

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY OF THE TWIN CITIES
CH 140--Feminist Approaches to Biblical Interpretation
INSTRUCTOR: Carolyn Pressler, Spring, 2008

GOALS OF THE COURSE

- A. Increased awareness of the politics of biblical interpretation. This includes recognition of the interpreter's social location as an interpretive grid and awareness of the ways biblical interpretation has been used to resist or support women's struggle for liberation.
- B. Critical familiarity with some major feminist/womanist/mujarista and pro-feminist approaches to biblical interpretation.
- C. Increased skill in exegeting texts from a feminist, womanist or mujarista perspective.
- D. Ability to engage in feminist, pro-feminist, mujarista or womanist biblical interpretation for a concrete communal setting.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- A. Kwok Pui-Lan. *Discovering the Bible in a Non-Biblical World*. Orbis Books. 1995.
- B. Day, Linda and Carolyn Pressler, eds. *Engaging the Bible in a Gendered World*.
- C. Fiorenza, Elisabeth Schüssler. *In Memory of Her*.
New York: Crossroad Publishing, (10th Anniversary revised ed.) 1994.
- D. Williams, Delores. *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk*.
Maryknoll: Orbis, 1995.
- E. Several of the assigned articles are available on-line (see "Course Schedule")
- F. A study Bible (Oxford NRSV 3rd College Ed. or HarperCollins Study Bibles is preferred)

REQUIRED ARTICLES (On Reserve)

- Alpert, Rebecca. "Finding Our Past: A Lesbian Interpretation" in Judith Kates and Gail Twersky Reimer, eds. *Reading Ruth*. Ballentine Books, 1994, pp. 91-96.
- Camp, Claudia. "Feminist Theological Hermeneutics," in Fiorenza, Elisabeth Schüssler, ed. *Searching the Scriptures: A Feminist Introduction*. NY, NY: Crossroad Publishing, 1993, pp. 154-171.
- Donaldson, Laura. "The Sign of Orpah: Reading Ruth Through Native Eyes," in *Ruth and Esther: Feminist Companion to the Bible—2nd Series*. Sheffield, England: Academic Press, 1999, pp. 130-144.
- Dube, Musa W. "Divining Ruth for International Relations," in *Other Ways of Reading*, pp. 179-195.
- Exum, J. Cheryl. "Preface" and "Murder They Wrote," in *Fragmented Women*. Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press, 1993, pp. 9-41.
- Frymer-Kensky, Tikva. "Law and Philosophy: The Case of Sex in the Bible," in *Semeia* 45, 1989, pp. 89-102. (Available on line through First Search.)
- Gebara, Ivone. "What Scriptures Are Sacred Authority" in Kwok Pui-Lan and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, eds. *Women's Sacred Scriptures*. (Concilium) Maryknoll: Orbis Press, 1998, pp. 7-19.
- Gilkes, Cheryl Townsend. "Mother to the Motherless, Father to the Fatherless: Power, Gender, and Community in an Afrocentric Biblical Tradition," in *Semeia* 47 (1989), pp. 57-85. (First Search).
- Hess, Carol. *Caretakers of Our Common House*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1997, pp. 195-206.
- Isasi-Diaz, Ada Maria. "La Palambra de Dios en Nosotras -The Word of God in Us," *Searching*, pp.86-97.
_____, *Women of God, Women of the People*, available on line at the following URL: www.users.drew.edu/aisasidi
- Lorde, Audre. *Sister Outsider*. "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference."
Trumansburg, NY: Crossing Press, 1984.

- Nelson, James B. and Sandra P. Longfellow. *Sexuality and the Sacred*. "Sources for Body Theology." Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994, pp. 374-386.
- Ostriker, Alicia. "A Holy of Holies: The Song of Songs as Countertext," in *Song of Songs: A Feminist Companion*, pp. 36-54
- Plaskow, Judith. "Anti-Judaism in Feminist Christian Interpretation," in *Searching the Scriptures*, pp. 117-129.
- Sakenfeld, Katharine Doob. "Ruth and Naomi: Economic Survival and Family Values," in her *Just Wives*. Westminster, 2002, pp. 27-48.
- _____, "Whose Text Is It?" SBL Presidential Address, November 17, 2007. (*Forthcoming in the Journal of Biblical Literature*.) (Available on class webpage.)
- Thistlethwaite, Susan Brooks. "Every Two Minutes: Battered Women and Feminist Interpretation," in *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. by Letty M. Russell. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985, pp. 96-107.
- Weems, Renita. "Reading Her Way Through the Struggle: African American Women and the Bible," Cain Hope Felder, ed. *Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation*.
- _____, "Blessed Be the Tie That Binds," *Just a Sister Away*, (1st ed.) pp. 23-38.
- _____, "A Crying Shame," *Just a Sister Away*, (1st ed.) pp. 53-67.
- Williams, Delores. *Sisters in the Wilderness*, pp.15-33.

