

Gender and Religion: Women, Gender, and Religious Experience

RS 3351 CRN 27462/WS 3351 CRN 26301

Spring 2024 Syllabus 16-Week Online Asynchronous

Instructor: Lisa Elliott

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Virtual Office Hours

Wednesday 9:30-11:30 AM

via [Zoom](#)

During Virtual Office Hours, I'm available on Zoom, via mobile phone (FaceTime or regular calls) or email. I'm also available by appointment – please reach out to set a time to meet if my Office Hours don't work with your schedule.

For quick questions, texting is my preferred mode of communication. When sending a course message or email, please make sure that messages are written in complete sentences following standard rules of grammar, punctuation and spelling. I will respond to each message I receive within 24 hours (when possible); if you did not receive a reply, then I did not receive your message...and you should re-send it or attempt to communicate with me via another method.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course surveys the tradition of women's religious experience in major world religions, with a special emphasis on Gender and the gendered construction of religious experience. We will read works by and about women (and others) from different languages, genres, and traditions as we work toward an understanding of the ways in which women and gender function as forces that have shaped, resisted, and transformed ideas about spiritual practice and religious authority. As we develop a broad view of the construction of gendered religious agency, we will consider contemporary women's voice and authority in religious and popular discourse, and work toward a deeper understanding of gender as a shaping force in religious and literary history.

The class requires students to engage in critical reading, analytical writing, and academic argument. It teaches students methods for understanding primary texts from different genres, developing analytical writing skills, and engaging with the academic discourse of different disciplines.

COURSE OBJECTIVES/EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES: At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Develop a working definition of "gender," "women," and "religion"
- Articulate the generic, stylistic, and historical features of women's religious experience
- Engage in written academic conversation in an online setting

COURSE OBJECTIVES/EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES (continued):

- Develop formal analytical writing skills through individual response and peer review
- Construct a comparative argument that considers multiple primary sources and effectively integrates textual evidence
- Practice informed evaluation and assessment of digital sources
- Collaborate with peers to clearly communicate new information in a digital setting

CLASS PHILOSOPHY: This course provides the student who takes it with a degree of flexibility that is unavailable in the traditional classroom setting. You can choose when you do the readings and answer discussion questions as long as your work is completed by the due date. In a very real sense, your learning is self-directed and self-motivated. **Please expect to spend 8-10 hours per week in the course, reviewing course materials, taking quizzes, and participating on discussion boards.** This does not include additional time spent completing the assigned reading, drafting your initial discussion thread, and completing journal assignments. What you take away from the course will in large measure be determined by how much time and effort you put into it.

REQUIRED MATERIALS: Regular access to a computer, Blackboard and your UTEP email account. Readings will be posted in PDF format to Blackboard. Some screening of documentaries may require the purchase of a subscription to PBS, Criterion or another streaming service. There is no required textbook for the course. All other readings will be available in pdf format on BlackBoard. Completing the weekly reading assignment is essential to being successful in this course.

COURSE POLICIES:

Accommodations Policy: The University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations and auxiliary services to students, staff, faculty, job applicants, applicants for admissions, and other beneficiaries of University programs, services and activities with documented disabilities in order to provide them with equal opportunities to participate in programs, services, and activities in compliance with sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008. Reasonable accommodations will be made unless it is determined that doing so would cause undue hardship on the University. Students requesting an accommodation based on a disability must register with the UTEP Center for Accommodations and Support Services: phone: (915) 747-5148; email: cass@utep.edu.

Plagiarism and Cheating: It is expected that you will write all of your own papers and that you will know how to cite sources and quote people appropriately (using MLA style for this course). Plan ahead for your written assignments. If you are not familiar with MLA style, here is a helpful [resource](#).

Plagiarism and Cheating (continued):

Any indication that you are submitting someone else's work, or that you are adopting statements or ideas of another person or artificial intelligence program without appropriate acknowledgment (plagiarism), will have serious repercussions. **Any plagiarism, cheating, or collusion to cheat observed in this class will result in an immediate zero on the assignment and a failing grade, or "F", for the class.** Do not risk your good name and your future based on anxiety about grades, peer pressure, lack of time management, or feeling overwhelmed. Instead, contact me about any problems or concerns you have about the course, course assignments, course material, etc.

