



Women in the Old Testament

OT 5XW5

SPRING 2021



Dates of class meetings: May 3–June 4, 2021

Times of class meetings: Tuesdays at 3:00–5:00pm EST on May 4 & June 1

Professor: Paul Evans, PhD

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Class meets online via Avenue to Learn and Zoom: May 3–June 4, 2021

Course Description

This course leads the class in an examination of women characters, female imagery, and biblical legislation concerned with women in the Old Testament, with sustained attention to the significance of female characters in biblical salvific history. The history of interpretation of women characters will be surveyed, with a focus on the many divergent viewpoints and assessments of various biblical female characters through interpretive history. The class will focus on Old Testament women in terms of their characterization, their ancient historical context, and consider how they can contribute to the discussion of gender issues today. Modern ideological approaches (e.g., feminist, postcolonial) towards the text will be examined and employed in the reading of Old Testament narratives with women characters, prophetic passages with female imagery, and biblical laws concerning women. Both minor and major female characters will be studied, such as: Eve, Sarai/Sarah, Hagar, Rebekah, Dinah, Miriam, Rahab, Deborah, Jael, Ruth, Hannah, Naomi, Abigail, Bathsheba, Tamar, Athaliah, Huldah, Vashti, Esther, Hosea's wife.



Course Objectives

Knowing

- To know the women of the Old Testaments: their contexts, characters, and roles
- To understand a variety of feminist approaches to biblical interpretation
- To understand both the positive and negative contributions of women in the narrative of the Old Testament
- To understand the contribution of women to OT theology
- To understand the relevance of OT women to the NT and Christian theology

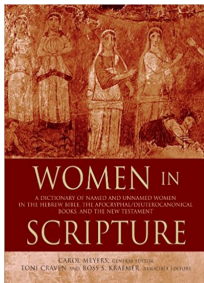
Being

- To appreciate the contribution that women have made to the history of faith
- To appreciate the potential for women's contribution to the academy and the church
- To grow closer to God through his working through both men and women in the OT text

Doing

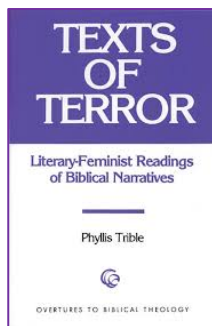
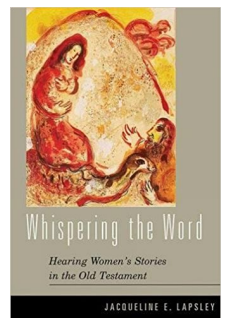
- To evaluate and apply feminist approaches to biblical interpretation
- To articulate, orally and in writing, the way in which women contribute to OT narrative and theology
- To be able to dialogue with those in the church who hold different perspectives

Required Texts



Meyers, Carol L., Toni Craven, and Ross Shepard Kraemer. *Women in Scripture: A Dictionary of Named and Unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible, the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, and the New Testament*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 2000.

Lapsley, Jacqueline E. *Whispering the Word: Hearing Women's Stories in the Old Testament*. 1st ed. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2005.



Trible, Phyllis. *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives*. Overtures to Biblical Theology. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984.

All required textbooks for this class are available from the College's book service, READ On Bookstore, Room 145, McMaster Divinity College. Texts may be purchased on the first day of class. For advance purchase, you may contact READ On Bookstore, 5 International Blvd, Etobicoke, Ontario M9W 6H3: phone 416.620.2934; fax 416.622.2308; email books@readon.ca. Other book services may also carry the texts.

Course Requirements

I. Classroom Experiences

Participation in classroom experiences is an assumed foundation for this course (like class attendance) if a student fails to participate their final mark will be reduced by one full letter grade (so A becomes B, A- becomes B-).

A. Synchronous (via Zoom conferencing app)

Successful classroom experiences depend on student commitment commensurate as how it would be in a face-to-face experience. Just as in a normal physical classroom experience, students are encouraged to take notes, participate in discussion through asking and answering questions, and wear appropriate attire. As much as is possible students should join the Zoom class in a quiet place where you will not be interrupted. Please have your video turned on whenever possible. It is best practice to mute your microphone except for when you are intending to speak to the class. Students are encouraged to use digital virtual backgrounds if desired. Tasteful backgrounds can help with the issues of privacy, equity, and prevent distractions for others in the class (e.g., in the case of a family member walking in the background of your video).

