Women in the Bible
First Year Seminar
Drake University, Fall 2015

Professor

Dr. Trisha Wheelock
Email: trisha.wheelock@drake.edu
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

Texts

1. a Bible. You must bring a bible to class everyday
2. The Red Tent by Anita Diamant
3. Women in the New Testament by Bonnie Thurston
4. Helpmates, Harlots, and Heroes by Alice Ogden Bells
5. The Dovekeepers, Alice Hoffman
6. supplemental texts on e-reserves--password: women15
Course Requirements—check Blackboard for handouts

1. With a partner or alone, make a formal class presentation of approximately 20 minutes on one of the biblical figures (you may choose which session beginning with “Eve”)

2. Methods and exegetical paper (3-4 pages) DUE Sept. 30 (rough draft), final Oct. 5

3. Mid-term exam—Oct. 14

4. Research Paper (7-8 pages) DUE Dec. 18

5. With a partner or alone, lead informal class discussion for each of the novels. This does not require a visual presentation but should include a summary of the reading and three discussion questions. You will sign up for one discussion on *The Red Tent* and one for *The Dovekeepers*.

6. Weekly journals. Students will submit a journal each week (except midterm and finals week) by Sunday at 11pm via Blackboard. The journal should be 200-250 words and relate to the week’s readings, class discussions, and conversations. Show me you’re doing the reading and critically thinking about the class. We’ll use these short pieces as starting blocks for the longer assignments. Sometimes, I’ll provide you with a specific prompt and other weeks I’ll have you choose your own topic.

Please submit your assignments on Blackboard. I will provide feedback, post grades, and list other material on Blackboard.

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. I expect and want you to attend every class.

**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. 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.
**Student Services:**

The Coordinator for Sexual Violence Response and Healthy Relationship Promotion’s primary role is to act as a resource for students who have been subjected to interpersonal [gender] violence including sexual assault/harassment, dating/domestic violence, gender-based discrimination, and stalking and will advocate on behalf of the student victim’s requests if services are voluntarily initiated. The coordinator can explain how to initiate a complaint within the university and through criminal/civil processes, assist with referrals to a confidential crisis advocate and/or counselor and appropriate medical or legal professionals. The coordinator must report “known” student campus assaults to the Dean of Students and/or Title IX Coordinator, but the complainant still has rights to participate or withdraw from the university process. Other services include providing crisis intervention (safety plan, crisis counseling, rights information), and assistance in academic and housing accommodations as needed. To contact the coordinator, Alysa Mozak, call 515-271-4141 or email alysa.mozak@drake.edu. The Violence Intervention Partner (V.I.P.) program through this office provides peer-based 24/7 confidential advocacy services. To access a V.I.P. advocate call or text 515-512-2972. For more information about these services visit [www.drake.edu/sexual-assault/](http://www.drake.edu/sexual-assault/)

**Course Grading**

Point Values for Course Activities:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lead class session</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>90%   = A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm exam</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>80%   = B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods paper (and rough draft)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>70%   = C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>60%   = D</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Paper</td>
<td>75</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Weekly journals</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>(five points for each)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead discussion on novels</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>(25 points for each)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>400 Points</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.

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

Monday, August 31 Introducing the Course, Overview, women in the ancient world

Wednesday, September 2 – Feminism and the bible (the new f word?)
Reading: 1. Bellis, Helpmates, Harlots, and Heroes, 3-34 (chapter 1)
see handout
Journal 1 due Sunday, 11pm

Monday, September 7—Labor Day, no class

Wednesday, September 9 – Methods (5 streams)
See handout
Journal 2 due Sunday, 11pm

Monday, September 14 – Applying the Methods
Reading: The Red Tent, chapters 1 and 2 (pages 1-49)

Wednesday, September 16 – Library
Journal 3 due Sunday, 11pm

Monday, September 21 – Revisiting the Methods and Eve
Reading: 1. Helpmates, Harlots and Heroes, 37-55 (chapter 2)
2. Genesis 3

Wednesday, September 23 – Sarah, Hagar, and Lot’s Daughters
Reading: 1. Genesis 16: 1-16
2. Helpmates, Harlots and Heroines, 57-67
3. The Red Tent, chapter 3 (pages 51-103)
Journal 4 due Sunday, 11pm

Monday, September 28 -- Rebekah, Leah, Rachel, Zilpah, Bilhah, and Dinah
Reading: 1. Helpmates, Harlots and Heroines, 67-73
2. Genesis 24, Genesis 25:19-34, Genesis 29
3. The Red Tent, pages 105-166
Wednesday, September 30-- peer review and writing conference
Reading: *The Red Tent*, pages 167-232
ROUGH DRAFT of methods paper due
Journal 5 due Sunday, 11pm

Monday, October 5-- Methods paper due
Reading: *The Red Tent*, pages 233-278

Wednesday, October 7 -- The Women in Joshua and Judges [Rahab, Deborah, Jephthah’s daughter, Delilah, the Levite’s woman]
Reading: 1. *Helpmates, Harlots and Heroes*, 98-122
2. Joshua 2; Judges 4, 11, 15-16, 19
Journal 6 due Sunday, 11pm

Monday, October 12-- Writing Conferences

Wednesday, October 14-- mid-term exam

Monday, October 19— Fall Break (No class)

Wednesday, October 21-- 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
Journal 7 due Sunday, 11pm

Monday, October 26— Ruth, Esther, and Judith
Reading: 1. *Helpmates, Harlots and Heroes*, 183-195
2. Ruth 1-4 and Esther 1-2, 8-10

Wednesday, October 28-- Introduction to New Testament
2. *The Dovekeepers*, 3-58
Journal 8 due Sunday, 11pm
Monday, November 2— 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. The Dovekeepers, 58-122

Wednesday, November 4-- Women in the Gospel of Matthew (Mary, James and John’s mother, Canaanite woman)  
2. The Dovekeepers, 122-198  
Journal 9 due Sunday, 11pm

Monday, November 9-- Women in the Gospel of John (the Samaritan woman, Mary--mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene)  
Reading: 1. Women in the NT, 78-95  
2. John 2, 11, 20:1-18  
3. The Dovekeepers, 198-250

Wednesday, November 11-- Women in the Lukan Material (Mary and Martha, Lydia)  
Reading: 1. Women in the NT, 96-128  
3. The Dovekeepers, 250-300  
Journal 10 due Sunday, 11pm

Monday, November 16–comparing the gospels/synthesis  
Reading: 1. The Dovekeepers, pages 301-362

Wednesday, November 18— Paul, the 1st century, and Women in the Early Church  
Reading: Polaski chapter—Blackboard reading  
Journal 11 due Sunday, 11pm

Monday, November 23--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  
3. The Dovekeepers, pages 363-410

Thanksgiving Recess
Monday, November 30—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
3. *The Dovekeepers*, pages 411-450

Wednesday, December 2—Josephus and Masada/library
Reading: *The Dovekeepers*, pages 451-501
Journal 12 due Sunday, 11pm

Monday, December 7—The Gospel of Mary
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)

Wednesday, December 9—writing conference

Final Research Paper Due—Wednesday, December 18 (noon)