Women’s Studies in Religion Seminar
STRS 4242, 3 Units
Spring 2022

Zoom Meetings: Every Monday, 3:40-5pm PT
Office Hours by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
This seminar is required for completion of the GTU Women’s Studies in Religion certificate and is open to all interested students. It explores and analyzes emerging themes and issues in women’s studies in religion, focusing on those that intersect with race, sexuality, gender, ethnicity, class, culture, nationality, and religious expression. This course will provide theoretical groundwork and common vocabulary for students interested in pursuing women’s studies and womanist, intersectional feminist, mujerista scholarship in theology/religious studies. The course introduces the issues that are raised by the field of women’s studies, and explores how these issues relate to the study of religion. Evaluation based on zoom participation, watching asynchronous VoiceThread lectures, weekly writing engagements, and final project and presentation. This course is open to all degree programs at the GTU and has an inter-religious orientation.

This is an online Zoom synchronous course. The format is lecture/discussion. Lectures will be posted to VoiceThread each week on Moodle. Zoom session participation is mandatory and will be primarily for group discussion of the lecture and the readings. Zoom discussion will not be recorded so that what is shared in community stays in community.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
- Students will develop a facility in navigating some of the major issues and theoretical approaches related to women’s studies in religion
- Students will demonstrate an understanding of various ways these issues and theoretical approaches are important for scholarship related to women’s studies in religion and for application in religious, social, and political contexts
- Students will develop skill in explication and analysis within a transnational comparative and intersectional feminist framework
- Students will apply insights gained from this course to their scholarship and are encouraged to bring it to their own living/working/spiritual contexts
- Students will participate in collaborative teaching and learning
REQUIRED COURSE TEXTS:


- Additional Readings posted to Moodle

- Recommended: Messina-Dyert, Gina, Zobair, Jennifer, and Amy Levin, eds. *Faithfully Feminist: Jewish, Christian, & Muslim Feminist on Why We Stay*. Ashland, OR: White Cloud Press, 2015. There are suggested bibliography lists posted in the about section on Moodle and additional lists will be posted periodically on Moodle.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS (IN BRIEF)

- Attendance of zoom class sessions and participation in class discussions and exercises
- Assigned readings to be completed before each zoom class session
- Completion of posted Voicethread lectures before zoom class discussion
- Discussion Participation & Completion of Weekly Writing Engagements (WWE) submitted through Moodle – 40%
- Completion of VoiceThread Weekly Lectures – 20%
- Final Project and Presentation – 40%

COURSE REQUIREMENTS (IN DETAIL)

Attendance

An essential part of the learning experience is gathering together to reflect upon, engage, and develop ideas. Your presence is needed, not only for your own learning, but for your colleagues’ learning as well. Therefore, it is expected that students will attend all regular class sessions and participate actively (see below).

40% of your grade is assessed through submission of weekly writing engagements, attendance, and participation in small group discussion. If you are unable to attend class for any reason, please make a reasonable effort to notify the instructor and/or TA prior to the class session. Our contact information is at the top of this syllabus. Open communication is essential, if there is an emergency or extenuating circumstance, please contact the instructor as soon as reasonably possible. A student will be marked with an unexcused absence if a student does not notify the instructor before the zoom discussion which will negatively impact their overall participation assessment.
**Assigned Readings**

You are expected to prepare for each class by completing the assigned readings. We hope that you will engage these readings with a variety of critical hermeneutical approaches; namely, **generosity** (an empathetic reading of the text, attempting to inhabit the world of the author and understand the arguments from that point of view); **open-minded engagement** (noting the sound and compelling aspects of the author’s work); **suspicion** (noting elements of the language, analysis, sources that may indicate growing edges in the author’s analysis); **embodiment and experience** (remembering you are a body reading, taking breaks as needed, noticing bodily responses, and relating your own experience in strategic ways to the text); **suggestive critique** (commenting on incorrect or inadequate elements of the author’s arguments and offering suggestions for changes). All these “moments” are necessary in scholarly reading, and we hope you will find them a helpful way to approach texts. We will also look at your Moodle written assignments to show evidence of some or all of these moments in some form.