Drop Policy: *Students wishing to withdraw from the course with a grade of "W" must do so before the official college deadline.* It is the responsibility of students to drop themselves if they desire to receive a "W" in the course. Additionally, if a student does not log in to Blackboard or communicate with the instructor for one week, then the instructor reserves the right to drop the student from the class.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Student Evaluation:	Weight:	Point Value:
Online Class (N)Etiquette	6 %	40
Reading Quiz (10)	17 %	100
Journal Assignment (6)	20 %	120
Group Discussion (6)	20 %	120
Religious Field Visit	10 %	60
"Ask a Sister" Interview	10 %	60
Final Presentation	17 %	100
TOTAL	100%	600

Grading Scale

A = 540 - 600

B = 480 - 539

C = 420 - 479

D = 360 - 419

F = 359 and below

Online Class (N)Etiquette (80 points total): Every online class is managed a bit differently. In this online class, it is expected that you will treat the instructor and fellow students courteously. To get a sense of what that means, please do an Internet search of “Online Netiquette” and review the graphic below (adapted from a graphic created by ASU).

<p> BE SCHOLARLY</p> <p>Do: Use proper language, grammar, and spelling. Be explanatory. Justify your opinions. Credit ideas of others; cite and link to scholarly resources.</p> <p>Avoid: Misinforming others when you may not know the answer. If you are guessing about something, clearly state that you do not have all of the information.</p>	<p> BE POLITE</p> <p>Do: Address others by name or appropriate title, and be mindful of your tone. Be polite as you would in a face-to-face situation.</p> <p>Avoid: Using sarcasm, being rude, or writing in all capital letters (shouting). Written words can be easily misinterpreted, as they lack facial expression, body language, and tone of voice.</p>
<p> BE PROFESSIONAL</p> <p>Do: Represent yourself well at all times. Be truthful, accurate, and run a final spell check. Write in a legible, black font, and limit the use of emoticons.</p> <p>Avoid: Using profanity or participating in hostile interactions (flaming).</p>	<p> BE RESPECTFUL</p> <p>Do: Respect privacy. Respect diversity and opinions that differ from your own. Communicate tactfully, and base disagreements on scholarly ideas or research evidence.</p> <p>Avoid: Sharing another person's professional or personal information.</p>

Additionally, there are certain policies, or helpful hints, that should be followed in order to be successful in this class. **In fact, they're so important that “Online Class (N)Etiquette” grade will be based on students’ adherence to these principles.** Naturally, this portion of this grade has some subjectivity to it, as it is assessed based on the holistic impressions of the instructor across the entire course.

- SYLLABUS - **Print out the syllabus and read it often. If you don't have a printer, then please download it** – it will give you a calendar of assignments, including what is due each week, and an idea of how the class will operate. And, in the event that you lose Internet access, it has the information needed to reach out to the Instructor outside of Blackboard so that she can be alerted to the issue.

Online Class (N)Etiquette (continued)

- MANAGING YOUR TIME - You can log in to the class whenever it is convenient for you, but **setting up a schedule with specific days where you log on is recommended**. Stick to the schedule. It's easy to put aside an online class for other priorities, but if you do so, it will be difficult to keep up. Here's an example of a possible schedule:
 - Sunday – check what assignments are due for the week and start the assigned reading
 - Tuesday – complete first discussion post and take reading quiz
 - Thursday– reply to (at least) two classmates' discussion posts and reply to any comments on your post
 - Saturday- check the discussion board one more time for comments on your thread and submit weekly journal assignment

