



Eve



Naomi



Mary Magdalene

SCTR 39/WGST 47

# Biblical Women and Power

aka:

## *Bad Girls of the Bible*

*~Fulfills SCU's RTC2 requirement~*

### **Associated Pathways:**

Applied Ethics; Justice & the Arts; and  
Gender, Sexuality and the Body

**Instructor:** Diana Gibson      **Office:** Kenna 317

**Email:** [dcgibson@scu.edu](mailto:dcgibson@scu.edu)

**Prerequisite:** Students must have taken an introductory level course in Religious Studies (SCTR 1-19, TESP 1-19, or RSOC 1-19) in order to qualify for this class.

**Course Description:** Hero and harlot, victor and victim, deviant and divine, revolutionary and repressed, courageous and catty - the stories of the women of the Bible offer unique insights into different forms of power in a variety of contexts including family, politics, faith and culture. We will examine some of the less-often talked about women, scrutinize "texts of terror" in the midst of patriarchy, unearth "invisible women" of scripture, reassess traditional interpretations of some of the more infamous women, and discover that "bad" itself is a value judgment shaped and skewed by perspective. Combining feminist hermeneutics of the Bible with applied ethics and social theories of power, we will explore the continuing impact these biblical women may have for subverting contemporary paradigms of oppression, domination and violence, and helping us build a world of equality, liberation and peace.

### **Instructor's Office Hours:**

Mondays 10:45-11:30am; Wednesdays 1-2pm; or by appointment

I have an open door policy, and any time I am in my office you are welcome to stop by. I am always happy to meet with you to discuss concerns, hopes or questions. I am also available by email.

### **Required Course Reading**

Alice Ogden Bellis, *Helpmates, Harlots, and Heroes: Women's Stories in the Hebrew Bible* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition)

Joyce Hollyday, *Clothed with the Sun: Biblical Women, Social Justice & Us*

Bible - Students need to have access to a hard copy to bring to class.

Additional readings will be posted on Camino

### **Course Objectives:**

Students will be able to:

1. identify and practice using diverse methods for biblical interpretation;
2. identify and practice using basic tools of feminist scriptural interpretation;
3. identify and practice using a hermeneutics of suspicion and theories of power in both biblical study and in understanding their own world;
4. challenge assumptions about the role of women in the Bible and in contemporary society;
5. integrate insights from biblical study, in particular the study of biblical women, in their understanding of themselves, their communities and their role in the world today.

### **Core Curriculum Learning Goals and Objectives**

*This course fulfills Santa Clara's Core Requirement for RTC 2*

The second course in RTC invites students to deeper engagement with the study of religion through the application of multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary approaches to complex religious phenomena, past and present. By providing multiple, integrated perspectives, this course seeks to enrich students' appreciation for the diversity of human religious expression.

#### Learning Goals:

**Critical Thinking:** The ability to identify, reflect upon, evaluate, integrate, and apply different types of information and knowledge to form independent judgments.

**Complexity:** An approach to understanding the world that appreciates ambiguity and nuance as well as clarity and precision.

**Religious Reflection:** Questioning and clarifying beliefs through critical inquiry into faith and the religious dimensions of human existence.

#### Learning Objectives:

**2.1** Analyze complex and diverse religious phenomena (such as architecture and art, music, ritual, scriptures, theological systems, and other cultural expressions of religious belief.) (Complexity; Critical Thinking)

**2.2** Integrate and compare several different disciplinary approaches to a coherent set of religious phenomena. (Complexity of Content as well as of Method; Critical Thinking)

**2.3** Clarify and express beliefs in light of their critical inquiry into the religious dimensions of human existence. (Reflection; Critical Thinking)

### **Course Assessments**

Intellectual Engagement (15% of your grade) includes regular class attendance, reading all assigned material, and regular and thoughtful class participation. To earn a B or above students must consistently demonstrate engaged critical thinking in class and small group discussions, and prove careful reading of texts by raising questions and offering insights in class. *Indirectly supports all course goals and RTC learning objectives.*

Quizzes (15% of your grade) will be given on occasion and without notice at the beginning of the class period. Doing well on these quizzes requires thorough reading of texts and attentive engagement with lectures and class discussions. *Indirectly supports all course goals and RTC learning objectives.*

Meeting Eve through Art & Text (10% of your grade) Students will incorporate what we've learned about Eve in our study of the biblical text in order to analyze the depictions of Eve in scripture and religious art. *Assesses course RTC objective 2.1.*

Research Project & Paper (a total of 55% of your grade) A major three-chapter plus conclusion research project is required for this course. You will pick *one* woman (or group of women) from the Bible (a list of choices will be offered at the beginning of the quarter), and all four papers (chapters) plus a presentation to a small group will investigate this *same* character.

