

The College of Humanities: Religion
RELI 2535 A: Women and Religion

Professor A. Geissinger

Office Hours: Tuesdays 9:30-11:30 am,
or by appointment

Office: 2A41 Paterson Hall

Office phone: (613) 520-2600, ext. 3108

Email: Aisha_Geissinger@carleton.ca

Course Lectures: Tuesdays 2:35-5:25 pm (3112 River Building)

Course description

This course provides an introduction to the complex question of what it means to be a female, male, or otherwise gendered human being in several different religious traditions found in the world today. In order to study the ways that the nature of the divine, human bodies, genders and sexualities are constructed in these different religious traditions, this course will focus on four main issues: (1) beliefs about the divine and sacred stories, (2) body practices and gender, (3) ritual practices and gender, and (4) sexual practices. Attention will also be given to the diverse and complex ways that adherents of these religious traditions respond to such constructions.

Note: The purpose of this course is not to attempt to persuade you to adopt or reject a particular religious viewpoint. This course presupposes that students accept that the primary and secondary source texts used will be studied using critical methods that are employed in a modern research university when examining any text, religious or otherwise.

Course Readings

The following textbooks are required:

- Leona Anderson and Pamela Dickey Young, eds., *Women and Religious Traditions* (Don Mills, ON and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 2nd edition. [WRT]
- Julie Ingersoll, *Evangelical Christian Women: War Stories in the Gender Battles* (New York University Press, 2003).

These books are available through Haven Books
(43 Seneca Street, Ottawa: www.havenbooks.ca).

Course Evaluation

Your final grade will be determined by the following:

- Class presentation—15%
- Written assignment—15%
- Mid-term exam—25%
- In-class quizzes—15%
- Final exam—30%

COURSE POLICIES

In-class quizzes and attendance

The quizzes will be held in class at random. They are based on the readings and/or lecture materials, and are my way of gauging your comprehension of the readings, as well as marking attendance. Therefore, there is no way to make up for any quizzes missed. This course is designed with the assumption that students will prepare the readings before coming to class, and will attend class regularly.

Class presentation

For the class presentation, bring in a news or media item that is directly related to the issues studied in this course, present it to the class, and lead a short, focused class discussion on it.

When leading discussion, begin by briefly addressing the following issues:

- (1) what type of a news/media item this is (e.g. editorial, human interest story, satire...)
- (2) when it was written/produced, and by whom
- (3) who is its intended audience
- (4) what the author(s) seems to have intended to communicate (e.g. contribute to an on-going intra-community debate, defend their religious community from outside criticism, promote what they see as reform...)
- (5) how this news/media item relates to the religious tradition/community in question.

Then, raise questions that deal with how the item constructs gender, as well as authority.

A written outline of your observations and questions is to be submitted immediately following the discussion. More detail as to what is expected will be provided in class.

Exams

The exams are based on both the course readings and materials discussed in class. About two-thirds of the exam questions are based on materials dealt with in class.

Please note that there will be no make-up examination for the mid-term. If you must miss the mid-term, then you must choose whether to add its value to your final exam mark, or to your written assignment mark. In order to qualify for either of these options, you must (1) provide adequate documentation which shows why you missed the midterm, and (2) fill out a form (available in my office) asking to have the normal grade distribution changed.

The written assignment—General policies

- More detailed instructions for the assignment will be provided in class.
- **Ensure that you know what plagiarism is**, and how to avoid it. For details, see: <http://www2.carleton.ca/studentaffairs.academic-integrity/> If you are in any doubt about what constitutes plagiarism, ask.
- **If you have never written a paper like this before**, you are strongly urged to contact the Student Academic Success Centre: <http://www2.carleton.ca/sasc/writing-tutorial-service/writing-resources/>
- **Assignments are due** in hard copy, at the beginning of class, on the date specified in the syllabus. Late papers will be penalized by the deduction of 2% per day or partial day (including weekends), unless an extension has been arranged before the due date. Retroactive extensions will be granted only according to the rules of the university—

personal and family emergencies (documentation must be provided). Extensions will not be granted because of exam or essay conflicts, jobs, busy schedules, etc.

- **Late papers can be submitted** through the drop box at the Religion and Classics Department (a large locked wooden box on the wall outside 2A39 Paterson Hall). Do not put them under my (or anyone else's) door; the cleaning staff may pick them up and throw them out.
- **Papers that do not follow the directions given** in class (in content, methodology, appearance, length) may be returned ungraded for resubmission. In such a case. Late penalties will accrue from the due date, regardless of when the problem was discovered.
- **Be sure to keep a hard copy of your paper**, and do a computer/disk back-up as well. Please submit the original for marking, not a photocopy.

Email communication

Please be aware that in order to ensure compliance with the federal privacy act known as FIPPA, Carleton communications policy states that faculty may only communicate with students through their Carleton Connect accounts.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 (Jan. 7)—Defining our terms: What do we mean by “women” and “religion”? What do we mean by “religious traditions”? What methodological issues are involved in the study of these topics?

Reading: WRT, “Introduction.”

