FALL 2012

FEMINIST AND WOMANIST THEOLOGIES

TH3466

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SYLLABUS
GOALS

1. Overall, to examine the major issues and thinkers in womanist and feminist theologies through an integrative study of historical, literary, doctrinal and ethical resources and methods.

2. To expose course members to the inter-racial and polycultural dimensions of women’s movements and discussions within which theological and ethical perspectives emerge.

3. To contribute to course members’ practical dimensions of ministry, social justice organizing, and spiritual formation, as they are challenged by gender and sexual justice issues, cross-cut always by ethnic and racial issues.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Students will have displayed, in their written essays, serious engagement with the theological content of diverse feminist/womanist theologians, an ability to appraise critical debates about approaches in feminist/womanist theologies.

2. Also across the students' two essays, they will have demonstrated interpretive skill, a basic “literacy of difference,” in the reading of contrasting cultural, racial/ethnic and literary traditions in feminist/womanist theologies.

3. Student essays and course contributions will also have displayed an inter-disciplinary capacity to integrate, working amid three different academic disciplines (history, literature, theology), and integrating also disciplinary areas within their seminary course work, from biblical, historical, theological, ethical and practical studies.

4. In especially the second essay, students will be able to articulate the impact that course readings have had on their own Christian faith, and their significance for meaningful practice of Christian life in its personal, ecclesial and wider social and political meanings.

TEXTS

The following texts are in the PTS bookstore and on Reserve in Speer Library. Some essays assigned from these books are also on Blackboard. The book in the bookstore by Digby (Men Doing Feminism) only has some recommended reading for the weeks of October 9 and 16.


--Readings of and from the following texts are *only on Blackboard*. The specific readings from these and other sources on Blackboard are given in the “Agenda below, and marked below also by “(BB).”


(Additional books beyond those listed here, may also be placed on Reserve from time to time, which may be especially important for class research. Check the Reserve listings for this course in the library.)

REQUIREMENTS

1 Faithful, weekly attendance and participation in every class.

2 Two, 10-12 page papers on the following themes and due on the dates given below:

   Paper One: Focusing on the theological implications of two of the literary and historical traditions read for the first half of this course. **Due: October 30.**

   Paper Two: This final paper is to focus on your reflections concerning the significance of course readings for your own theology, drawing from readings in the second half of the course. Examples of questions you may wish to take up: What key themes and emphases from the readings do you find it important to make primary in your theology? In what ways has your theology changed in light of light of the course's readings? How do you assess key themes of this course from what you consider to be your core theological beliefs? These questions are only examples The main point of this final paper is to provide a personal/synthetic theological statement that takes account of the readings of the course and their impact upon you. **Due: December 10.**

3. Serve at least once as a Precept Initiator, bringing no more than five minutes of opening questions and/or commentary on readings of the week. (Please tie your question(s) to material of the week that everyone was assigned). The course professor will serve as moderator of the precept, even though the students initiate it in this way.
EVALUATING OUR WORK TOGETHER

Advisories: This course in feminist and womanist theologies usually poses special challenges to us all, as we explore together new and often excluded theological visions and perspectives on life, faith and spirit. All views of all participants are to be treated with openness and respect. In this spirit, inclusive language regarding human beings – with respect to gender and all modes of human difference – is expected, and is also encouraged with respect to language about God.

All students with learning or other disabilities, please feel free to contact us about changes that can be made to facilitate your full participation in this course. Some preparatory conversations about these needs and opportunities have already occurred.

