



Women in the Christian Tradition (TESP 79)

Summer B

Email: edrescher@scu.edu

Office Hours: By appointment

****Please note: This syllabus may be adapted throughout the quarter to address the learning needs of the class.****

This course explores the role of women in the Christian tradition—both as active agents and as subjects—through an expressly *feminist theological* lens. There are two central components in this perspective. The first is that we are considering Christian experience with a particular focus on how women are portrayed in the tradition, how they have agency to act in shaping the tradition, who places what sorts of limitations on the portrayal and agency of women in the tradition, and how women and those who care about them can productively challenge artificial limitations placed on women. We'll be asking questions about what women are included in the tradition, how they are represented, by whom, and for what purposes. And we'll consider what sorts of women are more often excluded or muted in the Christian tradition, by whom, and why. This is the *feminist* part of the course.

From a *theological* perspective, we will consider how the central figure in Christianity—Jesus of Nazareth, who Christians believe to be the savior of human kind, or “the Christ”—is experienced by women. How do traditional representations of the Son of God empower or disempower women? How do women's own portrayal of Jesus Christ and their lived experience of Christianity contribute to their sense of belonging, worth, and agency in Body of Christ? How is Christianity a source of liberation for women?

Methodologically and pedagogically the course generally takes a *material feminist* approach. That is, though we will be studying texts by and about Christian women and paying attention to how Christian women are portrayed in with words (through *discourse*), we will be looking beyond words to consider how the materiality of women's bodies and the concrete realities of their lives at various times and in different places influence their status and self-understanding as Christians. That is the *methodological* frame for our studies. *Pedagogically*, we will draw on feminist concepts of collaboration and shared responsibility to learn together in the class. Details on this are shared in the Assignments section.

About the Online Learning Experience

Platform: This is an online course. Weekly course materials will be posted on the Camino course management system (<https://camino.scu.edu>) by noon (Pacific) on Mondays and Wednesdays. Responses to discussion questions and other assignments are due on the Camino site as indicated by due dates posted on Camino.

The course enables students to engage online materials and activities according to their own schedules during the week. There is also structured interaction among students, which allow students and the instructor to share learning experiences together at particular times throughout the course. Online learning tends to be ideal for students for students who are disciplined and highly self-motivated in their studies but who also benefit from the more subtle interpersonal exchanges in a face-to-face classroom.

In an online course, active, regular engagement of students is particularly important. Because our study together takes place online, we are only present to each other when we post and comment on a regular basis. Unlike in most face-to-face classroom experiences, where written work is seen primarily by the instructor, online posts and comments are shared with the whole learning community, so students have the particular

challenge of expressing themselves succinctly, clearly, and engagingly for a range of readers. Guidelines on online learning will be shared in the first course session.

Core Learning Objectives

- Students will be able to 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)**
- Students will be able to integrate and compare several different disciplinary approaches to a coherent set of religious phenomena. **(complexity of content as well as of method; critical thinking)**
- Students will be able to clarify and express beliefs in light of their critical inquiry into the religious dimensions of human existence. **(reflection; critical thinking)**

Required Reading:

Rebecca Moore, *Women in Christian Traditions* (NYU 2015). ISBN 978-1-4798-2961-3 [Cited as “Moore” in the schedule below.]

Other readings, videos, and podcasts are provided on the Camino course site.

Requirements and Grading:

1. Active participation in all online presentations, discussions, and other activities
2. One collaborative research contribution on a particular woman in Christian history
3. Four multiple-choice quizzes
4. A final exam with both multiple-choice and essay questions.

Assignments

Independent Research and Discussion Contribution: Each week, pairs of students identified by the professor will be assigned one of several women related to the historical period or thematic concern we are discussing. (The number of partnerships will vary based on class size.) Assignments will be posted at the beginning of each unit so that each research partnership will have the roughly same amount of time to complete the assignment during each unit. Students will conduct additional research to supplement the material in the lectures with information on the women they are assigned. They will include findings from their research on those women to the larger class as a 10-slide presentation with an accompanying 10-minute podcast (including a podcast transcript, as required under the American Disabilities Act). Each research partnership will create two collaborative research presentations during the course.

You will be expected to be the experts on these women, so your research must go beyond what you find on Wikipedia and other internet sites to include research on the SCU library religion database, ATLA (accessible through the library website). On ATLA, you should be able to find **one academic article** on the subject of your research that highlights her particular role in the Christian tradition.

Your role will be to supplement and enrich discussion with additional insights from your independent research and to pose discussion questions that will help us all to reflect upon the role of the women in Christian history and tradition. The second discussion session each week will focus on the collaborative research reports and content from the reports will be included in the weekly quizzes and the final exam.

We are making history here, so please provide everything you can to help all of us put these women back in their rightful places in Christian history. Your slides and podcast are to be posted by midnight on the Tuesday of the week for which they are assigned. A listing of your sources, including your academic article, should be included as a 1-page attachment in the Assignments tab of the Camino course site.

Discussions will be scheduled twice each week. On Tuesdays, a discussion will explore issues raised in the reading and the lecture based on your personal observations and experience. These should be completed by Thursday, when a second discussion will be opened to connect learning from the readings and lecture to the experiences of the women profiled by students in the class.