REQUIREMENTS OF THE COURSE

- A. Attendance, preparation and participation. Peer-learning is a vital part of this class. It is important that each class member contributes her or his informed perspective. Absence from three or more sessions will jeopardize the student's ability to successfully complete the course.
- B. A written response to a set of reflection questions for eight of the class sessions. These questions are intended to facilitate class discussion; responses should be brief (one to two pages, computer generated and double-spaced) and may be informal. The instructor will read them but will not assign a letter grade. (Note: There will be reflection questions assigned for eleven class sessions. Each student is allowed to skip two of the reflection papers. In addition, students will not be responsible for reflection papers for the session during which they present their expository essays and projects.) Those taking the course for credit in Hebrew Exegesis will complete a set of alternative assignments investigating specific words and verses in texts under consideration (see schedule). All papers are to be posted on the class web page by 5:00 p.m. the evening before class meets.
- C. A six- to eight-page exposition of a biblical text or texts from a feminist, pro-feminist, mujerista or womanist perspective (whichever best describes your own social location). You will be asked to choose either a passage or an issue to be discussed by the class. You will be given a list of possible passages and issues during the second class session and will be asked to sign up for a topic during the third class session. If you sign up for a particular issue, you must choose and interpret one or more of the assigned biblical text(s) related to that issue. Expository papers should reflect readings required of the whole class *and* the student's additional study of the topic. A draft of the paper is due the day that the topic is discussed. You may revise the paper if you choose; revisions are due the last class session. Students taking the course to fulfill a Hebrew exegesis requirement must demonstrate that they have used Hebrew in at least three ways to enhance their work on their paper (three word studies, a word study, a discussion of the syntax of a verse, and a reference to a word play or etc.)
- D. Students will develop a concrete practical interpretation of the issue or passages which they discussed in their six- to eight-page papers. This might be an adult or youth study, poetry, a collage, an outline for a workshop or retreat, a children's story, etc. Each student will have eight to ten minutes to present their interpretation during the final class session. Students who have interpreted the same issue or passage may, with the instructor's approval, work together on a shared project.

PLEASE NOTE

Papers must be **double-spaced, computer generated, and properly footnoted. Plagiarism will result in an F for the course and may be grounds for dismissal from the Seminary.** Late papers and makeup exams will be accepted **only with the permission of the instructor and only in cases of emergency.**

COURSE OUTLINE

FEBRUARY 7 INTRODUCING THE COURSE AND OURSELVES

- A. Class organization
- B. Women's Biblical Studies: A Historical Overview

Recommended Reading

Pressler, Carolyn. "To Heal and to Transform," in *The International Bible Commentary*, ed. by William Farmer. Collegeville Liturgical Press, 1998, pp.282-288.

FEBRUARY 14 GENDER AND BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION—AN OVERVIEW

- A. Location, location, location
- B. Feminist? Biblical? Interpretation?

Required Readings

Camp, Claudia. "Feminist Theological Hermeneutics," in Fiorenza, Elisabeth Schüssler, ed. *Searching the Scriptures: A Feminist Introduction*. NY, NY: Crossroad Publishing, 1993, pp. 154-171.

Kwok Pui Lan. *Discovering the Bible in a Non-Biblical World*, chapter 1.

Lorde, Audre. *Sister Outsider*. "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference." Trumansburg, NY: Crossing Press, 1984.

Introduction. *EBGW*, ix-xxvii.

O'Connor. "The Feminist Movement Meets the Old Testament: One Woman's Perspective," *EBGW*, pp. 1-24.

Recommended Readings

Gebara, Ivone. "What Scriptures Are Sacred Authority" in Kwok Pui-Lan and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, eds. *Women's Sacred Scriptures*. (Concilium) Maryknoll: Orbis Press, 1998, pp. 7-19.