**COURSE GRADING:**

*Participation: 40% of final assessment (Discussion & WWE &WPE)*

Student participation is determined by active engagement in online zoom discussion and submitting weekly written engagements (WWE) and weekly partner exchanges (WPE). Students are expected to attend the weekly zoom meetings, attendance will be taken every week and students will be unable to complete the WPE if they are not present. “Without community there is no liberation, only the most vulnerable and temporary armistice between an individual and her oppression. But community must not mean a shedding of our differences, nor the pathetic pretense that these differences do not exist.”- Audre Lorde, “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House,” *Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Crossing Press, 1984), 112. Developing an ability to discuss these texts is a learning objective of the course. Please note that some material, such as personal testimony, may trigger trauma at times, so it is important to factor in time to process and reflect on the course material before the zoom discussion so that everyone can engage in open, respectful, and productive dialogue.

During our zoom discussion sessions there will be a designated amount of time that students will be placed in break-out sessions for small group discussion. The small groups will change every week so that students have the opportunity to engage with all fellow classmates to facilitate a sense of community and avoid uneven workload dynamics that could potentially occur in consistent groupings.
Small group discussion aids in the development of critical thinking abilities by:

- promoting the development of interpretive skills and peer learning social habits such as deep listening skills and accountability.
- increasing awareness of topics through actively connecting in-class topic/reading with assigned course material and reinforcing fundamental concepts and strategies for analysis and thoughtful reflection.
- enhancing student confidence in student led dialogue, oral communication skills, and developing an appreciation for differing viewpoints.
- developing a sense of trust and deepening a sense of community within the class.

**Weekly Written Engagements (WWE) & Weekly Partner Exchanges (WPE):**

- **WWE (350-500 words)** What were the main points that you took away from this week’s readings? See below for more details on content suggestions. This portion is due by noon on Monday before zoom discussion on the readings at 3:40pm PT.
- **WPE (75-150 words)** In your own words, what stood out to your partners about the readings? Write one thing about your small groups understanding of the material that prompted you to think about the readings in a new way (ex: connections to other readings, lectures, other classes, etc.). This portion is due by midnight after Monday’s zoom discussion.

One question concerns the student’s experience of the reading and each student is responsible for completing the assigned readings and being prepared to discuss with their partner or small group. The second question is about what each student learns from their partners understanding of the readings.

**Weekly Written Engagements (350-500 words)**

Each week write 350-500 words in response to the reading assigned for that week. Your response can take several forms throughout the semester:

- Critical evaluation of a main theme in one (or several) of the readings from the week.
- Exploration of an open question raised for you by the reading
- Articulation of a new insight gained from the reading, along with a reflection on the importance of that insight for your own developing understanding of women’s studies in religion
- Exploration of a tension created between the reading and a position, perspective, or insight that is important to you

The most effective written engagements will directly address assigned reading(s) and show evidence of multiple critical hermeneutical approaches as described in the section above.

If a student has an excused absence (which means the student emailed the instructor to let them know why the student would be missing mandatory zoom discussion) then they will give the student an alternative prompt to answer the WPE so that they can get full credit for the
week. You have to answer the prompt that is given and at the heading of the answer type “Excused Absence: Alternate Prompt Approved”.

Moodle WWE assignments will span twelve weeks of the semester. You may skip one week’s Moodle entry and responses without penalty.

**VOICETHREAD LECTURES (20% of Final Grade)**

Lectures will be given over VoiceThread for students to watch asynchronously. Each lecture needs to be viewed before Sunday at midnight, in order to get full credit. At the end of each VoiceThread lecture students will see a “submit assignment” button. By pressing this button, the student has logged that they have completed watching the lecture and this will be recorded in the gradebook as pass/fail. The system can determine if the student has tried to speed up the recording, skip slides, or move on before they have listened to the full recording on each slide and it will not display the submit assignment button. If the button does not appear, go back to the beginning, and make sure you did not miss any slides. Once VoiceThread registers that the student has listened to the lecture completely, they will be able to click the button to submit the lecture assignment as completed. The VoiceThread lectures offer historical context, methods, theories, and/or proposed models that complement and supplement the readings. They do not summarize the readings.

**FINAL PROJECT**

Choose any one of the following models/formats for the final project assignment. By April 4th, you must submit a proposal for a final project that is based on one of the models described below. Students who wish to collaborate on the final project are encouraged to do so. Details of the planned collaboration in regards both to the project and to the final project paper must be included in the proposal. Each student will present their project to the class in the final weeks of class. Final Projects are due in the final two weeks of the semester (you will select your own due date and tell us in your proposal). All projects must be submitted electronically via Moodle by Friday May 20th at midnight.

