Women in the Bible
First Year Seminar,
Drake University, Fall 2013

Professor

Dr. Trisha Wheelock
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Office Hours: after class and by appointment

Course Description

This class will explore the depiction of women in biblical literature and in social and cultural contexts of both ancient Israel and the Mediterranean world. We will consider the roles women play within biblical narratives, the presentations of femininity and feminine in biblical traditions, and the legal/ethical precepts related to the status of women. We will read both biblical texts and secondary literature. In addition, we will reflect on the influence of these texts on the lives of women and men in the synagogue and church and evaluate their significance for life in the twenty-first century.

No prior knowledge of Jewish and Christian canonical texts is assumed.

Goals

1. Gain familiarity with biblical texts concerning women in their social and cultural contexts
2. Explore and use the tools and methods of biblical interpretation
3. Reflect how biblical women both operated within and challenged the expectations placed on them
4. Evaluate how – or if – biblical texts concerning women should impact contemporary synagogue and church life
5. Develop critical thinking, reading, information literacy, and writing skills
6. Have fun

Texts

1. a Bible. You must bring a bible to class everyday
2. *The Red Tent* by Anita Diamant
5. *Helpmates, Harlots, and Heroes* by Alice Ogden Bells
6. supplemental texts on e-reserves--password: women14

Course Requirements
1. With a partner or alone, make one class presentation of approximately 20 minutes (you may choose which session beginning with “Eve and Lot’s Daughters”)

2. Methods of interpretation paper (4-5 pages) DUE Sept. 30

3. Book review (4-5 pages)—The Red Tent DUE Oct. 21

4. Explication essay (3-4 pages) DUE Nov. 25

5. Research Paper (8-10 pages) DUE Dec. 11 (at noon)

6. Five pop quizzes (students may choose to write a two page summary of the reading assignment in lieu of a quiz). The summary must be submitted at the beginning of the next class following the quiz.

7. Five short writing assignments (approximately 1 page each). We’ll use these short pieces as starting blocks for the longer assignments.

All student grades will be posted on Blackboard. In addition, expectations and guidelines for course requirements are posted on Blackboard under “Course Information” or “Content.”

**Participation and Academic Honesty**

Your participation in this class is indispensable. Therefore, your instructor will assign you a grade (up to 50 points) for class participation, based on your attendance at, preparation for, and participation in class lectures and discussions. After two absences, students will lose 5 participation points for each subsequent absence.

**Please turn off your cell phones.**

** Unless the professor gives specific written instructions otherwise, all work evaluated for a grade is expected and assumed to be your own without any assistance or collaboration from other students, professors, or other individuals. Any student who engages in academic dishonesty will receive a zero for the specific assignment and may receive an “F” for the course.

**Disability Services**

Any student who has a physical, psychiatric/emotional, medical, learning, or attentional disability that may affect the student’s ability to complete assigned course work should contact the Disability Services Coordinator, Michelle Laughlin (Michelle.Laughlin@drake.edu), who will review the concerns and decide with the student what accommodations are necessary.

**Course Grading**
Point Values for Course Activities:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Grade Range</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lead class session</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>495-550=A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Review</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>440-494=B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods paper</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>385-439=C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>330-384=D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explication paper</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>&lt;330=F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Paper</td>
<td>125</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5 short assignments</td>
<td>50</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>550</strong></td>
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Course Policy

This Women in the Bible course is being taught in a liberal arts context and is part of the First Year Seminar curriculum at Drake. You do not have to share a particular faith commitment to do well in this class; our purpose is education not indoctrination. Thus, we will present various responsible viewpoints on critical issues. You are not expected to agree with any one particular view; rather, you should demonstrate that you understand the issues involved and the various options discussed in class. While facts and historical data are important in this class, more important is the task of equipping yourself to become interested and informed readers of the Hebrew Bible and Christian New Testament.

The instructor reserves the right to amend the syllabus at any time during the semester.