Quizzes will be held on Friday of each week. These 10-point quizzes will have 10 multiple choice, true-false, fill-in-the-blank, or matching questions drawn from the material for the week, including collaborative research presentations. Each quiz will open at noon on Friday through noon on Saturday. Once you begin the quiz, you will have 60 minutes to complete it (unless you have a certified disability accommodation).

A **final exam** will include five essay questions from which you select three to respond to in no fewer than 500 words and no more than 800 words. You will have 24-hours to complete the exam.

Course Schedule

Module One: July 31-August 5

Introducing Feminist Theology and the Christian Tradition

Please read:

The entire syllabus, with great care

Moore, Introduction and Chapter 1

Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza, "Feminist Theology as a Critical Theology of Liberation," *Theological Studies* (December 1, 1975).

Quiz #1

Module Two: August 7-11

Disciples, Apostles, Prophets, Teachers & Martyrs

Please read: Moore, Chapters 2 and 3

Collaborative research reports on The Apostle Phoebe, Perpetua & Felicitas, Desert Amma Syncletica, the pilgrim Egeria due on Wednesday at NOON.

Quiz #2

Module Three: August 14-18

From Medieval to Modern: Mystics, Pilgrims & Reformers

Please read: Moore, Chapters 4 and 5

Watch: Bernard McGinn, "What is Mysticism?"

Collaborative research reports on Hildegard of Bingen, Margery Kempe, Katherina von Bora, and Mary Ward due on Wednesday at NOON.

Quiz #3

Module Four: August 21-25

The Spirits of Modern Christian Women

Please read:

Moore, Chapters 6 and 7

Watch: "A Maori, An Anglican, A First: Jenny Te Paa" at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iPHw5pHCVT8>

Collaborative research reports on Jarena Lee, Sarah Grimké, Henriette Delille, Dorothy Day, Mercy Amba Oduyoye

Quiz #4

Module 5: August 28-September 1

Global Feminist Christianity

Please read:

Moore, Conclusion

Min-Ah Cho, "Stirring up Deep Waters: Korean Feminist Theologies Today," *Theology Today*, (July 2014)

Michelle A. Gonzalez, "Latina feminist theology: past, present, and future," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, (January 1, 2009)

Collaborative research reports Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, Delores Williams, Kwok Pui-Lan, Carmelita Usog

Quiz #5

Module 6: September 2-6

Concluding Conversations

Please read: Alice Walker, "In Search of our Mothers' Gardens"

Final Exam, September 6.

Assessment and Evaluation

There will be a short quiz each week to assess how well students are keeping up on the reading and their independent research. Likewise, a final essay exam will assess students' overall understanding of the material covered in the course. Grading will be determined as follows:

Response to weekly discussion questions = 10 points (2 each week)

Quiz #1 = 10 points

Quiz #2 = 10 points

Quiz #3 = 10 points

Quiz #4 = 10 points

Quiz #5 = 10 points

Collaborative Research Projects = 20 points (10 points each)

Final Exam = 20 points

Grading is based on an assessment of the quality of students' work in each of the areas described above. Grades are not measures of personal worth.

6-100 A 87-89 B+ 77-79 C+ 67-69 D+ 59 or Below F

95-90 A- 83-86 B 73-76 C 63-66 D

80-82 B- 70-72 C- 60-62 D

Disability Accommodation Policy

To request academic accommodations for a disability, students must contact Disability Resources located in the Benson Center, (408) 554-4111; TTY (408) 554-5445.

The schedule of classes will be distributed the first day of class. The class schedule, syllabus and all assignments will be available on ANGEL.

Instructor Access

One of the complexities in online learning in the context of today's "always on" social media environment is that students sometimes have the expectation that the instructor will be available 24/7 throughout the course. This is not the case for, alas perhaps, the instructor remains merely human without technological enhancement. Because of this, it is important (as it is for students as well) for the instructor to schedule time she is available to students. In this course, I will be posting course materials on Mondays, and requiring responses later in the week. I will respond to student emails about the course **only** on Mondays and Thursdays, so it is important that students review the course content each week, make sure that they

understand the lecture content, discussion questions, and any other assignments so that they can pose any questions to me **by 4:00 (Pacific) on Mondays** about the work that lies ahead. Questions on the reading or on discussions that have developed through the week can be posed **by noon (Pacific) on Thursday**.

Should any student feel the need for additional instructor time, such as might happen in the context of an office hours appointment, please email me to set up time for an online chat or phone conversation. Another challenge of the online classroom is that, for the most part, our interaction will be textual. That is, I only know you're paying attention, doing the reading, engaging other students, etc. by the comments you make on the Camino site. Likewise, you only know I'm seeing your work when I comment on what you've said. However, there are more of you than there are of me (again, merely human), so I cannot comment in depth on every comment you post, even though many of these will be very interesting, indeed. In an onsite class, it is usually the case, in fact, that instructors **don't** have much to say about student comments beyond an approving nod or a "good question!" or "great insight" affirmation. This kind of largely nonverbal interaction is hard to approximate in the online classroom, but I try to do this by simply putting my initial (E) in response to your comment, perhaps with a very short comment ("very nice" or, maybe, "worth more exploration." Sometimes I throw in a ☺). Each week I will, however, highlight a couple discussion comments from students to discuss in greater depth. Through the course, I will offer these more extended replies to each student more than once, but students whose discussions are not highlighted in my response in a particular week should not fret. I **am** paying attention.