Heyward, Carter. "Authority and Scripture," *Touching Our Strength*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1989, pp. 114-123.

Tolbert, Mary Ann. "Reading the Bible with Authority: Feminist Interrogation of the Canon," in *Escaping Eden*. Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998, pp. 141-162.

Reflection Questions

(There are no special Hebrew Track questions this week. Hebrew students who choose to write a reflection for this session should answer these questions.)

The terms "feminist" "Bible" and "authority" are all open to various definitions. Before you read the assigned texts, jot down your initial definition of each of those three terms. When you have read the assignments, return to those definitions and see if they have changed and, if so, how.

FEBRUARY 21

DIRECTIONS IN ASIAN and ASIAN AMERICAN WOMEN'S BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

- A. Videotape: "Welcome the Spirit, Hear Her Cries" by Chung Hyung Kyung
- B. Discussion

Required Reading

- Kwok. remainder of *Discovering the Bible in a Non-Biblical World*.
- Anna May. "Reading Ruth 3:1-5 from an Asian Woman's Perspective," *EBGW*, pp. 47-59.
- Lee, Eunny. "Ruth the Moabitess: Identity, Kinship and Otherness," pp. 89-101.

Recommended Reading

- Kyung, Chung Hyung. "Welcome the Spirit, Hear Her Cries,"
- Yuen, Mary. "The Ruths Living Among Us: A Cry from New Immigrant Women," *In God's Image* 16 (1997), pp. 22-23. *Christianity and Crisis* 56, pp. 220-232.

Reflection Questions

- i. How does Kwok construe the Bible (What is her image of the Bible, how does it function for her; what dimensions of the Bible are most important to her and so forth?)?
- ii. How does Kwok construe biblical authority?
- iii. How does Kwok construe "truth?"
- iv. What are the main points of Kwok's critique of traditional approaches to the Bible?
- v. What is/are Kwok's interpretive strategy/ies?
- vi. What are the main implications of Kwok's book for your interpretation of Scripture in your own context?

Alternative "Hebrew Track" Reflection Questions (Please complete i-v before doing the reading. Then read Lee's article before answering number vi.)

- i. Read through the book of Ruth in English.
- ii. Translate (from Hebrew) Ruth 1:1 and the reply of the servant in Ruth 2:6.
- iii. In Hebrew, write the terms translated "Moab" (1:1) and "Moabitess" (2:6).
- iv. Using either a Hebrew-English concordance like Evan-Shoshan or an electronic Hebrew Bible with a search capacity, investigate attitudes toward Moab and especially Moabite women in the OT.
- v. Look up each reference to "Moab" or "Moabite" in the book of Ruth. What do you conclude about ethnicity in the book of Ruth from the frequency of the usage of the terms and from the contexts in which they are or are not found?
- vi. Does Lee's essay change how you think about ethnicity in the book of Ruth?

FEBRUARY 28

DIRECTIONS IN AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN'S INTERPRETATION

- A. Guest Presenter—Rev. Denise Dunbar Perkins
- B. Discussion

Required Reading

- Junior, Nyasha. "Womanist Biblical Interpretation," *EBGW*, pp. 37-46.
- Weems, Renita. "Reading Her Way Through the Struggle: African American Women and the Bible," Cain Hope Felder, ed. *Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation*.

_____, "Blessed Be the Tie That Binds," *Just a Sister Away*.
Williams, Delores. *Sisters in the Wilderness*, pp.15-33.

Recommended Readings

Gilkes, Cheryl Townsend, "A Prophetic Apocalyptic Reading: Resurrection in Prophetic Context," in *Engaging the Bible: Critical Readings from Contemporary Women (Choi)*, ed. by Choi Hee An and Katheryn Pfisterer Darr. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006, pp. 1-19.

Reflection Questions

- i. What does Williams mean by "womanist survival/quality-of-life hermeneutic?"
- ii. Does her use of the Hagar story illustrate that hermeneutic? If so, how?
- iii. What implications does Williams' work have for your interpretation of scripture in your own context?

Hebrew Alternative Reflection Questions

- i. In English, review the book of Ruth again, this time paying particular attention to the relationship between Ruth and Naomi.
- ii. Translate Ruth 1:16-17. Then translate Jehoshaphat's reply to the King of Israel in 1 Kings 22:4. Does the comparison suggest anything about the *genre* of Ruth's promise to Naomi? What? What, if any, light does that shine on the relationship of the two women?
- iii. How does Weems view the women's relationship? Do you agree or disagree?