Course Calendar

**Monday, August 26** Introducing the Course, Overview, Definitions

**Wednesday, August 28** – Feminism (the new f word?)
Reading: 1. Bellis, *Helpmates, Harlots, and Heroes*, 3-34 (chapter 1)

**Monday, September 2**—Labor Day, no class

**Wednesday, September 4** – Methods (5 streams)

**Monday, September 9** – Doing Feminist Readings (Loyalist) and (Rejectionist)
Reading: 1. E-reserves—Getty-Sullivan, Women in the NT part 1 (loyalist) pages 43-60  
2. E-reserves—Milne, No promised land: Rejecting the authority of the Bible  (rejectionist)

**Wednesday, September 11** – Doing Feminist Readings (Revisionist) and (Sublimationist) 
Reading: 1. E-reserves—Tanner, My Sister Sarah [revisionist] from *Engaging the Bible*  
2. E-reserves—Bowen, Women, Violence, and the Bible from *Engaging the Bible* [sublimationist]

**Monday, September 16** -- Doing Feminist Readings (Liberationist) 
Reading: 1. E-reserves—The Call of Wisdom-Sophia: Feminist Biblical Studies by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza  
2. E-reserves—Neuger, Image and Imagination from *Engaging the Bible*

**Wednesday, September 18** – Library session (meet in Cowles Library room 45)

**Monday, September 23** -- Eve and Lot’s Daughters 
Reading: 1. *Helpmates, Harlots and Heroes*, 37-55 (chapter 2)  
2. Genesis 1-3  

**Wednesday, September 25**– Sarah, Hagar, and Lot’s Daughters 
2. *Helpmates, Harlots and Heroines*, 57-67  

**Monday, September 30**– Methods Paper Due (via Email) 
Class meets in Parents Hall for Fall Advising Session

**Wednesday, October 2** -- Rebekah, Leah, Rachel, Zilpah, and Bilhah 
Reading: 1. *Helpmates, Harlots and Heroines*, 67-73  
2. Genesis 24-27 and 29-35  

**Monday, October 7**– Dinah, Tamar, and Mrs. Potiphar 
Reading: 1. *Helpmates, Harlots and Heroines*, 73-82  
2. Genesis 34, 38, 39  
**Wednesday, October 9**– *The Red Tent* Writing Conference
Reading: Diamant, part 1 (pages 1-71)

Monday, October 14—Fall Break (No class)

Wednesday, October 16—The Women in Joshua and Judges [Rahab, Deborah, Jephthah’s daughter, Delilah, the Levite’s woman]//Writing Conference
Reading: 1. Helpmates, Harlots and Heroes, 98-122
2. Joshua 2; Judges 4, 11, 15-16, 19

Monday, October 21—Book Review Due// The Women in 1 and 2 Samuel [Hannah, Michal, Abigail, Bathsheba]
Reading: 1. Helpmates, Harlots and Heroes, 123-155
2. 1 Samuel 1, 18-19, 25; 2 Samuel 11-13

Wednesday, October 23—Ruth and Esther
Reading: 1. Helpmates, Harlots and Heroes, 183-195
2. Ruth 1-4 and Esther 1-10

Monday, October 28—Introduction to New Testament
Reading: 1. Women in the New Testament (Thurston) 1-29

Wednesday, October 30—Women in the Gospel of Mark [the hemorrhaging woman, the Syro-Phoenician woman]
Reading: 1. Women in the NT 62-77
2. Mark 7:24-31 and 5:24-34
3. E-reserves-- Getty Sullivan, Women in the NT part 2
4. E-reserves—Haber, A Woman’s Touch

Monday, November 4—Women in the Gospel of Matthew (class does not meet)
Reading: Blackboard--Weaver, “Wherever this Good News”
2. Blackboard—Dreyer, “Gender Critique”
Handout (counts as a quiz)

Wednesday, November 6—Women in the Gospel of John (class does not meet)
Reading: 1. Women in the NT, 78-95
Short writing assignment

Monday, November 11—Review (handout and short writing assignments due)
**Wednesday, November 13**— Women in the Lukan Material (Luke and Acts)
Reading: 1. *Women in the NT*, 96-128

**Monday, November 18**— Paul, the 1st century, and Women in the Early Church
1. Blackboard—“The World of Paul’s Readers” in *A Feminist Companion to Paul* by Polaski, 26-46

**Wednesday, November 20**— Women in the Pauline Letters
Reading: 1. *Women in the NT* (Thurston) 30-61
2. Galatians 3:28; 1 Corinthians 11:1-20, 14:34-36; Philippians 4:1-2; Romans 16:1-6

**Monday, November 25**— Explication paper due

**Thanksgiving Recess**

**Monday, December 2** – Women in the Deutero-Pauline Texts
Reading: 1. *Women in the NT* (Thurston) 129-155
2. Colossians 3:18-4:1; Ephesians 5:21-6:9; 1 Timothy 2:9-15

**Wednesday, December 4**-- The Gospel of Mary and some Preliminary Conclusions
Reading: e-reserves—Gospel of Mary (this is an article by expert Karen King)
2. Blackboard—Gospel of Mary (this is the actual text of the gospel)

**Research Paper Due: December 11 (by noon)**