- **Academic Paper**
  The academic paper is a research paper based on a topic of interest to you and related to themes explored in this course. You should integrate/engage with insights from at least 2 resources from the course materials (readings or lectures). The paper will need to follow Turabian style, 9th edition. Your paper should represent original research, insight, and interpretation. A minimum of 10 pages in length for Master’s students; 20 pages in length for doctoral students. You will need to submit a starting bibliography for the research paper, and a one-page proposal for the paper and submit it to us for feedback and approval.

- **Extensive Reading**
  You may choose to read an additional 500-800 pages of material dealing with issues discussed in this class. This will be a good opportunity to read either “classic” material
in the field or to read cutting edge work. You must submit an annotated bibliography, relevant notes, and evidence of thoughtful engagement with the readings you did. These notes might be around central ideas, questions, and insights. They might serve as notes for a future project you hope to complete in your program at the GTU. You will need to submit a bibliography of the material you will be reading along with a one-page proposal addressing the questions that will be shaping your engagement with the reading.

• Professional Project
This project offers you the opportunity to integrate the material of this course with your current or anticipated work/vocation/ministry. The extent of the work, original thought, and interpretive analysis must be equal to the assignments outlined above. Some ideas for possible projects are listed below, but this list is far from extensive:

- Create a syllabus and activities for a mini course (whatever audience you choose) that incorporates ideas and issues from this course;
- Create a Forum Series or Workshop (whatever venue you choose) adapting themes and insights from this course for adult enrichment study;
- Create a communal ceremony/gathering/worship event that in some way(s) ritualizes a particularly meaningful theme or aspect of this course;
- Create an artistic expression related to themes of this course (paintings, poetry, etc)
- Create a staff training or information session for a women’s services, non-profit organizing using and applying ideas or themes from this course
- Create a blog series based on various themes, readings, and ideas from this course

Students who choose this project option must also submit a 5-page analysis of their project that describes how it was informed by the insights gained in this course. This analysis should refer to readings and class discussion. You will need to submit a one-page proposal specifying the goals, context, and scope of the project to us for feedback and approval.

• Other Project Idea Submitted by You
You may have another idea for a final project that is not covered in the options above. Your project must be of comparative effort to the above options (not much less work, and not much more work). It will also need to be clear to us the manner in which I can evaluate your project in order to assign a grade for it. You will need to submit a one-page proposal specifying the goals, context, and scope of the project as well as evaluative criteria. I strongly encourage you to schedule an appointment with us to talk over your idea prior to submitting your proposal.

EXTRA CREDIT
In order to help facilitate practices of health and self-care, students are able to receive 3 points of extra credit per month. You may do so each month by (a) attending a woman-centered
event or activity [WSR-sponsored events count toward this and have been noted in the syllabus; Meetup.com is also a neat website to find out about events in your area]; or (b) engaging in a self-care activity (to be determined by you). Examples of self-care activities might be getting a massage, going for a walk, taking a nap, practicing a Sabbath day, unplugging from electronic and social media for a day or weekend, painting, writing poetry, singing in choir. To receive extra credit, please submit an email of you at the event or doing the activity (as appropriate! Use your discretion.) One event/activity per month is worth 3 points. Please submit your extra credit within the month you have done it. Please do not submit all four extra credit activities at the end of the semester.

Accessibility Policy
The GTU consortium-wide “Students with Disabilities” policy that can be found in full at http://www.gtu.edu/admissions/life-at-gtu/students-with-disabilities. The GTU Dean of Students serves as the Disabilities Resource Officer (DRO) for the consortium. The DRO serves as a consortium-wide resource to develop expertise, provide information and consultation, and answer questions. The student is responsible for fully participating in the process and exercising due diligence to ensure the provision of accommodations is successfully accomplished. Students should request accommodations in advance of when the accommodation is needed. Please see the link above for more complete details, forms, and instructions.

Sexual Harassment and Discrimination (Title IX Resources)
GTU upholds a zero-tolerance policy for discrimination, harassment, and sexual misconduct. If you (or someone you know) have experienced discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, domestic or dating violence or stalking, we encourage you to tell someone promptly. For more information, please go to the GTU policy which can be found here: https://www.gtu.edu/gtu-title-ix

Reporting Practices
While I want you to feel comfortable coming to me with issues you may be struggling with or concerns you may be having, please be aware that there are some reporting requirements.

