

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY  
 FACULTY OF HUMANITIES  
 DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES  
 SUMMER 2007

May 30, 2007

RELIGIOUS STUDIES 381.L60  
 WORLD RELIGIONS  
 WOMEN AND RELIGION

INSTRUCTOR:	Anne White, Ph.D.
DAY AND TIME	TR – 2:00-2:45 p.m.
OFFICE:	SS 1322
OFFICE HOURS:	TR 1:00 – 1:45 p.m.
TELEPHONE:	220-3285 or 220-5886 (main office)
E-MAIL ADDRESS:	<a href="mailto:awhite@ucalgary.ca">awhite@ucalgary.ca</a>
WEBSITE:	Blackboard

**REQUIRED TEXT:** Serinity Young, ed., *An Anthology of Sacred Texts By and About Women*, New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1993.  
 Plus Webnotes.

**RECOMMENDED BUT NOT REQUIRED READING:**

Lucinda Joy Peach, *Women and World Religions*, Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 2002.  
 Nancy Auer Falk, and Rita M. Gross, *Unspoken Worlds: Women's Religious Lives*, Toronto: Wadsworth, 2001.  
 Ellen M. Umansky and Dianne Ashton eds., *Four centuries of Jewish Women's Spirituality: A Sourcebook*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1992.  
 Beverly Mayne Kienzle and Pamela J. Walker eds., *Women Preachers and Prophets Through Two Millennia of Christianity*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998  
 Asma Barlas, *"Believing Women" in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

In his work, *Anatomy of the Sacred*, J. C. Livingston states that "religion is a universal and abiding dimension of human expression." The human species has further been defined as *homo religiosus* – a religious animal. Our species routinely forms and reforms religion to find meaning, purpose and solace for life. As full members of our species, women have played an indispensable role in this construction of religious identity and religious worlds of meaning (cosmologies). This course is designed to introduce the student to the voice and presence of some of the strong, passionate women of faith in the world's religions.. As major contributors to the construction and enduring relevance of religion, women's role and influence has been sporadically acknowledged, but often only with broad qualifiers such as "different spheres" or "different temperamental interpretations due to gender," or even the "weaker vessel." Another common theme within many religious traditions has been that of misogyny whereby women have been viewed as pollutants or intellectually corrupting through their influence. Due to pervasive and continuing social prejudices, and their subsequent misunderstandings, the true impact, influence and validity of these women's worlds of meaning have been consistently diluted or dismissed. Using examples of heroines, victims, and reformers and mystics, this course will address the strategies by which women constructed their religious identities, managed to retain their strong belief systems, endure repressive circumstances, and often construct worlds of meaning, freedom and leadership that changed society in general. The course present an overview of myths and stories of gender conflict based on religious laws and other

writings. It will examine accounts of the women who functioned within these contexts and left their own impressive legacy as a testimony to the reality and truth that they lived and helped establish.

**COURSE OBJECTIVE:**

To enable students to organize and evaluate various historical events and religious concepts as perceived and interpreted by each of these religions and some of the women within them.

**SELF DIRECTED STUDY:**

Students are encouraged to read web notes and the assigned pages of text before each lecture, and come prepared to ask questions.

**COURSE METHODOLOGY:**

(i) Analysis of socio-historical contexts; (ii) examination of author, text and topic.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

The midterm test will consist of six short essay type answers – each worth five points – total 30 points. Each test will be 90 minutes in duration.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

July 17	- Test	30%
Aug. 14	- Paper - Eight pages, plus one page bibliography Topics to be discussed in class CHICAGO STYLE FOR PAPER (MANDATORY) Eight pages, double spaced, one inch margins. Bibliography – not more than two websites, six text or academic journal sources, cover page (name, student ID, course number, title)	30%
Registrar Scheduled Final Exam (TBA)		40%

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**Grading:**

A numerical mark will be given for each course requirement. Following the final examination, a letter grade will be assigned on the following number and letter grade scheme:

Percentage grades are calculated as follows:

A+	96-100	A	95 - 90	A-	89 - 85
B+	84 - 80	B	79 - 75	B-	74 - 70
C+	69 - 65	C	64 - 60	C-	59 - 55
D+	54 - 53	D	52-50	F	Under 50

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**Academic Honesty:**

Students should be familiar with the University regulations regarding academic honesty.

See University Calendar.

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**COURSE SCHEDULE:**

## READINGS:

NOTE THAT ALL LECTURES WILL HAVE ACCOMPANYING WEBNOTES POSTED ON BLACKBOARD. PLEASE ACCESS THESE BEFORE LECTURES.

**JULY****3-5**

Introduction

**Genre of Sacred Literature**, Cross-cultural themes, misogyny.  
Extracts from all textbook chapters.

**10-12**

**Judaism** – historical context and writings.  
Eminent female leaders and thinkers.

**17****IN CLASS TEST – ONE HOUR – WORTH 30 POINTS****17-19**

**Christianity.** Extra material provided on Junia (the forgotten apostle) and Emily Spencer Kerby (early 20<sup>th</sup> century reformer).

**24****READING DAY****26, 31**

**Islam** - historical context and writings.  
Early female leaders, developments, and works by women.

**AUGUST****2**

**Shamanism and Tribal Religions-** mythic heroines,  
practical empowerment and healing ceremonies.

**7-9**

**Hinduism** Culture, texts, the goddesses, and empowerment through  
Bhakti devotion.

**Buddhism** – Cultural context – the *bhiksuni-samgha*, heroines, goddesses  
and the role of the female bodhisattva.

**14****RESEARCH PAPER TO BE HANDED IN**

**Confucianism, Daoism.** Cultural and religious context, texts and goddesses.

**Neopaganism** – rituals, spells and voodoo.