What His-story tells us	FR 29-49; CB ch. 1.
Tu	1/27	The Goddess Age (?)	FR 49-64; CB ch. 2.
Th	1/29	The Hidden Voice of women	FR ch 3; CB ch. 3.
Tu	2/3	From Chalice to Blade	FR ch. 4; CB ch. 4
Th	2/5	Rethinking the Past	FR ch. 5; CB ch. 5.
Tu	2/10	Indigenous Traditions Unit 1 Film: <i>Whale Rider</i>	ER; CB ch. 6.
Th	2/12	Indigenous Traditions Unit 1 Film: <i>Whale Rider</i>	ER; CB ch. 7.

Unit 2: Women in Abrahamic Traditions: Joan of Arc

Tu	2/17	Student Presentation 1: Pagan Roots	ER; JA Foreword, Preface, Prelude. CB ch. 8; JA 9-14.
Th	2/19	Student Presentation 2: Women in Judaism	ER; JA 15-32; CB ch. 9.
Tu	2/24	Student Presentation 3: Women in Early Christianity	ER; JA 34-52; CB ch. 10.
Th	2/26	Student Presentation 4: Role of Women in Catholic Church structure, theology, and ritual.	ER; JA 54-68; CB ch. 11.

(Unit 2 [cont.])

Tu	3/3	Women and Mysticism in the Medieval Period	JA 69-88; CB ch. 12.
Th	3/5	The significance of Joan of Arc	JA 89-102.
Tu	3/10	Unit 2 Film: <i>The Passion of Joan of Arc</i>	JA 103-138
Th	3/12	Unit 2 Film: <i>The Passion of Joan of Arc</i>	JA 139-158
Tu	3/24	Student Presentation 5: Women in Protestant Christianity	ER; JA 159-168.
Th	3/26	Student Presentation 6: Women in the Christian Church Today	ER
Tu	3/31	Student Presentation 7: Women in Islam	ER

Unit 3: Women in Asian Traditions: Anandamayi Ma

Th	4/02	Divine Feminine in India: Intro	MB 3-18.
Tu	4/07	The Life of Anandamayi Ma	MB 19-54.
Th	4/09	Student Presentation 8: Women in India—Empowered or Enslaved?	MB 55-86.
Tu	4/14	Sainthood and Gender	MB 87-128.
Th	4/16	Student Presentation 8: Female Gurus in India	MB 129-160.
Tu	4/21	Ma as Divine Mother	MB 161-198.
Th	4/23	Student Presentation 2: Political and Cultural Vision of the Mandala	MB 199-221.
Tu	4/28	Unit 3 Film: <i>Water</i>	CB ch. 13.
Th	4/30	Unit 2 Film: <i>Water</i>	FR ch. 6.