MARCH 6 AMBIGUOUS SISTERHOOD: THE BOOK OF RUTH
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- A. Class discussion of Ruth
- B. Ruth: Writer's Series: Pam Wynn and Barbara Rogers

Required Readings

- Alpert, Rebecca. "Finding Our Past: A Lesbian Interpretation," Judith Kates and Gail Twersky Reimer, eds. *Reading Ruth*. Ballentine Books, 1994, pp. 91-96.
- Donaldson, Laura. "The Sign of Orpah: Reading Ruth Through Native Eyes," in *Ruth and Esther: Feminist Companion to the Bible—2nd Series*. Sheffield, England: Academic Press, 1999, pp. 130-144.
- Dube, Musa W. "Divining Ruth for International Relations," in *Other Ways of Reading*, pp. 179-195.
- Lapsley, Jacqueline. "Seeing the Older Woman: Naomi in High Definition." *EBGW*, pp. 102-113.
- Sakenfeld, Katharine Doob. "Ruth and Naomi: Economic Survival and Family Values," in her *Just Wives*, Westminster, 2002, pp. 27-48.
- Review Weems "Blessed Be the Tie that Binds."

Recommended Readings

- Nadar, Sarojini. "A South African Indian Womanist Reading of the Character of Ruth," *Other Ways of Reading*, pp. 159-175.
- Pressler, Carolyn. Introduction to Ruth in her *Joshua, Judges and Ruth*. (WBC). Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2002. pp. 261-264.
- Sakenfeld, Ruth. (Int) Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1999.

Reflection Questions

Ruth has been read in many ways. Many interpreters, including Alpert, Weems and Pressler, view it as a positive story lifting up women's friendships and women's agency. In contrast, Donaldson and others view it as a "text of terror" that advocates assimilation to the dominant culture. How do you account for these strikingly different appraisals of the book of Ruth? What is your assessment of the book of Ruth? What in your own social location shapes your interpretation?

Alternative Reflection Questions for Hebrew Track

- i. What role does God play in the book of Ruth? What terms are used for God? Where are those terms found? Does that say anything about the role of God in Ruth and Naomi's story? What? (Note: people have answered that question in very different ways!)
- ii. The story of Ruth is artistically told, using lots of word play, repetition and gaps to convey its message. One such lovely word play occurs in varied use of one term (כַּנָּה) in two different ways in Ruth 2:12 and 3:9. Describe the word play. Does that say anything about how God works in the story of Ruth?
- iii. Do your answers to questions i and ii influence whether you view Ruth as positive or negative for women? If so, how?

MARCH 13--READING WEEK--NO CLASS

MARCH 20--MAUNDAY THURSDAY--NO CLASS

MARCH 27 DIRECTIONS IN EURO-AMERICAN FEMINIST BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

- A. To Reject, Reform or Rescue? Exploring the range of white feminist interpretation
- B. "Pro-feminist" and "Masculinist" Readings

Required Readings

- Review Camp, Claudia. "Feminist Theological Hermeneutics."
- Review O'Connor. "'The Feminist Movement Meets the Old Testament: One Woman's Perspective,'" *EBGW*, pp. 1-24.
- Sakenfeld, Katharine Doob. "Whose Text Is It?" SBL Presidential Address, November 17, 2007. (*Forthcoming in the Journal of Biblical Literature.*) Available on class webpage.
- Tanner, Beth LaNeal. "My Sister Sarah: On Being a Woman in the First World," *EBGW*, pp. 60-72.
- Day, Linda. "Wisdom and the Feminine in the Hebrew Bible," *EBGW*, pp. 114-127.
- Miller, Patrick. "What I Have Learned from My Sisters," *EBGW*, pp. 238-252.
- Olson, Dennis. "Untying the Knot? Masculinity, Violence, and the Creation-Fall Story of Genesis 2-4," *EBGW*, pp. 73-86.

Recommended Reading

- Sakenfeld, Katherine Doob. "In the Wilderness, Awaiting the Land."
- Schuessler-Fiozenza, Elisabeth. "A Critical Feminist Emancipatory Reading: Invitation to 'Dance' in the Open House of Wisdom," Choi, pp. 81-104.
- Shanks, Herschel, ed. *Feminist Approaches to the Bible*. Washington, D.C.: Biblical Archaeological Society, 1994.