For example, if you inform us of an issue of harassment, sexual violence, or discrimination, we will keep the information as private as we can, but we are required to bring it to the attention of the institution’s Title IX Coordinator. Reports may be submitted online through the GTU Complaint and Intake Form (Link) or anonymously through Ethicspoint (Link).

If you would like to talk to the Title IX Coordinator directly you can reach Marie Lucero, mllucero@gtu.edu phone: 510-649-2437.

Pronouns
The GTU affirms the richness of diversity in our classrooms and expects that students practice civility and inclusion of all perspectives in respectful conversation and dialogue, which includes...
the use of students’ names and pronouns. All students should be referred to by the names and pronouns they use for themselves (e.g., she, he, they, ze).

It is our responsibility to educate ourselves about gender neutral pronouns. Here is a good starting point if this is something new to you (or as a refresher for those who have already been exposed to this):

http://www.brynmawr.edu/pensby/documents/AskingforNameandPronouns.pdf

Academic Integrity
Your voice, your perspective, your grappling with the materials in this course in relation to your context are the most valued things from my perspective. Therefore, all work submitted to fulfill requirements in this course is expected to be your own work. I want to know what you think. And I want to know it in your own words. Any quotation that is not original to you must be sited using Kate L. Turabian’s A Manual for Writers, 9th edition style guide.

Ideas and quotes from other authors that are not properly cited are considered to be plagiarism. Sometimes students plagiarize by accident, by forgetting to use quotation marks, by incorrectly citing sources, or by forgetting to cite sources at all. Sometimes plagiarism is intentional, where students lift significant portions of published material (from books or the internet) and attempt to pass the work off as their own.

One excellent web-based resource to help students better understand what plagiarism is and how to avoid it is the Online Purdue Writing Lab, which can be found at http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/01/.

We are also always available for consultation if you have any questions about this at all. Plagiarism on an assignment leaves one liable to a failing grade on the assignment, a failing grade for the course, or even suspension by the Academic Dean from the academic program of the seminary.

Email & Moodle Communication Policy
We welcome appropriate communication via email as questions arise. We will make every effort to respond in a timely manner; however, you should plan on about a 48-hour window for a response.

We will use Moodle messages to communicate with the class when necessary. It is your responsibility to check your moodle messages (you should get a notification through your email) in order to be sure that you are informed of any communication in a timely manner. Students for whom this presents undue hardship should partner with a colleague who agrees to relay communications to you.

For information about other policies, please consult the GTU Student Handbook

8
Course Schedule (Always Check Moodle for the Most Up-To-Date Information)

**Week 1:**
Creating Community
Read:
- hooks, bell. *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom.*
  Introduction: Teaching to Transgress, 1-12; Chapter 1: Engaged Pedagogy, 13-22

Discuss: First Zoom Meeting Monday January 31st 3:40-5pm PT

**Week 2:**
Read:
- *Methodology in Religious Studies:* Chapter 1: David Kinsley “Women’s Studies in the History of Religions” 1-15; Chapter 2: Katherine K. Young, “From the Phenomenology of Religion to Feminism and Women’s Studies” 17-40

Watch:
- VoiceThread Lecture: Exploring Intersectional Feminist Hermeneutics

Discuss: Zoom: Monday February 7th 3:40-5pm PT

**Week 3:**
Read:

Watch:
- VoiceThread Lecture: Feminist Archaeology: Peeling the Androcentric Onion & Re-evaluating the Past

Discuss: Zoom: Monday February 14th 3:40-5pm PT
Week 4:
Read:
- hooks, bell. Teaching to Transgress: Chapter 4: Paulo Freire, 45-58 and Chapter 5: Theory as Liberatory Practice, 59-76
Watch:
- VoiceThread Lecture: When a Seat at the Table Is Not Enough, Do We Flip the Table?

