



Class runs online: May 13–June 30, 2024

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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

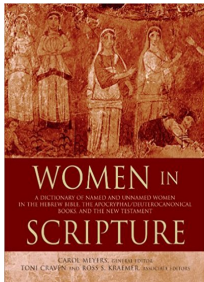
Being

- 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

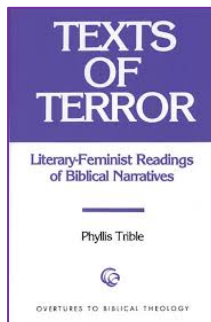
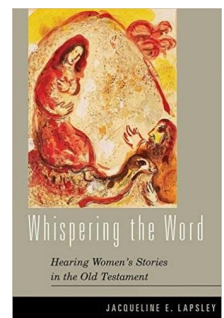
- To evaluate and apply feminist approaches to biblical interpretation
- To articulate, orally and in writing, the way in which women contribute to OT narrative and theology
- To be able to dialogue with those in the church who hold different perspectives

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.

Textbook Purchase

All required textbooks for this class are available from the Hurlburt Family Bookstore located beside the entrance to the Nathaniel H. Parker Memorial Chapel of McMaster Divinity College. To purchase in advance, you may contact the bookstore manager, Bernice Quek, by phone at 416.620.2934 or 416.668.3434 (mobile); or by email at books@readon.ca. The Hurlburt Family Bookstore also carries other books and merchandise and is open throughout the academic year during posted hours.

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. Asynchronous Class Discussions (May 13 – June 30)

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 June 4

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. 10% - Class Presentation. Due June 21.

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 online discussion for the week of June 23–29.***

C. 25% - Critical Literature Review Assignment. Due June 30

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**.

D. 40% - Major Assignment. Due July 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).

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 <https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/resources-forms/mdc-style-guide/> Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.

All papers to be submitted in electronic format only (a pdf file)—no hardcopies! **Upload assignments to the appropriate folder in A2L**. 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 **July 15** in order to avoid a failing grade in the class. Late assignments receive no critical feedback.

Gender Inclusive language

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all its publications. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected, but you will need to use gender-inclusive language for humans, and you will need to quote from a gender-inclusive version such as, for example, the following: NRSVue (2022), TEV/GNB/GNT (1976), CEV (1995), NLT (1996), NIV (2011), and the CEB (2011).

AODA

In accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), the content of this course is intended to be accessible to all students who are enrolled in the course, including those with disabilities. If a student requires accommodation to participate fully in this course, that student is to contact SAS at McMaster University, who will then work directly with the McMaster Divinity College Registrar to negotiate reasonably appropriate accommodation for the student. The MDC Registrar will communicate with faculty regarding necessary accommodations. Please note that an accommodation is not retroactive and must be requested in advance to allow sufficient time for implementation.

Academic Honesty

Academic dishonesty is not qualitatively different from other types of dishonesty. It consists of misrepresenting the ownership of written work by deception or by other fraudulent means. In an academic setting this may include any number of forms such as: copying or using unauthorized aids in tests, examinations; plagiarism, i.e., submitting work that is not one's own (regardless of the means of its production) but passing it off as if it is; submitting work for credit in a course for which credit is being or has already been given, unless the previously submitted work was presented as such to the instructor of the second course and has been deemed acceptable for credit by the instructor of that course; aiding and abetting another student's dishonesty; giving false information for the purposes of gaining admission or credit; giving false information for the purposes of obtaining deferred examinations or extension of deadlines; forging or falsifying McMaster University or McMaster Divinity College documents.

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 Dr. Mary Conway and thanks is expressed to Dr. Conway for her contributions to the syllabus and class design.**

Class Schedule

Wk	Date	CLASSROOM EXPERIENCES	CONTENT	Reading	Assignment Due
1	May 13–18	Avenue to Learn asynchronous discussions of readings and lecture video	Introduction to Feminist Biblical Scholarship	*Lapsley ch. 1 *Meyers - <i>Feminist Biblical Scholarship</i> *Meyers - <i>Introduction to the Bible</i>	--
2	May 19–25	Avenue to Learn asynchronous discussions of readings and lecture video	Women in Genesis 1–11	*Lapsley ch. 2 *Meyers - <i>The Hebrew Bible</i> *Relevant entries of women being studied	--

3	May 26– Jun 1	Avenue to Learn asynchronous discussions of readings and lecture video	Women in the Pentateuch	*Lapsley ch. 3 *Meyers - <i>Names and Naming in the Ancient World</i> *Meyers - Relevant entries of women being studied	--
4	June 2–8	Avenue to Learn asynchronous discussions of readings and lecture video	Women in the Historical Books	*Lapsley ch. 3 *Meyers - Relevant entries of women being studied	*Annotated Bibliography due June 4
5	June 9–15	Avenue to Learn asynchronous discussions of readings and lecture video	Women in the Historical Books	*Lapsley ch. 4 *Meyers - Relevant entries of women being studied	
	June 16– 22	Avenue to Learn asynchronous discussions of readings and lecture video	Women in the Prophets	*Meyers -Relevant entries of women being studied	*Class Presentation due June 21
	June 23– 29	Avenue to Learn asynchronous discussions of readings and lecture video	Women in the Writings	*Lapsley ch. 5 *Meyers - Relevant entries of women being studied	***Critical Review Assignment due June 30 * Major Assignment Due July 15

Selected Bibliography

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