Reflection Questions—answer One of the following sets of questions.

- i. Sketch the main argument of Sakenfeld's address, including her use of her context/social location. How does being a "first world" feminist interpreter affect her approach to the biblical text? Can you articulate her understanding of "Bible" "Feminist" and "biblical authority?"
- ii. Compare and contrast Olson and Day's interpretations of Genesis 2-3. How does those interpreters' gender influence their interpretations? Are there any connections between the two?

Alternative Reflection Questions for Hebrew Track

Answer the following questions *before* reading Day. What is the Hebrew word for "wisdom"? Using a searchable electronic Hebrew Bible or a Hebrew concordance such as Evan-Shoshan, do a search of "Wisdom" in Proverbs 1-9. What or who is Wisdom in those chapters? Use the TDOT (Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament) to confirm or challenge your answer to that question. *After* reading Day, reflect on her description of wise women, and compare it to your description of Wisdom/wisdom woman in Proverbs 1-9.

APRIL 3	DIRECTIONS IN MUJERISTA BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION ANTI-RACIST BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION
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- A. Videotape: Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz and discussion of readings
- B. Biblical Interpretation and Anti-Racism

Required Readings

Isasi-Diaz, Ada Maria. "La Palabra de Dios en Nosotras -The Word of God in Us," *Searching*, pp. 86-97.

_____, "Communication as Communion. Elements in a Hermeneutics of La Cotidiano," *EBGW*, pp. 27-36.

_____, *Women of God, Women of the People*, available on line at the following URL: www.users.drew.edu/aisasidi

Ivone Gebara. "What Scriptures Are Sacred Authority?" in Kwok Pui-Lan and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, eds. *Women's Sacred Scriptures*. (Concilium) Maryknoll: Orbis Press, 1998, pp. 7-19.

Kwok Pui Lan, *Discovering the Bible*, chapter 7. Review.

Plaskow, Judith. "Anti-Judaism in Feminist Christian Interpretation," in *Searching the Scriptures*, pp. 117-129.

Recommended Readings

Irizarry-Fernandez, Aida. "A Communal Approach: See-Judge-Act," *Choi*, pp. 47-80.

Reflection Questions

(There are no special Hebrew Track questions this week. Hebrew students who choose to write a reflection for this session should answer these questions.) Answer the following questions about Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, "La Palabra de Dios in Nosotras," or "Communication as Communion."

- i. What is the author's main hypothesis(es)?
- ii. What implication(s) does this author's work have for your interpretation of scripture?
- iii. What question(s) does the article raise for you?

APRIL 10	RE-IMAGING LANGUAGE AND THE HOLY
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- A. Inclusive Language
- B. Biblical Resources for Inclusive Ways of Re-imagining the Holy

Required Readings

- Neuger, Christie Cozad. "Image and Imagination," *EBGW*, pp. 153-165.
Review Miller. "What I Have Learned from My Sisters," *EBGW*, esp. pp. 239-244.
Classens, L. Julianna M. "Rupturing God Language: The Metaphor of God as Mid-wife in Psalm 22," *EBGW*, pp. 166-175.
Gilkes, Cheryl Townsend. "Mother to the Motherless, Father to the Fatherless: Power, Gender, and Community in an Afrocentric Biblical Tradition," *Semeia* 47 (1989), pp. 57-85. (First Search).
Roberts, J. J. M. and Kathryn L. "Yahweh's Significant Other," *EBGW*, pp. 176-185.

Recommended Readings

- Kyung, Chung Hyung. "Welcome the Spirit, Hear Her Cries."
Gilkes, Cheryl Townsend. "Some Mother's Son and Some Father's Daughter: Gender and Biblical Language in the Afro-American Worship Tradition," *Shaping New Vision*. ed. Clarissa Atkinson. Ann Arbor: UMI Press, 1988, Ch.4.
Procter-Smith, M. *In Her Own Rite: Constructing Feminist Liturgical Tradition*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1990, pp.85-115.
Trible. *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978 pp. 1-71.
Wren, Brian. *What Language Shall I Borrow*. N.Y., N.Y.: Crossroad Press, 1993.

Reflection Questions

Over the course of the week, pay attention to the various images of God that you hear, read or speak. Write them down, and reflect on them. What aspects of the Divine do they suggest? What feelings about God do they evoke in you? Which images for God do you find most useable?

