

WOMEN IN CHRISTIAN HISTORY

CT/TH 3XW3/5XW5/6XW6

McMaster Divinity College
 Fall Semester 2022
 Hybrid Intensive Course
 Online: Weekly Content, Occasional Zoom Discussion
 Face-to-Face: October 24-25
 Instructor: Gordon L. Heath
gheath@mcmaster.ca

Specializations: Christian Culture, Christian History and Worldview, Pastoral Studies

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

From the book of Acts to the contemporary church, women have played a key role in the life of the church in places such as monasteries, missions, schools, pulpits, home, and hostels. And many have been formally identified as “saints.” This class is a survey and analysis of the roles and impact of such women from the earliest churches to the modern period of global Christianity.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Knowing

- to provide students with an understanding of how women have participated in, and contributed to, the life of the church over the centuries
- to help students place the contemporary debate over gender roles in the church in the larger historical context

Being

- to explore - and ultimately appreciate - the diverse ways that women have served in the church
- to create an awareness of the breadth and diversity of the Church, and provide a sense of “place” within the many church traditions

Doing

- to develop in each student an ability to assess documents and situations from an historical perspective, and, in particular, to be able to assess critically the various claims made about women in leadership throughout the church’s history

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- Ruth A. Tucker & Walter L. Liefeld. *Daughters of the Church: Women and Ministry from New Testament Times to the Present*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987.
- Mary T. Malone. *Women and Christianity: The First Thousand Years*. Mary Knoll,

Orbis Books, 2001.

- Karen Jo Torjesen. *When Women Were Priests: Women's Leadership in the Early Church & the Scandal of their Subordination in the Rise of Christianity*. San Francisco: Harper, 1995.
- Gordon L. Heath. *Doing Church History: A User-friendly Introduction to Researching the History of Christianity*. Toronto: Clements Publishing, 2008.
- There may also be the occasional journal article to be read (distributed by the professor in class).

All required textbooks for this class and others at the Divinity College are available from READ-ON Books. Of course, you can purchase your books anywhere, but I encourage you to support our local bookstores by purchasing from READ-ON Books. Contact can be made by mail: 304 The East Mall, Suite 100, Etobicoke, ON M9B 6E2; phone: 416-620-2934; fax: 416-622-2308; email: books@readon.ca; website: www.readon.ca.

COMMENTS ON ASSIGNMENTS (MDIV/MTS/DIPLOMA/CERTIFICATE):

- Online Engagement (40%)

Students will complete weekly readings and post comments, as well as respond to posted comments by other students and professor. This is an important part of the class that allows for interaction and engagement by all.

- Position Paper (10%)

This assignment is a brief statement on one's own view of women in ministry, as well as one's view of the church's treatment of women in its history.

- Book Review (10%)

This four-five-page review should answer questions such as: what is the author's thesis? How did she go about arguing her thesis (structure, sources, methodology, etc.)? What are the weaknesses and strengths of the book? What is the value of reading the book? See *Doing Church History* for further instructions. A part of your analysis of the book should be an interaction between your specialization and the book. A brief comment on [avenuetolearn](http://www.avenuetolearn.com) summarizing your view is also required.

- Research Paper (25%)

This ten-page research paper provides an opportunity for students to pursue an area of research that intrigues them. The topic for the paper should relate to the student's specialization. Results of research will be shared with the class at the end of the semester.

- Church and Culture

The primary focus of this research should be on a theological analysis of a past culture or our contemporary culture in regard to Christian attitudes and actions towards women. The focus should be relatively specific, rather than scattered (eg. "the idealization of virginity in antiquity" rather than "how the church viewed women in antiquity"). The interplay between Christian

- theology and culture should be a critical part of this analysis.
- Christian History and Worldview
The research for this specialization should focus on developing critical knowledge of a key movement in Christian history, or a deeper awareness of Christian theology related to women and the church (eg. ordination, monasticism, sexuality). Research for this specialization should focus on a construction of one's theological position in regards to an issue related to women and ministry (eg. women's ordination, women and the family, mothering, celibacy).
 - Pastoral Studies Specialization
Research for this specialization can go in one of two directions. First, it can focus on a theological construction of one's theological position in regards to an issue related to women and ministry (eg. women's ordination, women and the family, mothering, celibacy). Second, it can deal with developing a strategy for dealing with issues related to women and ministry in the local church.
- Biographical Presentation (15%)

Each student will post on [avenuetolearn](#) a five-minute video summary of a prominent woman's life and contribution. Students will comment on [avenuetolearn](#) on other presentations.

COMMENTS ON ASSIGNMENTS (DPT):

Along with taking part in online lectures and discussions, DPT students will complete the following requirements:

- Literature Review and Commentary (25% & 25%)

The student will develop an annotated bibliography of approximately 15-20 resources (4000 pages) related to the topic of the course and write a 100-word annotation for each one. The required and recommended texts for the course can be included as part of the book list. The literature review will be approximately 2,000 words. This assignment is due October 6 and will constitute 25% of the course grade.