Discuss: Zoom: NO ZOOM Discussion Presidents Day Monday February 21st

*Extra Credit Opportunity: WSR Speaks with Dr. Rita Sherma about Ecotheology and the Divine Feminine on Friday February 18th 12-1pm PT

Week 5:
Read:
- Methodology in Religious Studies: Chapter 7: Rosemary Radford Ruether, “Methodologies in Women’s Studies and Feminist Theology” 179-206
Watch:
- VoiceThread Lecture: Ecofeminism: Equity as a Return to Paradise

Discuss: Zoom: Monday February 28th 3:40-5pm PT (Discuss week 4 & 5)

Week 6:
Read:
- ________, Orisha Archetypes, Cultural Memory, and the Odu, 42-52
- Betancourt, Sofia. Between Dishwater and the River Toward an Ecowomanist Methodology. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016), 61-68

Watch:
• VoiceThread Lecture: Keyona Lazenby, Exploring African Cosmological Traditions and Ecowomanism

Discuss: Zoom: Monday March 7th 3:40-5pm PT

Week 7:
Read:
• hooks, bell. *Teaching to Transgress*: Chapter 6: Essentialism and Experience, 77-92; Chapter 7: Holding My Sister’s Hand: Feminist Solidarity, 93-110; and Chapter 8: Feminist Thinking: In the Classroom Right Now, 111-118

Watch:
• VoiceThread Lecture: *Enkyklios Paideia*: Reexamining the Paths We’ve Taken Thus Far

Discuss: Zoom: Monday March 14th 3:40-5pm PT

*Extra Credit Opportunity: WSR Speaks with Dr. Kirsi Stjerna about Women as Confessors of Faith in the 16th century on Friday March 11th 12-1pm PT

Week 8: NO CLASS – READING WEEK March 21st-25th – [work on your presentations]

Week 9:
Read:
• Townes, Emilie M. "Ethics as an Art of Doing the Work Our Souls Must Have" in *Womanist Theological Ethics A Reader* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 35-50
• Mitchem, Stephanie Y. "Womanist Theology” in *Introducing Womanist Theology*. (Orbis Books, 2002), 46 -64

Watch:
• Guest Lecture by Leslie Bowling-Dyer: Black Feminist/Womanist Voices & Methods

Discuss: Zoom: Monday March 28th 3:40-5pm PT

*Extra Credit Opportunity: GTU Borsch-Rast Lecture on Dr. Ashley Bacchi’s Book, *Uncovering Jewish Creativity in Book III of the Sibylline Oracles: Gender, Intertextuality, & Politics* on March 31st 6pm PT
Week 10: (Final Project Proposals Due by midnight PT via Moodle)
Read:
- hooks, bell. Teaching to Transgress: Chapter 11: Language: Teaching New Worlds/New Words, 167-176 and Chapter 12: Confronting Class in the Classroom, 177-190

Watch:
- VoiceThread Lecture: The Expansive Divine: Inclusion & Transformation

Discuss: Zoom: Monday April 4th 3:40-5pm PT

Week 11:
Read:
- Schüssler Fiorenza, Elisabeth, Congress of Wo/men: Toward a Critical-Political Feminist Theory and The*logy, 1-30

Watch:
- VoiceThread Lecture: Postcolonial Feminist Hermeneutics & Trauma Informed Feminist Pedagogy

Discuss: Zoom: Monday April 11th 3:40-5pm PT

*Extra Credit Opportunity: WSR Speaks with the Rev. Dr. Boyung Lee about Korean Feminist Theology, Monday April 11th 12-1pm PT

Week 12:
Read:
- Schüssler Fiorenza, Elisabeth, Congress of Wo/men: Chapter 1: The Violence of Kyriarchal Power, 31-64 and Chapter 2: Essentializing Gender-Theologizing the Feminine, 65-94

Watch:
- VoiceThread Lecture: Women and Religion & the Fight to End Violence Against Women
Discuss: Zoom: Monday April 18th 3:40-5pm PT

Week 13:
Read:

Watch:
- Guest Lecture by Dr. Jennifer Owens-Jofré, Mujerista Feminist Voices & Methods

Discuss: Zoom: Monday April 25th 3:40-5pm PT

Week 14:
Read:

Watch:
- VoiceThread Lecture: Envisioning New Paths & Allies: How Do We Create Just & Sustainable Communities?

Discuss: Zoom: Monday May 2nd 3:40-5pm PT

*Extra Credit Opportunity: Annual WSR Faculty Chair Lecture with Dr. Ashley Bacchi & Recognition of WSR Certificate Recipients for 2021/2022 in May, date & time TBA

Week 15:
Read: Student Handouts

Watch:
*Student Presentations on VoiceThread, Student Presenters Lead Discussion*

Discuss: Zoom: Monday May 9th 3:40-5pm PT

Week 16:
Read: Student Handouts

Watch:
*Student Presentations on VoiceThread, Student Presenters Lead Discussion*

Discuss: Zoom: Monday May 16th 3:40-5pm PT