Alternative Reflection Questions for Hebrew Track

Before reading Classens, use your knowledge of Hebrew to investigate Psalm 22:9-10 [Hebrews 10-22]. Compare the last two words in verse 9 [10] to the epithet for God, El Shaddai. Does that word play, and the verses as a whole suggest a feminine image of God? If so what and how? What aspects of the Divine do those verses suggest? What feelings about God do they evoke in you? How do the verses function within the poetry of Psalm 22? **After reading** Classens, reflect on her interpretation of Psalm 22 in light of your work with verses 9-10 [10-11]. Do you agree with her assessment of the function and significance of those verses? Why or why not?

APRIL 17	THE BIBLE, SEXUALITY AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION
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- A. The Bible and Sexuality
- B. Lesbian Interpretation of Scripture

Required Reading

- Song of Songs
Deuteronomy 21:10-21; 22:13-28; 24:1-5 and 25:5-12.
Dobbs-Alsopp, Frederick W. "I am Black and Beautiful: The Song, Cicoux, and *Ecriture Feminine*," *EBGW*, pp. 128-140.

- Exum, J. Cheryl. "Ten Things Every Feminist Should Know About the Song of Song *Song of Songs: A Feminist Companion to the Bible*, (Second Series), Athalya Brenner and Carole R. Fontaine, eds. Sheffield Academic Press, 2000, pp. 24-35.
- Frymer-Kensky, Tikva. "Law and Philosophy: The Case of Sex in the Bible," in *Semeia* 45, 1989, pp. 89-102. (Available on line through First Search.)
- Kwok Pui-Lan. "Sexual Morality and National Politics: Reading Biblical 'Loose Women,'" Choi, pp. 21-46.
- Pressler, Carolyn. "The 'Biblical View' of Marriage," *EBGW*, 200-211.
- Weems, Renita. "Song of Songs," in *The Women's Bible Commentary*, 1st ed. ed. by Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992, pp. 156-160.

Recommended Readings

- Anderson, Cheryl. *Women, Ideology, and Violence: Critical Theory and the Construction of Gender in the Book of the Covenant and Deuteronomical Law*. London and N.Y.: T & T Clark, 2004.
- Nelson, James B. and Sandra P. Longfellow. *Sexuality and the Sacred*. "Sources for Body Theology." Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994, pp. 374-386.
- Ostriker, Alicia. "A Holy of Holies: The Song of Songs as Countertext," in *Song of Songs: A Feminist Companion*, pp. 36-54,

Reflection Questions

Please reflect on **ONE** of the following two questions:

It is easy to name ways in which the Bible has been used as a weapon against sexual minorities. Are there Biblical stories, themes, images or genres that can serve as useful resources for LGBT folk or for "straight but not narrow" folk concerned about sexual justice? Which? How would you use them in ministry?

OR:

Many interpreters consider the Song of Songs a valuable resource for women and men seeking a healthy, mutual expression of sexuality. Others approach the book with more caution (see Exum's article) or reject it as a male fantasy of female desire. What is your response to the Song of Songs? Is it a positive resource? An ambiguous one?

Alternative Reflection Questions for Hebrew Track

- i. Review Ruth 1:1 in Hebrew. What does the syntax of that sentence suggest about the structure of the family presupposed by the storyteller? Use your Hebrew to work with Deuteronomy 22:30 [23:1]. Give a literal translation of the words that NRSV renders "marry" "wife" and "violating...rights." What does that suggest about the normative "view of marriage" in ancient Israel? What does your work with both verses suggest about the "biblical view" of marriage, and especially of gender roles within marriage?
- ii. (a) Using Bibleworks or Gramcord, check several translations of Song 1:5. Most translate the conjunction between "black" and "beautiful" as "but." In contrast, Cicoux, followed by Dobbs-Alsopp, translates with the conjunction "and." Now translate the first three words of that verse. Why are the different translations possible? What difference does it make if you translate "but" or "and?"

- (b) בית אב is a common phrase in the Hebrew Bible (e.g. Genesis 24:28; Judges 11:2) Using either a lexicon or your own search on the term, try to determine what it means. That phrase is not found in the Song of Songs. Rather, there one finds אב בית . Search on that phrase within the Hebrew Bible. When is it used? Why does its use in the Song imply?
- (c) Based on your work with the Hebrew, do you think that the Song is supportive of women and mutual relationships across racial/gender lines, or is it, as Exum suggests, dangerous—or both?

