

updated December 20, 2010

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY  
FACULTY OF ARTS  
DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES  
RELIGIOUS STUDIES 381 L01  
WOMEN AND RELIGION  
WINTER 2011

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INSTRUCTOR: Anne White, Ph.D.  
DAY AND TIME: MWF 10:00-10:50  
OFFICE: SS 1322  
OFFICE HOURS: MWF 13:00-13:50  
TELEPHONE: 403-220-3285 or 403-220-5886 (main office)  
E-MAIL ADDRESS: [awhite@ucalgary.ca](mailto:awhite@ucalgary.ca)  
WEBSITE: Blackboard

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**REQUIRED TEXT:** *Women and Religious Traditions*, eds. Leona M. Anderson and Pamela Dickey Young, Oxford University Press, 2010,  
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, reformers and mystics, this course will address the strategies by which women have constructed their religious identities, managed to retain their strong belief systems, endured repressive circumstances, and often constructed worlds of meaning, freedom and leadership that changed society in general. Through discussion of text and documentaries, this course will present an overview of myths and stories of gender conflict based on religious laws and other writings. The course will examine accounts of women who function within these contexts and who provide a testimony to their respective belief systems.

Modern aspects of reform will also be addressed within the context of women's active participation in changing their religions to reflect how they live as people of faith.

**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; (iii) discussion of selected documentaries for contextual background.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

Feb. 2 -	In class test worth	20%
Mar. 2 -	In class test worth	20%
Mar. 21 -	Documentary review/analysis – 6 pages (approx. 2,000 words) Double spaced, 1 inch margins left, right, top, bottom. Course information, student's name and ID# on first page.	20%
TBA -	Registrar's exam	40%

**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+	100 - 96	A	95.9 - 90	A-	89.9 - 85
B+	84.9 - 80	B	79.9 - 75	B-	74.9 - 70
C+	69.9 - 65	C	64.9 - 60	C-	59.9 - 55
D+	54.9 - 53	D	52.9-50	F	Under 50

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**Academic Honesty:**

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

See University Calendar.

**Academic Accommodation:**

It is the student's responsibility to request academic accommodations. If you are a student with a documented disability who may require academic accommodation and have not registered with the Disability Resource Centre, please contact their office at 403-220-8237. Students who have not registered with the Disability Resource Centre are not eligible for formal academic accommodation. You are also required to discuss your needs with your instructor no later than

**fourteen (14) days** after the start of the course.

**Gnosis:**

Gnosis is the Religious Studies Student Club. For membership or more information please email: [gnosis@ucalgary.ca](mailto:gnosis@ucalgary.ca) or visit <http://www.ucalgary.ca/~gnosis>.

**Faculty of Arts Program Advising and Student Information Resources**

- Have a question, but not sure where to start? The new Faculty of Arts Program Information Centre (PIC) is your information resource for everything in Arts! Drop in at SS110, call us at 403-220-3580 or email us at [artsads@ucalgary.ca](mailto:artsads@ucalgary.ca). You can also visit the Faculty of Arts website at <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/undergraduate> which has detailed information on common academic concerns.
- For program planning and advice, contact the Student Success Centre (formerly the Undergraduate programs Office) at (403) 220-5881 or visit them on the 4<sup>th</sup> Floor of MacEwan Student Centre.
- For registration (add/drop/swap), paying fees and assistance with your Student Centre, contact Enrolment Services at (403) 210-ROCK [7625] or visit them at the MacKimmie Library Block.

**COURSE SCHEDULE:**

PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS SCHEDULE MAY VARY SLIGHTLY DUE TO CLASS DISCUSSIONS AND TIME CONSTRAINTS

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

**JANUARY**

**10 – 14**

Webnotes

**Introduction:** cross-cultural themes, exclusion and tenacity.

**17 - 21**

Webnotes

**Chap. 1**

**Hinduism:** historical context, texts, symbols, devotion, sexuality.

**24**

**Documentary**

**26 – 31**

**Chap. 8**

Webnotes

**Sikhism:** historical context, daughters of the gurus, reform movements, Gender roles, symbols, and identity

**FEBRUARY**

**2**

**In class test – worth 20 points**

**4 – 9**

**Chap, 4**

Webnotes

**Chinese Traditions (Confucianism, Daoism, Hidden Women’s Tradition)**  
Historical context, texts

11	<b>Documentary</b>
14 – 18 Chap. 3 Webnotes	<b>Buddhism:</b> historical context, texts, development in traditions.
20 – 27	<b>READING WEEK – NO CLASSES</b>
28	<b>Documentary</b>
<b>MARCH</b>	
2	<b>In class test – worth 20 points</b>
4	<b>Documentary screening for essay analysis “The Need to Know.” Guidelines will be posted on Blackboard.</b>
7 – 11 Chap. 5	<b>Indigenous Traditions:</b> historical context (before and after contact), Knowledge, elders, symbols, rituals, shamans, the two-spirit person, official and unofficial roles. Documentary, if time permits.
14 - 18 Chap, 2 Webnotes 21	<b>Judaism:</b> historical context, status, reforms, texts and interpretations, symbols, gender, purity, impurity, sexuality, roles, unique features.  <b>Documentary analysis to be handed in.</b>  <b>Documentary</b>
23 – 28 Chap. 6 feminist theology.	<b>Christianity:</b> historical context, texts, interpretations, ritual, symbol, gender, sexuality, mystical tradition, reform, ordination, official and unofficial roles,
30	<b>Documentary</b>
<b>APRIL</b>	
1 – 6	<b>Islam:</b> historical context, texts, interpretations, mystics, rituals, purity, space, sexuality and law, reform and political power.
8	<b>Documentary</b>
11 – 15	<b>New Age Traditions:</b> historical context, characteristics, wicca, healing, channeling, rituals, the goddess concept, sexuality. Documentary, if time permits.