*Chapter #1:* This first chapter of your investigation of your chosen woman/women will focus on the biblical text and give you a chance to practice using a variety of exegetical tools (including those drawn from feminist interpretation, liberation theology, and a hermeneutics of suspicion) to better understand the text itself. 5-6 pages. (20%) *Assesses course goals 1 & 2 and RTC objective 2.1.*

*Chapter #2:* Addressing the same biblical woman, chapter 2 of your investigation will incorporate Rollo May's theories of power (explained in Chittister's book) to identify and examine the ethical implications of the diverse kinds of power (and lack thereof) at play in the text and/or character, and compare insights with those gained in chapter 1. 3-4 pages. (10%) *Assesses course goal 3 and RTC objective 2.2.*

*Chapter #3:* Now you will turn to examining the world of the reader (that's you, your communities, the church, traditional scholarship and contemporary society), and how this influenced your work in chapters 1 & 2 and continues to influence your thinking. This may involve some deconstruction of your previous assumptions, but that is a good thing and part of the learning process! In this chapter, the world of the text and the world of the reader interact, hopefully sparking some surprising revelations! (15%) 4-6 pages. *Assesses course goal 4 and RTC objectives 2.2 and 2.3.*

*Progress Report:* An oral progress report (5-10 minutes) to a small group of students will allow you to share what you are learning, and benefit from other students' research as well.

*Conclusion:* Examine what you have learned from this project about biblical interpretation, feminism, and yourself. In this final section you explore not only how your world informs how you read the text, but how the text can help you see yourself and your world differently. You may incorporate poetry, midrash, letter-writing or other artistic forms in this final part of your project. 3-4 pages. (10%) *Assesses course goal 5 and RTC objective 2.3.*

Bad Girls Speak Out (5%) Working in small groups focused on a current topic of choice, students will engage in an exercise of applied ethics to explore what some of the biblical women we have studied might have to say to us today. *Assesses course goal 5.*

### Course Policies

1. Class Preparation: Students are expected to read all required material, take consistent notes, and arrive in class on time ready to discuss, raise questions, offer insights, and answer questions in a manner that reflects your thoughtful reading. Students are expected to stay in class throughout the class period. (Please tend to personal needs before you come to class.)
2. Class Discussion: You are expected to participate in all-class as well as small group discussions through *active listening* and *respectful response*. Respectful, engaged discourse will be the rule for the class. Questions and exchange of ideas must always be for the purpose of enhancing our understanding and learning. Disagreements and differences will be encouraged, however disrespectful comments will immediately lower your grade. **Texting, side conversations, passing notes to other students and napping are all signs of disrespect. Any violation of this policy will lower your final course grade.** If you are having trouble finding ways to participate in this learning environment, please see me and I will be glad to discuss this with you.
3. Electronic Devices: No laptops, iPads, smart phones or any other mobile device use (including texting) is allowed in this class. Electronic devices must be stored away and are not allowed on your desk or lap.
4. Academic Integrity: Santa Clara University insists on honesty and integrity from all members of its community. The standards of the University preclude any form of cheating, plagiarism, forgery of signatures, and falsification of data. *A student who commits any offense against academic honesty and integrity will be reported to the Office of Student Life and may receive a failing grade without a possibility of withdrawal.* An offense may also dictate suspension or dismissal from the University. In particular, it is each student's responsibility to understand the serious nature of plagiarism and the consequences of such activity. Please be certain to cite your sources very carefully in your papers. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please do not hesitate to ask me. A thorough explanation of the policy can be found at [www.scu.edu/academics/bulletins/undergraduate/Academic-Integrity.cfm](http://www.scu.edu/academics/bulletins/undergraduate/Academic-Integrity.cfm)

## Santa Clara University Academic Integrity Pledge

*"I am committed to being a person of integrity. I pledge, as a member of the Santa Clara University community, to abide by and uphold the standards of academic integrity contained in the Student Conduct Code."*

I ask that you affirm this pledge and apply these principles to your work in this class.

