

WMGS 132a  
Dr. Elinor W. Gadon, Laurie Faculty  
Women and Gender Studies  
Spring 2006  
Tu and F 12:10 - 1:30  
Pearlman 203

Office Hours: Wednesday 2-4  
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## **FEMINISM AND RELIGION: WOMEN, RELIGION AND SOCIAL CHANGE**

### **Course Description:**

Women's claim to their own experience of divinity, to the sacredness of their bodies and sexuality, and to their own spirituality has challenged traditional world religions. These claims are also creating new feminist theo(a)logies and addressing changing leadership roles worldwide.

In this class we will see how this happened and what the implications are for the future. Our perspective is broad and inclusive. We will address issues germane to women worldwide as well as those in the new religious movements of the West. We will explore the relationship between nature and the body, immanence and transcendence. We will also discuss feminist visions of post-patriarchal religion.

The readings, lectures and class discussion reveal the powerful connections between religious doctrine and practices and women's oppression, between the use of image and text and their pervasive influence on culture, and the denial of social, economic and ecological justice. Readings include voices from some of the most articulate, passionate women critiquing institutionalized religions globally from a gendered perspective and writing about their roles in promoting social change.

### **Course Goals:**

To engage the student in the challenge and excitement of multi-cultural, multi-dimensional and gendered approaches to religion as a force for social change.

Learning objectives include

- (1) raising consciousness as to the patriarchal nature of all world religions;
- (2) promoting awareness of leadership roles that women are taking within established religions as well as in creating alternative structures; and
- (3) understanding the new methodologies feminist scholars of religion have created in order to reclaim women's religious experience.

Classes will be conducted as seminar. Each session will include a brief introduction of relevant issues followed by discussion of the assigned readings with full student participation. We will make ample use of visuals, story telling and role playing.

**Booklist:**

The following books have been ordered through the Brandeis bookstore and will be read in their entirety. Selected readings from six other books will be posted on WebCT.

Rita M. Gross, *Feminism and Religion: An Introduction*

Judith Plaskow, *Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism from a Feminist Perspective*

Fatima Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society*

Carol P. Christ, *Rebirth of the Goddess: Finding Meaning in Feminist Spirituality*

Also, please have a copy of the Bible on hand.