

San José State University, Humanities Department, Religious Studies Program

RELS/WOMS 131: Gender, Sexuality & Religion (Fall Semester 2012)
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DUE: Tuesday, October 18, 2012

Real World Relevance Essay (20%)

In this paper, you will demonstrate your ability to accurately understand and apply concepts from the readings by showing how they can deepen our understanding of contemporary issues. This paper should be 4-6 pages long.

Find a contemporary (or relatively recent) issue or incident that concerns women, gender and/or sexuality (ideally with an obvious connection with religion, but this not required) on one of the following websites:

- <http://www.religiondispatches.org>
- <http://www.patheos.com>
- <http://www.mercurynews.com/faith>
- <http://www.latimes.com/news/local/religion>
- <http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/on-faith>
- http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/r/religion_and_belief/index.html
- <http://religion.blogs.cnn.com>

For this assignment, please use ONLY articles located via one of these websites (although you are encouraged to follow links in these articles for more insights & context). And, if possible, find more than one perspective on the issue or incident by finding sources about it on more than one of these sites.

Then, apply the insights, methods, and methodologies we've studied thus far in both readings and discussions as a lens through which to view and interpret (and thereby more deeply understand) the issue or incident at hand. Concepts to revisit might include (depending on your topic):

- Are people being treated (*&/or resisting being treated*) as somehow secondary because of their gender &/or sexuality?
- Where and how are women exercising (or still struggling to exercise) public power (especially concerning religion, if possible)?
- Where is there evidence of institutionalized/systemic patriarchy, (or evidence of resistance to institutionalized/systemic patriarchy)?
- Can feminist theologies shed light on this issue? (i.e. look for evidence of worldviews & cosmology that pertain to social constructions of women, gender, and sexuality)
- Can feminist biblical criticism (hermeneutics & exegesis) help us better understand this issue, if so how?
- Can you apply the idea of an "accurate and useful" history to this case?
- Can understanding the difference between "description and prescription" help shed light on this issue/incident?
- Can noticing the difference between androcentric (&/or ethnocentric) and androgynous (&/or pluralist) perspectives help you better understand this issue or incident
- What perspectives on women's sacredness (or lack thereof) are evident in this issue/incident?
- Are there other debates, challenges, or questions concerning women claiming power, authority, sacredness, and equality (& otherwise resisting sexism and patriarchy?)

All papers should:

- Summarize the issue or incident accurately
- Consider how feminist methods & methodologies help us better understand this/these issue(s). (ie, apply at least two of the concepts/questions above, as relevant.)
- Describe and give specific examples.
- Define feminism (in your own words, if possible).
- Note the Criteria below (& also avoid the "Pet Peeves" noted in the syllabus).

Criteria and Guidelines for Written Assignments:

- Organization: *follow basic directions and guidelines accurately* and always include a clear, succinct introductory paragraph and thesis statement that spells out your argument and provides a roadmap for the content of your essay, as well as a concluding paragraph that summarizes the essay & your key conclusions.
- Demonstrate your accurate understanding of the material, as well as your ability to think independently, analytically, and critically (i.e., explain *what you think and why*, make connections, and provide evidence for your assertions).
- Writing must be clear and grammatically correct, as well as descriptive and thorough.
- Use specific and relevant references to the assigned readings that support your analyses, using citations and quotations correctly and appropriately.
- For these papers, I do want to see formal citations and a works cited list (i.e., list the website articles utilized, providing links, as well as textbooks used.) You may use MLA, APA, or Chicago/Turabian styles, depending on which one you need to master for your major. For help with citation styles, see: <http://library.sjsu.edu/citing-writing-0>.
- Proofread and run spell check: one or two small errors may be acceptable, but sloppy essays riddled with misspellings and other errors will reduce your grade.
- Don't forget to upload your paper to turnitin.com. The class ID is **5301903** and the enrollment password is "**sophia**." See https://turnitin.com/static/training/student_quickstart_guide.php if you need help registering.