5. **Attendance:** You are expected to arrive to class on time and attend every class meeting. *Frequent tardiness or missing more than three class periods will result in lowering of your final grade.* Students are responsible for obtaining missed notes, updated assignments and any other news from other students or the instructor *outside* of class time. If illness or family emergency requires you to miss more than three class periods, you must meet with instructor to discuss. More than six absences (1/5 of the class periods) will result in a failing grade unless reasons and make-up plans are approved by the professor.
6. **Late Work:** All papers are to be submitted in 2 forms: electronically on Camino *and* a hard copy to the professor by the times indicated. The grade for late work will be lowered, usually by 1/3 of letter grade for each calendar day that paper is late. Exceptions will be granted only for *very good reasons*, and must be negotiated with instructor *before the due date*.
7. **Spelling and Grammar:** Spelling, grammar and sentence structure *will affect the grade on your papers*. Please *proofread your work carefully*. Follow the Writing Style Guidelines on our Camino Course page. Visit the Hub Writing Center for drop in assistance. See <http://www.scu.edu/provost/writingcenter/> for more information including drop-in assistance schedule and locations, and how to register for the HUB's new appointment services.
8. **Disability Accommodation Policy:** To request academic accommodations for a disability, students must be registered with Disabilities Resources located in Benson, room 216. In order to register please go online to [www.scu.edu/disabilities](http://www.scu.edu/disabilities). You will need to register and provide professional documentation of a disability prior to receiving academic accommodations. It is best to read "Required Documentation" on the website before starting the registration process in order to determine what is needed. You may contact Disabilities Resources at 408-554-4109 if you have questions.

**Feedback:** Students will receive regular feedback from the instructor through comments on papers and are welcome to schedule meetings to discuss further. I have an open door policy during office hours, and am happy to make appointments if your classes conflict with my office hours. Students will assess their own experience of the course in a mid-quarter review and in the standard end-of-term narrative evaluation.

### Grading Scale

**A (94-100)** = Outstanding. Awesome. Takes my breath away!

**A- (90-93)** = Amazingly good. I want to stand up and cheer.

**B+ (87-89)** = Very good. I'm clapping but still in my seat.

**B (83-86)** = Good, solid work. I'm impressed.

**B- (80-82)** = Good work, but I'm not excited.

**C+ (77-79)** = Above average. No complaints.

**C (73-76)** = Average. You've completed the assignment.

**C- (70-72)** = You have mostly completed the assignment, but not thoroughly. Something is lacking, or perhaps your grammar or composition needs work.

**D (61-69)** = I'll give it back to you and give you another chance, if it is not a presentation or exam.

**F (60 & below)** = Failure. Let's not even go there

### PATHWAYS

This course is associated with the "Applied Ethics," "Gender, Sexuality and the Body" and "Justice and the Arts" Pathways. You can find information about Pathways on the Core Curriculum website <http://scu.edu/core> including specific Pathways, all courses associated with them, and the Reflection Essay prompt and rubric used to evaluate the final essay you will submit. <http://www.scu.edu/provost/ugst/core/pathways/resources/>

**SAVE YOUR WORK FROM THIS CLASS:** If you declare this Pathway, you may use a representative piece of work from this course as one of the Pathway materials you will upload via eCampus during your junior or senior year. Therefore, we recommend that you keep electronic copies of your work using Dropbox or Google Docs, in addition to saving copies on your own computer or flash drives. This may ensure you will have a range of choices for retrieving your saved files when you analyze and assemble your Pathway materials in preparation to write the Pathway reflection essay.

## Fall 2017 Class Schedule

Week 1 – September 18-22: Queen Vashti

SCRIPTURE: Esther 1:1-2:4

### **Monday: ‘Bad,’ like ‘beauty,’ is in the eyes of the beholder**

Introduction & Getting Started

*Who are the most famous biblical women and what are they known for?*

READ (in class): Esther 1:1-22

### **Wednesday: “What part of ‘NO’ don’t you understand?”**

READ FOR CLASS TODAY:

- Esther 1:1-2:4 (again)
- Hollyday, p. 71 and Chapter 17 (76-78)
- LaVerne McCain Gill’s “The Vashti Victory” (Camino)

### **Friday News Alert: *Uppity Woman Threatens Stability of 127 Provinces from India to Ethiopia***

READ FOR CLASS TODAY:

- Ogden Bellis, Introduction, pages 6-18

*\*During the week and over the weekend begin reading through Hollyday’s book to choose the woman/women/text for your major research paper. In Hollyday you can skip chapters 1, 5, 7, 10, 12, 17, 44, 46 & 49 (we’ll read and study those as a class, so you may not choose one of them as your topic). You can also choose Sarah but not Hagar (from chapter 2), or Naomi but not Ruth (from chapter 4). Your choices are not limited to those in Hollyday, but it is a good place to start.*

Week 2 – September 25-29: The Lost Coin (and other hard-to-find things)

SCRIPTURE: Luke 13:18-21, 15:1-10

### **Monday: Did she really lose that coin, or did someone hide it?**

READ FOR CLASS TODAY:

- Luke 15:1-10
- On Camino: Sharon Ringe, *Luke*, (203-205, 8-top of 9)
- On Camino: Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, *The Divine Feminine*, Chapter 11 (60-68)

### **Wednesday: And the women knead dough...**

- Luke 13:18-21
- Ogden Bellis, Introduction, pages 18-34
- On Camino: Feminist Biblical Interpretation article
- Optional: Review of “The Help” (Camino)

### **Friday News Alert: *Party tonight!***

READ FOR CLASS TODAY:

- On Camino: Fewell & Gunn, Introduction to *Gender, Power and Promise*

**DUE:** Submit choice of woman/women/text for major research paper onto discussion forum on Camino.

Include your topic (woman or women), a brief statement as to why you chose this topic, what you hope to learn, and the primary biblical citations where you will read about your topic. (No more than 2 students per topic.)

Week 3 – October 2-6: Eve  
SCRIPTURE: Genesis 1:1-2:4a; 2:4b-3:24

**Monday: The Blame Game**

READ FOR CLASS TODAY:

- Genesis 1:1-2:4a; Genesis 2:4b-3:24
- Ogden Bellis, Chapter 2, “The Story of Eve” (37-55)

**Wednesday: In the Image of God *She* Created Them**

READ FOR CLASS TODAY:

- On Camino: Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, *The Divine Feminine*, Chapters 3, 4, 6 and 13 (**NOTE** that chapter 13 is on a separate pdf!)
- Hollyday, Chapter 1, “Eve: Created in God’s Image”

**Friday News Alert: *Eve – Woman of Wisdom or Temptress?***

**DUE: Meeting Eve through Art & Text**

Week 4 – October 9-13: Mary of Nazareth  
SCRIPTURE: Luke 1:26-56, 2:1-40; Matt. 1:18-2:23; Luke 8:19-21; John 2:1-12, 19:25-27

**Monday: More than a Pregnant Virgin**

READ FOR CLASS TODAY:

- Luke 1:26-56, 2:1-40; Luke 8:19-21; John 19:25-27
- Hollyday, Chapter 46: “Mary: Mother of God” (219-221)
- On Camino from *The Women’s Bible Commentary* excerpt commentaries as marked re: Mary from Gospel of Luke (Schaberg, pp. 282-285) & Gospel of John (O’Day, p. 300).

**Wednesday: Submission or Revolution?**

READ FOR CLASS TODAY:

- Luke 1:26-56 (again)
- On Camino: Robert McAfee Brown, *Unexpected News*, “Mary’s Song: Whom do we hear?” (You may skim “Another Biblical Passage” bottom of 81- mid83, but continue reading attentively after that.)

**Friday: News Alert: *You too can become a pregnant virgin!***

READ FOR CLASS TODAY:

- Matt. 1:18-2:23; John 2:1-12
- On Camino: Margaret Hebblethwaite, *Six New Gospels: New Testament Women Tell Their Stories*, “The Story of Mary of Nazareth” (22-53) (You may skim 42-47 and read attentively again starting the top of 48.) **NOTE:** Read especially the footnotes, both for their content – sometimes provocative - and for how the author uses her resources.