***A link to participate via Zoom will be posted in an announcement on Avenue to Learn each week we meet.

1. Tuesday May 4 at 3:00–5:00pm EST

Class will meet virtually via Zoom. Our time together will include introductions and an overview of the class.

2. Tuesday June 1 at 1: 3:00–5:00pm EST

Class will meet virtually via Zoom. In our time together we will share our reflections on course materials and what we wrote in our reflective papers (see below).

B. Asynchronous Class Discussions (May 5 – June 4)

Much of the class discussion will occur asynchronously online on the Avenue to Learn course website. On weeks noted on the schedule below, students must actively participate in the online discussion and **post** minimum **two** discussion topics at the beginning of a week (Sun-Tues). Student posts must be in regard to the posted lecture videos / assigned readings that week. As well, to further the online discussion all students must **respond** to minimum **two posts** every week. Since initial posts will be online in the first part of the week, there will adequate time for all students to respond to posts in a timely manner.

II. Formal Assignments

A. 25% - *Annotated Bibliography*: Due May 18

The student will develop an annotated bibliography of approximately 15-20 resources (4000 pages) related to the student's topic (related to women in the OT) and write a 100-150 word annotation for each one. The required texts for the course can be included as part of the book list. This assignment will be approximately **2,000 words**.

B. 25% - *Critical Literature Review Assignment*. Due May 27

A formal paper will be prepared that summarizes the key learnings from the annotated bibliography and provides a cogent foundation for a theology and practice of the student's topic. The paper will be approximately **3,000 words**.

C. 10% - *Class Presentation*. Due May 25.

The student will offer a class presentation on the topic of their final paper and its findings to the class. Presentations may take one of the following formats:

- i. **Video presentation** (posted to YouTube or Vimeo). Students will send link to the video to professor who will upload it to Avenue to Learn for the rest of the students to view and hear
- ii. **Digital presentation** (PowerPoint, Keynote, Prezi, Google Slides etc.) with audio recorded sent to professor who will upload it to Avenue to Learn for the rest of the students to view and hear
- ii. **Digital presentation** (PowerPoint, Keynote, Prezi, Google Slides etc.) along with pdf handout sent to professor who will upload it to Avenue to Learn for the rest of the students to view and read

***Student presentations will form the basis for some of the virtual face-to-face discussions on June 1, 3pm–5pm.*

5. 40% - *Major Assignment*. Due June 15. Approximately **8,000 words.**

The paper should include four key sections. First a brief, but clear explanation of how the paper is rooted in a Practice Led-research approach, second an exploration of the challenges and problems that provoke this study (i.e. why does this ministry practice need to be addressed? What are the problems that you want to identify?) Third, a consideration of a foundational theology of the practice of ministry under consideration in this course and a deep consideration of how new approaches to this practice can be employed in helping to address and improve ministry practice in this area. Fourth some reflection on the application of these ideas to the student's own ministry context (both in terms of the local church and also their ministry beyond the local church).

Course Schedule

Wk	Date	CLASSROOM EXPERIENCES	CONTENT	Assignment Due
1	May 3–8	May 4 - Zoom Meeting: 3–5pm	The Social/Historical Context of Women in the OT	--
2	May 9–15	Avenue to Learn asynchronous discussions of readings and lecture video	Women of the Pentateuch	--
3	May 16–22	Avenue to Learn asynchronous discussions of readings and lecture video	Women of the Historical Books	*Annotated Bibliography due May 18
4	May 23–29	Avenue to Learn asynchronous discussions of readings and lecture video	Women of the Prophetic Books	* Class Presentation due May 25 **Critical Review Assignment due May 27
5	May 30–June 4	June 1 - Zoom Meeting: 3–5pm	Women of the Writings	
	June 15	--	--	* Major Assignment Due June 15

College Style for Submission of Written Work

All stylistic considerations (including but not limited to questions of formatting, footnotes, and bibliographic references) must conform to the McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses <http://mcmasterdivinity.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/mdcstyleguide.pdf> Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.