APRIL 24 THE BIBLE AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN
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- A. Violence in the Text; Violence by the Text
 B. Teaching/Preaching Texts of Terror

Required Readings

- Judges 11:1-40
 Bowen. "Women, Violence and the Bible," *EBGW*, pp. 186-199.
 Exum, J. Cheryl. "Preface" and "Murder They Wrote," in *Fragmented Women*, Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press, 1993, pp. 9-41.
 Hess, Carol. *Caretakers of Our Common House*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1997, pp. 195-206.
 Thistlethwaite, Susan Brooks. "Every Two Minutes: Battered Women and Feminist Interpretation," in *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. by Letty M. Russell. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985, pp. 96-107
 Weems, Renita. "A Crying Shame," *Just a Sister Away*, pp. 53-67.

Recommended Reading

- Day, Linda. "Teaching the Prophetic Marriage Metaphor Texts," a paper delivered to the Feminist Hermeneutical Section of the SBL, November, 1998.
 Tribble, Phyllis. *Texts of Terror*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984, esp. pp. 93-116.

Reflection Questions

Use the Exegetical Study Guide to work with Judges 11:1-40, then reflect on the following questions:

- The story of Jephthah's daughter is unambiguously a "text of terror."
 Would you use this text in preaching, teaching, or pastoral care? How?
 Weems lifts up the ways in which Jephthah, the victimizer, has also been victim.
 How would you refer to Jephthah?

Alternative Reflection Questions for Hebrew Track

Some interpreters argue that Jephthah envisioned sacrificing an animal, not a human being, when he made his fatal vow. Work with the Hebrew of Judges 11:31 to see if you can understand why interpreters might make such an argument. What is the form of the Hebrew noun and verb that NRSV translates "whoever comes out"? Do those forms support the idea that Jephthah would have in mind an animal or not? Identify other key issues in the story of Jephthah's daughter, and use your knowledge of Hebrew to investigate them further. (This is a deliberately open ended question, because the PCUSA exegetical exam will be open ended.)

MAY 1 RECONSTRUCTING BIBLICAL HISTORY AS A HISTORY OF WOMEN AND MEN
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The Jesus Movement as a Community of the Discipleship of Equals

Required Reading

Fiorenza. *In Memory of Her*, Part 1

Recommended Reading

Kwok, "The Feminist Hermeneutics of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza: An Asian Feminist Response," *East Asia Journal of Theology* 3 no 2 1985, pp. 147-153.

Meyer, Carol. *Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women In Context*. New York: Oxford University. 1988.

Reflection Questions

- i. What questions or challenges do you have for Schussler-Fiorenza?
- ii. What are the major strengths of *In Memory of Her*?
- iii. What questions would you ask Schussler Fiorenza if she were here?

MAY 8	RECONSTRUCTING BIBLICAL HISTORY AS A HISTORY OF WOMEN AND MEN II
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Required Reading

Finish *In Memory of Her*.

Reflection Questions

Suppose Schüssler Fiorenza's reconstruction of the Jesus Movement and earliest house churches characterized by the discipleship of equals is correct. Imagine that you have worshipped with one of those house churches. Write a letter describing the experience. Once you have done that, reflect briefly (in one paragraph) about what, if any, difference it makes.

MAY 15	BUT WILL IT PREACH? (TEACH, PROVIDE RESOURCES FOR ETHICS, THEOLOGY, OR COUNSELING)
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- A. Feminist Interpretation in Practice
- B. Project Presentations

Required Reading

Gardner, Freda. "Feminist Interpretation for the Laity," *EBGW*, pp. 227.
Review Miller. "What I Have Learned from My Sisters."

Recommended Reading

Bird, Phyllis. "Feminist Interpretation and Biblical Theology," *EBGW*, pp. 215-226.

For Further Study

Dube, Musa, ed. *Other Ways of Reading: African Women and the Bible*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001.

_____. *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*. St. Louis: Chalice, 2002.

Pobee, John and Barbel Von Wartenberg-Potter. *New Eyes for Reading: Biblical and Theological Reflections by Women from the Third World*. Meyer-Stone, 1086.

Trible, Phyllis and Letty M. Russell, eds. *Hagar, Sarah and Their Children: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Perspectives*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006.

Feminist literature is vast, and exponentially expanding. Additional resources will be made available through the course web-page.