Week 2 (Jan. 14)—Introducing women in Hindu traditions

Reading: WRT, Chapter 1; “Case study: both guru and goddess”

Week 3 (Jan. 21)—Introducing women in Judaism

Reading: WRT, Chapter 2

Week 4 (Jan. 28)—Introducing women in Buddhist traditions

Reading: WRT, Chapter 3; “Case study: Sakyadhita—daughters of the Buddha unite”

Week 5 (Feb. 4)—Introducing women in Chinese traditions

Reading: WRT, Chapter 4

Week 6 (Feb. 11)—Introducing women in Indigenous traditions

Reading: WRT, Chapter 5

Week 7 (Feb. 18)—Winter Break, no class

Start reading Ingersoll's book.

Week 8 (Feb. 25) * **mid-term exam** (in class)

Week 9 (March 4)—Introducing women in Christianity

Reading: WRT, Chapter 6; “Case study: l’ autre parole”

Week 10 (March 11)—Introducing women in Islam

Reading: WRT, Chapter 7; “Case study: two Muslim women in North America”

Week 11 (March 18)—Introducing women in Sikhism

Reading: WRT, Chapter 8

Week 12 (March 25)—Case study: gender conflict in religious institutions

Reading: Ingersoll, pp. 1-46

Week 13 (April 1)—Case study: change?

Reading: Ingersoll, pp. 47-96

Week 14 (April 8)—Case studies: empowerment in restriction? Course conclusion

* **Written assignment due today in class**

Reading: Ingersoll, pp. 97-147.

FINAL EXAM - In Scheduled Exam Period

REGULATIONS COMMON TO ALL HUMANITIES COURSES

COPIES OF WRITTEN WORK SUBMITTED

Always retain for yourself a copy of all essays, term papers, written assignments or take-home tests submitted in your courses.

PLAGIARISM

The University Senate defines plagiarism as “*presenting, whether intentional or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.*” This can include:

- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another’s data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in “*substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs.*”

Plagiarism is a serious offence which cannot be resolved directly with the course’s instructor. The Associate Deans of the Faculty conduct a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of “F” for the course

GRADING SYSTEM

Letter grades assigned in this course will have the following percentage equivalents:

A+ = 90-100 (12)	B = 73-76 (8)	C - = 60-62 (4)
A = 85-89 (11)	B- = 70-72 (7)	D+ = 57-59 (3)
A- = 80-84 (10)	C+ = 67-69 (6)	D = 53-56 (2)
B+ = 77-79 (9)	C = 63-66 (5)	D - = 50-52 (1)

F	Failure. Assigned 0.0 grade points
ABS	Absent from final examination, equivalent to F
DEF	Official deferral (see “Petitions to Defer”)
FND	Failure with no deferred exam allowed -- assigned only when the student has failed the course on the basis of inadequate term work as specified in the course outline.

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean.

WITHDRAWAL WITHOUT ACADEMIC PENALTY

The last date to withdraw from **FALL TERM** courses is **DEC. 9, 2013**. The last day to withdraw from **FALL/WINTER (Full Term)** and **WINTER** term courses is **APRIL 8, 2014**.

REQUESTS FOR ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term because of disability, pregnancy or religious obligations. Please review the course outline promptly and write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. You can visit the Equity Services website to view the policies and to obtain more detailed information on academic accommodation at: carleton.ca/equity/accommodation/

Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations in this course must register with the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) for a formal evaluation of disability-related needs. Documented disabilities could include but not limited to mobility/physical impairments, specific Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/psychological disabilities, sensory disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and chronic medical conditions. Registered PMC students are required to contact the PMC, 613-520-6608, every term to ensure that your Instructor receives your Letter of Accommodation, no later than two weeks before the first assignment is due or the first in-class test/midterm requiring accommodations. If you only require accommodations for your formally scheduled exam(s) in this course, please submit your request for accommodations to PMC by **Nov. 8, 2013** for the Fall term and **March 7, 2014** for the Winter term. For more details visit the Equity Services website: carleton.ca/equity/accommodation/

PETITIONS TO DEFER

If you miss a final examination and/or fail to submit a **FINAL** assignment by the due date because of circumstances beyond your control, you may apply a deferral of examination/assignment. If you are applying for a deferral due to illness you will be required to see a physician in order to confirm illness and obtain a medical certificate dated no later than one working day after the examination or assignment deadline. This supporting documentation must specify the date of onset of the illness, the degree of incapacitation, and the expected date of recovery.

If you are applying for a deferral for reasons other than personal illness, please [contact](#) the Registrar’s Office directly for information on other forms of documentation that we accept.

Deferrals of assignments must be supported by confirmation of the assignment due date, for example a copy of the course outline specifying the due date and any documented extensions from the course instructor.

Deferral applications for examination or assignments must be submitted within **5 working days** of the original final exam.

ADDRESSES: (Area Code 613)

College of the Humanities 520-2809	300 Paterson
Greek and Roman Studies Office 520-2809	300 Paterson
Religion Office 520-2100	2A39 Paterson
Registrar's Office 520-3500	300 Tory
Student Academic Success Centre 520-7850	302 Tory
Paul Menton Centre 520-6608/TTY 520-3937	501 Uni-Centre
Writing Tutorial Service 520-2600 Ext. 1125	4 th Floor Library
Learning Support Service 520-2600 Ext 1125	4 th Floor Library