- TECHNICAL RECOMMENDATIONS – To access UTEP Blackboard directly (without navigating through the UTEP website), go to: blackboardlearn.utep.edu – consider bookmarking this page so you have easy access to it.
 - In order to be successful in this class, it's important that your computer is set-up to properly run Blackboard. **Blackboard does not run well with the Edge browser**. It's recommended that you use another browser, such as Chrome, Safari, or Firefox instead. You can go to [this website](#) to check your browser compatibility.
 - “Blackboard” is a free app that will allow you to access the course on a mobile device. This is a great resource for communicating with your instructor, checking assignment information and looking at due dates. **When taking quizzes, drafting and submitting assignments, and posting to the discussion board, students perform better using a computer (desktop or laptop), if available, and not a mobile device or tablet.**

- FEEDBACK
 - I am happy to review assignments before the deadline. Please submit assignments for review at least 24 hours before the assignment deadline so that I have adequate time to give feedback and you have adequate time to make revisions based on that feedback before the submission deadline.
 - Extensive and thoughtful Instructor feedback is important for your success in this class, but doing so takes an enormous amount of time. Because of the time this takes, **it may take up to two weeks from the submission deadline for students to receive feedback and a grade on assignments**. Your patience is appreciated during this process; please do not contact me to ask when something will be graded if it's within this two-week window.
 - Feedback on assignments can be found under the “Gradebook” tab – check it often and let me know if you have questions about it.

Online Class Netiquette (continued):

- **SEEKING HELP** - If you don't understand something or have questions, then reach out to me – I'm here to help! **Please don't hesitate to contact me.** If you have the question, most likely other students do, too, and I want to help you be successful in this course.

Reading quizzes (10) worth 100 points total.

These quizzes will be geared towards the main concepts in the assigned readings. They are “open-book” objective-style questions such as multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, short answer, etc. **They have a 15-minute time limit, and once started, must be completed in the 15-minute window. The quizzes will automatically submit after 15 minutes.** Please don't begin a reading quiz unless you have 15 minutes to devote to it.

Journal assignments (6) worth 120 points total.

Your journal assignments are a chance to respond to topics brought up in class. Do you agree or disagree with an idea discussed? What is a new example that supports the idea or opposes it? Assignments will vary based on the week's topic. Grading rubrics will be included for assignments – pay attention to them so that you know how they will be graded.

When submitting an assignment, please do the following:

- **Do not put your name on the assignment.** Blackboard allows me to grade assignments anonymously, which increases objectivity when grading.
- If you're submitting an attachment for the assignment, **save it in a format that can be opened in Blackboard.** If your assignment is not viewable in Blackboard, then a “zero” will be given on the assignment. The student will be permitted to re-submit, but it will be minus late points. If a student continues to submit attachments in a format that isn't viewable on Blackboard, it will negatively impact their “Online Class (N)Etiquette” Grade.

Group discussions (6) worth 120 points. Take the Discussion Board seriously – it's a large percentage of your grade! To earn full points on the discussion board, do the following:

1. **You must post your initial thread to the discussion by Wednesday at midnight each week.** Your initial thread should be at least 100 words and completely answer all elements of the discussion question. Think of witty titles for your discussion post so that you can differentiate yours from classmates (and bonus points will be given if your title is clever enough to make me laugh out loud!). It can be written, or the video function can be used if you prefer to record yourself with a webcam for the discussion. Additionally, you are responsible for responding to all replies that classmates make to your initial thread.

Group discussions (continued):

2. **Two replies to classmates' threads are also required.** Replies to classmates' threads should add to the discussion. For example, you could offer another example or an additional insight into the initial post. Or, you could ask a thoughtful question that applies to the specific post. Commenting with "Great job!" or "I never thought of that." is not sufficient. You are welcome to discuss asynchronously, which means at your convenience.
3. **Continue the conversation on your thread by replying to comments posted on it** (in addition to the two replies listed above).

Religious Field Visit (50 Points)

This project consists of a site visit to a religious service to analyze how gender functions in worship services and in the lived faith of your community. More detailed guidelines will be distributed later in the course.