Week 5 – October 16-20: Silenced & Breaking Silence  
SCRIPTURE: Genesis 16:1-16, 21:9-21; Mark 14:3-11

**Monday: Rape is Rape by Any Name**

READ FOR CLASS TODAY:

- Genesis 16:1-16, 21:9-21
- Hollyday, Chapter 2 (5-7)
- Ogden Bellis, “Hagar” (62-66)

### **Wednesday: Recognizing Hagar Today**

#### **Friday News Alert:** *Forgotten Memories of Her*

READ FOR CLASS TODAY:

- Mark 14:3-11 (and Deuteronomy 15:11)
- Hollyday, Chapter 49, "The Anointing Woman: Prophetic Service" (229-231)
- On Camino: Julie M. Smith, "Mark 14:3-9: The Anointing at Bethany" (excerpts)

Week 6 – October 23-27: Women & Power  
SCRIPTURE: Job 1:1-22, 42:10-17; Mark 7:24-30

### **Monday: Jewish Messiah Outsmarted by Canaanite Woman**

READ FOR CLASS TODAY

- Mark 7:24-30
- Hollyday, Chapter 44

**DUE: Chapter #1**

### **Wednesday: Job's Daughters - Dove, Cinnamon and Eye-Shadow** (*Who came up with those names?*)

READ FOR CLASS TODAY:

- Job 1:1-22, 42:10-17
- On Camino, Chittister, pages 1-51 (excerpts as marked)

#### **Friday News Alert:** *Women are Changing the World!*

READ FOR CLASS TODAY:

- On Camino, Chittister, pp. 69-77, "A New World Vision" to end of book
- On Camino: Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, *Half the Sky* (excerpts as assigned)

Week 7 – October 30-November 3: Women and Violence  
SCRIPTURE: Judges 19:1-20:11; Numbers 31:1-35; Deuteronomy 22:13-21

### **Monday: Fragmented Woman**

READ FOR CLASS TODAY:

- Judges 19:1-20:11
- Ogden Bellis, "An Unnamed Woman" (117-121)
- Hollyday, Chapter 7, "The Levite's Concubine" (33-36)

### **Wednesday: Texts of Terror**

READ FOR CLASS TODAY:

- Number 31:1-35, Deuteronomy 22:13-21
- Hollyday, Chapter 10, "Women of Midian: Spoils of War" (45-47)
- On Camino: Chittister, "When violence against women is 'honorable,' 'religious' and 'legal'"

#### **Friday News Alert:** *Texts of Terror Today*

READ FOR CLASS TODAY:

- On Camino: Kristof and WuDunn, *Half the Sky* (required: 81-87; recommended: 88-92)

**DUE: Chapter #2**

Week 8 – November 6-10: Subversive Sex  
SCRIPTURE: Genesis 38:1-30; Book of Ruth

**Monday: Courage X-rated**

READ FOR CLASS TODAY:

- Genesis 38:1-30
- Ogden Bellis, "Tamar" (77-78)
- Hollyday, Chapter 12 (55-58)
- On Camino: Barbara J. Essex, *Bad Girls of the Bible*, "Tamar: Parasite or Persistent?" (31-36)

**Wednesday: Where there's a will there's a way**

READ FOR CLASS TODAY:

- The Book of Ruth
- Ogden Bellis, "Ruth" (183-189)
- Hollyday, Chapter 4 (11-17)

**Friday News Alert:** *Women in The Saint John's Bible* (visit to SCU library archives)

Week 9 – November 13-17: Thinking Outside the Book  
SCRIPTURE: excerpts from the Gospel of Mary and Acts of Thecla

**Monday: The Gospel of Mary Magdalene**

READ online: Karen L. King, *The Gospel of Mary of Magdala*, "Early Christianity and the Gospel of Mary" (You may stop at "Discovery and Publication.") Use link if unable to access from Camino:

<http://www.gnosis.org/library/GMary-King-Intro.html>

READ online: excerpts from Gospel of Mary Magdalene, chapters 4-9 (scroll down for text)

Use link if unable to access from Camino: <http://www.gnosis.org/library/marygosp.htm>

**DUE: Oral Progress Reports begin**

**Wednesday: The Acts of Thecla**

READ: Nancy A. Carter's Introduction to "The Acts of Thecla" (Camino)

READ online: "The Acts of Paul and Thecla" – Use link if unable to access through Camino

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/maps/primary/thecla.html>

**DUE: Oral Progress Reports continue**

**Friday News Alert:** *What would she say about??*

DUE: Oral Progress Reports finish up

**DUE: Chapter #3**

Academic Holiday November 20-24 – Happy Thanksgiving!

Week 10 – November 27-December 1: Bad Girls Speak Out

**Monday: What would she say about...?**

In class small groups work on topics of choice

**Wednesday: What would she say about...?**

In class small groups report

**Friday News Alert:** *Bad Girls Can Have Favorites!*

**DUE MONDAY, December 4, 5pm (Final's Week): Conclusion/Epilogue**