Papers will be evaluated in terms of the following five criteria (of the numbers, 5 is the highest)

1. **Presentation** 1 2 3 4 5  
   (writing style, clarity of prose, grammatical and spelling competence, sentence and paragraph flow)

2. **Clear Statement of Thesis or Argument** 1 2 3 4 5  
   (what is the main “point” or “purpose” of your essay. Is it stated clearly, early in the essay)

3. **Description of Sources** 1 2 3 4 5  
   (fair and accurate analysis and treatment, in the students’ own words, of the perspectives of the writers dealt with, and proper citation of materials used)

4. **Critical Engagement with Sources** 1 2 3 4 5  
   (display of a capacity to move beyond mere description and summary to creative and critical engagement with the novel)

5. **Balance of Theological with Literary-Historical Dimensions** 1 2 3 4 5  
   (the ability of the essay writer to distinguish and relate clearly and cogently, the theological to the literary dimensions of the novel, and where appropriate, to the historical dimension as well)

COURSE FORMAT

**Plenary Sessions.** Both instructors will try to be present for all class sessions in order to facilitate dialogue, but each week just one of the professors will have lecture and discussion leadership responsibility for the first two hours of our three hours together. The last hour will normally involve breaking out into precept groups for discussion. Things will be different within the first two weeks, with professors sharing each session’s lectures, and leading plenary dialogues without precepts being held.
Precepts. Within the first two weeks, students will sign up to serve as initiator for one of the week’s discussion in the semester. “Initiating” does not mean presenting a long verbal summary or position, or submitting an essay of any length. It does mean initiating the precept dialogue with a crisply-focused question or comment (maybe two of these), which refers to a specific passage or passages in the readings assigned for that week. So prepare by knowing the readings well, thinking creatively about your own concerns/questions/faith issues, and about what might be key issues of concern for your precept colleagues. The professor or preceptor will still serve as moderator of the precept discussion, even though the discussion is initiated by the student.

For Two of Our Precept Meetings, we will meet according to gender group, men in one precept with Dr. Taylor, women with Dr. Pierce. This will occur on the dates of October 9 and October 16, the days we are working on texts related to Margaret Atwood’s The Handmaid’s Tale. Some recommended readings, from Tom Digby’s Men Doing Feminism, are listed on the Agenda for those weeks (see below).
AGENDA

I – ARAB-AMERICAN LITERARY TRADITIONS & THEOLOGY

Diana Abu-Jaber, Arabian Jazz

September 11 – Experiences, Perspectives, Historical Traditions


PAWA – Palestinian-American Women’s Association (explore and assess the website)
http://www.pawasca.org/

September 18 – Theological Reflection


Jean Zaru, Occupied with Nonviolence: A Palestinian Woman Speaks (Fortress Press, 2008), chapters 1, 2 and 9.
II – AMERICAN INDIAN LITERARY TRADITIONS & THEOLOGY

Paula Gunn Allen, *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows*

September 25 – Experiences, Perspectives, Historical Traditions


October 2 – Theological Reflections


### III – EUROAMERICAN LITERARY TRADITIONS & THEOLOGY

**Margaret Atwood, The Handmaid’s Tale**

**October 9 – Experiences, Perspectives, Historical Traditions**


**October 16 – Theological Reflection**


FALL READING PERIOD
October 19-29

IV – AFRICAN AMERICAN LITERARY TRADITIONS & THEOLOGY

Alice Walker, Meridian

October 30 – Experiences, Perspectives, Historical Traditions


**November 6 – Theological Reflection**


![Monica Coleman, Claremont School of Theology](image1)


**V – LATINA LITERARY TRADITIONS & THEOLOGY**

*Ana Castillo, So Far From God*

![Ana Castillo](image2)

**November 13 – Experiences, Perspectives, Historical Traditions**

1. "La Chicana" by Elisabeth Martinez, "La Conciencia de la Mestiza: Towards a New Consciousness" by Gloria Anzaldúa "Feminist Encounters: Locating the Politics of"


November 20 – Theological Reflection


Nancy Pineda-Madrid, Boston College
VI – ASIAN-AMERICAN LITERARY TRADITIONS & THEOLOGY

Janice Mirikitani, *Love Works*

November 27 – Experiences, Perspectives, Historical Traditions


December 4 – Theological Perspectives

Kwok Pui-lan, Episcopal Divinity School