"Ask a Sister" Interviews with Religious Women (50 Points)

Following the model put forth by Augustana College's "RELG 363: American Catholicism" course, students will interview a religious woman about her experience and then write a summary of the interview that analyzes it for major themes and key takeaways. Examples of the project from Augustana College can be found [here](#).

Final Presentation (100)

One of the final assignments for the course will be a presentation. Significant attention to detail, organization and presentation is important. Points will be deducted for messiness, grammar, spelling errors, etc.

The format of this presentation is similar to a five-paragraph essay; Students will introduce a topic, make an argument related to gender and religion, share three supporting examples and then draw a larger conclusion on the topic. Arguments can focus on women's religious experiences, positions different religions have taken on issues of gender and sexuality, historical case studies, ethnographic work in one of the traditions covered in class, portrayal of religion in popular culture and beyond.

Easter Egg: Congratulations on reading the syllabus carefully! In order to claim your ten-point bonus prize, send me a Course Message on Blackboard and tell me which assignment you're most excited about in the course and why.

Course Schedule

This is a tentative course schedule and subject to change.

Week 1: January 16 - 20

Introduction Module: Welcome to the Class!

Due by 5pm MT on Saturday:

- Complete Student Profile
- Take the Syllabus Quiz
- Participate in the Introductory Discussion Board

Week 2: January 21 - 27

Module 1: Defining Terms: Introduction into the Academic Study of Women and Gender

Due by 5pm MT on Saturday:

- Reading Quiz
- Journal Assignment

Week 3: January 28 – February 3

Module 2: Defining More Terms: Introduction into the Academic Study of Religion

Due by 5pm MST on Saturday:

- Reading Quiz
- Group Discussion (first discussion post should be Wednesday by midnight, MT)

Week 4: February 4 – 10

Module 3: Representations of Religious Women in Popular Culture

Due by 5pm MT on Saturday:

- Reading Quiz
- Journal Assignment

Week 5: February 11 -17

Module 4: Replacing Religion

Due by 5pm MT on Saturday:

- Reading Quiz
- Group Discussion (first discussion post should be Wednesday by midnight, MT)

Week 6: February 18 - 24**Module 5: Major World Religions and Women: Islam****Due by 5pm MT on Saturday:**

- Reading Quiz
- Journal assignment

Week 7: February 25 – March 2**Module 6: Major World Religions and Women: Judaism****Due by 5pm MT on Saturday:**

- Reading Quiz
- Group Discussion (first discussion post should be Wednesday by midnight, MT)

Week 8: March 3 - 9**Module 7: Major World Religions and Women: Hinduism****Due by 5 pm MT on Saturday:**

- Reading Quiz
- Journal Assignment

March 10 - 16 SPRING BREAK Amnesty Week**Week 9: March 17 - 23****Module 8: Major World Religions and Women: Buddhism****Due by 5pm MT on Saturday:**

- Reading Quiz
- Group Discussion

Week 10: March 24 - 30**Module 9: Major World Religions and Women: Christianity****Due by 5pm MT on Saturday:**

- Reading Quiz
- Journal Assignment

Week 11: March 31 – April 6**Module 10: Religious Field Visit (Week 1 of 2)****Due by 5pm MT on Saturday**

- Group Discussion – brainstorming presentation topics

Week 12: April 7 - 13**Module 11: Religious Field Visit (Week 2 of 2)****Due by 5pm MT on Saturday:**

- Religious Field Visit Assignment

Week 13: April 14 – 20**Module 12: Final Presentation (Week 1 of 2)****Due by 5pm MT on Saturday:**

- Presentation Proposal Journal Assignment

Week 14: April 21 - 27**Module 13: “Ask a Sister” Interview****Due by 5pm MT on Saturday:**

- “Ask a Sister” Interview Assignment

Week 15: April 28 – May 4**Module 14: Final Presentation (Week 2 of 2)****Due by 5pm MT on Saturday**

- Final Presentation

Week 16: May 5 – 10**Module 15: Atheism****Due by 5pm MT on FRIDAY**

- Journal Assignment
- BONUS Group Discussion (first discussion post should be Wednesday by midnight, MT)