All papers to be submitted in electronic format only (a pdf file)—no hardcopies! Email to pevans@mcmaster.ca. Include your last name in the file name of your attachment (e.g., [evans.researchpaper.pdf](#)). To avoid late marks papers must be received by 11:59pm on which they are due. Late assignments receive no critical feedback.

Policy concerning late papers

Extensions for papers will not be given except in very exceptional circumstances. (serious illness, family crises, etc.). Busy-ness, computer problems etc. are not legitimate reasons to grant extensions and in the interests of fairness any request for extensions will take into account the entire class. Late assignments will be docked at the rate of 2% per day for the first 7 days (including weekends) and 4% per day after that. All assignments must be received by June 15, 2021 in order to avoid a failing grade in the class. Late assignments receive no critical feedback.

Academic Honesty:

Academic dishonesty is a serious offence that may take any number of forms, including plagiarism, the submission of work that is not one's own or for which previous credit has been obtained, and/or unauthorized collaboration with other students. Academic dishonesty can result in severe consequences, e.g., failure of the assignment, failure of the course, a notation on one's academic transcript, and/or suspension or expulsion from the College.

Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty ~ <https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/rules-regulations/>

Disclaimer: This syllabus is the property of the instructor and is prepared with currently available information. The instructor reserves the right to make changes and revisions up to and including the first day of class.

**I originally co-taught this course with Mary Conway and thanks is expressed to Dr. Conway for her contributions to the course syllabus and class design.

Critical Book Review Guideline

I. The Book Review of Phyllis Trible: *Texts of Terror* should roughly follow this format:

Summary of Content: 2-3 Pages

Critique of Content 1-2 Pages

Personal Reflection 1-2 Pages

Total=*no more* than 6 pages! Pages 7ff *will not* be read

The following items are rated according to the following scale:

1 = poor/inadequate; 2 = adequate; 3 = good/more than adequate; 4 = very good;

5 = excellent/superior.

Summary of Content (noted key concepts etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Quality of Critique (evidence of critical thought)	1	2	3	4	5
Reflective Thought (theological depth, sensitivity)	1	2	3	4	5
Literary Style (awkward, wordy, repetitive)	1	2	3	4	5
Grammar/Spelling	1	2	3	4	5
Neatness/Presentation	1	2	3	4	5

§ Note: this is a simple evaluation tool to assist in paper assessment. The categories are not weighted equally, and thus are not added together or averaged to calculate your grade.

II. The following need attention if checked

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Use inclusive language | <input type="checkbox"/> The paper is too long/too short |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Write a unified essay | <input type="checkbox"/> Edit your paper more thoroughly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Line spacing, Font size, Margins, Page numbers etc. need attention | <input type="checkbox"/> The paper needs balance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cite primary resources correctly/consistently (e.g., Gen 1:26; Gen 1; etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Follow MDC Style guide |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Cite secondary resources correctly/consistently |

Major Assignment Evaluation Guidelines

I. The next items are rated according to this scale: 1 = inadequate; 2 = adequate; 3 = good; 4 = very good; 5 = superior.

Bibliographic consciousness	1	2	3	4	5
Range and Use of Sources	1	2	3	4	5
Clarity in Defining Issues	1	2	3	4	5
Strength of Argument	1	2	3	4	5
Awareness of Exegetical Issues	1	2	3	4	5
Accuracy of Data and Assertions	1	2	3	4	5
Analysis /Critical Thinking	1	2	3	4	5
Introduction (Thesis Statement /Clear Issue)	1	2	3	4	5
Development of Thesis (focus)	1	2	3	4	5
Literary Style (awkward, wordy, repetitive)	1	2	3	4	5
Organization/coherence of ideas	1	2	3	4	5
Grammar/Spelling	1	2	3	4	5
Neatness/Presentation	1	2	3	4	5

§ Note: this is a simple evaluation tool to assist in paper assessment. The categories are not weighted equally, and thus are not added together or averaged to calculate your grade.

II. The following need attention if so indicated

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Use inclusive language | <input type="checkbox"/> The paper is too long/too short |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Write a unified essay | <input type="checkbox"/> Edit your paper more thoroughly |
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| | <input type="checkbox"/> Cite secondary resources correctly/consistently |

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