A commentary paper will also be prepared that summarizes the key learnings from the annotated bibliography and provides a cogent foundation for a theology and practice of the topic of the course. The paper will be approximately 3,000 words. It is due November 3 and will constitute 25% of the course grade.

- Major Research Paper (40%)

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 students own ministry context (both in terms of the local church and also their ministry beyond

the local church). The paper should be approximately 8,000 words. It is due December 1 and will constitute 40% of the course grade.

- Class Participation (10%)

COMMENTS ON ASSIGNMENTS (MA/PhD):

Along with taking part in online lectures and discussions, DPT students will complete the following requirements:

- Literature Review and Commentary (25% & 25%)

The student will develop an annotated bibliography of approximately 15-20 resources (6000 pages) related to the topic of the course and write a 100 word annotation for each one. The required and recommended texts for the course can be included as part of the book list. The literature review will be approximately 2,000 words. This assignment is due October 6 and will constitute 25% of the course grade.

A commentary paper will also be prepared that summarizes the key learnings from the annotated bibliography and provides a cogent foundation for a theology and practice of the topic of the course. The paper will be approximately 3,000-4,000 words. It is due November 3 and will constitute 25% of the course grade.

- Major Research Paper (40%)

This paper is a major research paper. Ideally the student aims to prepare something for publication such as a journal article. Regardless, the work must be on a subject mutually agreed upon between professor and student. The paper should be approximately 8,000-10,000 words. It is due December 1 and will constitute 40% of the course grade.

- Class Participation (10%)

GENERAL COMMENTS:

- 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 ~ <http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/rules-regulations>

- Gender Inclusive Language

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all of its publications. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected. The NRSV and TNIV are examples of the use of inclusive language for human beings. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments.

- Style

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://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/sites/default/files/documents/mdcstyleguide.pdf>
 Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.

- 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.

- Due Dates

Essays must be handed in at the beginning of the class on the day they are due. All other essays will be considered to be late. Students may be exempted from the late penalty of 3% per day (not including weekends) if they attach to their essay a letter explaining the genuine emergency that delayed them. Late assignments (even ones with an extension) will not receive comments and constructive criticism from the professor.

- Other

Please turn off your cell phone and/or pager before the class begins. Please do not attend class if you are ill and contagious (e.g. the flu). Respectful dialogue and disagreement is expected.

CLASS SCHEDULE:

Week Starting Sept 12: Introduction to the Class

Reading: *Doing Church History* (all)

Monday Face-to-Face (5:00-6:00pm): <https://mcmaster.zoom.us/j/6185125107>

Week Starting Sept 19: Women in the Early Church I

Reading: *Daughters of the Church* (chs.1-3), *Women and Christianity* (chs.1-4)

Position Paper Due

Week Starting Sept 26: Women in the Early Church II

Reading: *Women and Christianity* (chs.5-7)

Book Review Due

Week Starting Oct 3: Medieval Female Monastic Orders

Reading: *Daughters of the Church* (ch.4), *Women and Christianity* (chs.8-10)

Monday Face-to-Face (5:00-6:00pm): <https://mcmaster.zoom.us/j/6185125107>

Week Starting Oct 10: Medieval Women: Sainthood and Motherhood

Week Starting Oct 17: Women as Reformers in the Reformation

Reading: *Daughters of the Church* (ch.5)

Week Starting Oct 24: On Campus face-to-Face Component (Oct 24-25), Monday all day,

Tuesday morning. <https://mcmaster.zoom.us/j/6185125107>

This two-day on-campus component is comprised of professor's lectures and group discussions. Topics for the two days include:

- Resources for Ministry
- Issues in Ministry
- Reformation and Women
- Women Doctors of the Church
- Catholic Catechism and Male Priesthood
- Evangelicalism, Missions, and Women
 - Reading: *Daughters of the Church* (chs.6-8)
- Women in the Modern West
 - Reading: *Daughters of the Church* (chs.10-11)

Week Starting Oct 31: Witch Hunt

Week Starting Nov 7: Biographical Presentations

Week Starting Nov 14: Women in the Global Church

Reading: *Daughters of the Church* (ch.9)

Monday Face-to-Face (5:00-6:00pm): <https://mcmaster.zoom.us/j/6185125107>

Week Starting Nov 21: Research Paper Presentations

Research Paper Due

Week Starting Nov 28: Women in Modern Orthodoxy and Catholicism

Week Starting Dec 5: Looking to the Future

Monday Face-to-Face (5:00-6:00pm): <https://mcmaster.zoom.us/j/6185125107>