

**RELS 265 Women and Religion**

***Fall 2007***

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Hours: MWF 9:30-10:45 T 2:00-3:00  
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**Course Description:** Women and Religion will examine two aspects of "woman" as she has been encountered in human religious history, i.e., through the religious roles of women, and representations of the divine feminine. The course will analyze the various functions and roles of women as they participated in religious activity. Attention will also be paid to religiously and culturally constructed gender ideology and role expectations. These roles will include the priestess, the holy virgin, the saint, the martyr and the mystic. Treatment of the divine feminine will focus on images of the goddess through various historical time periods and cultures. The methodology will consist of analysis through historical, comparative and feminist criticism. Both primary and secondary texts will be utilized.

**Required Texts:**

*The Myth of the Goddess: Evolution of an Image*, Anne Baring and Jules Cashford

*Womanspirit Rising*, Carol Christ and Judith Plaskow, Eds.

*Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Harriet Jacobs

Readings on E-reserve, **Password: goddess**

**Course Requirements:**

- 3 Exams (300 points)
- 1 Paper (5-6 pp.) (100 points)
- 5 1-page critical reflections on selected \*\*readings (100 points)

**Grading:**

Each set of 100 points will be worth 20% of the final grade.

Numerical and letter grades will be based upon the following scale:

	A	100-92	A-	91-89	
B+	88-86	B	85-82	B-	81-79
C+	78-76	C	75-72	C-	71-69
D+	68-66	D	65-62	D-	61-59
F	-58				

**Attendance Policy:**

More than 4 unexcused absences may result in a lower letter grade for the course.

**Honor Code:**

The Code of Honor found on pages 10-11 in the Student Handbook will be strictly enforced.

## Class Schedule and Assignments

### **Introduction and Methodology**

**"What you see depends upon where you stand."** Elisabeth Schussler-Fiorenza

8/22-8/29 "Introduction: Womanspirit Rising" (1-16, WR)

"Female God Language in a Jewish Context" (167-173, WR)

\*\* 8/31 ----- **Reflection #1** "The Human Situation: A Feminine View" (25-41, WR)

### **In the Beginning... The Paleolithic and Neolithic**

**"Sweet Goddess born of a blinding light and a changing wind,  
Now, don't be modest, you know who you are and where you've been."**

Bob Dylan, "Tough Mama," 1974

9/3-5 *In the Beginning: the Paleolithic Mother Goddess* (Ch. 1, Baring)

9/7, 10-12 *The Neolithic Great Goddess of Sky, Earth and Waters* (Ch.2, Baring)

*When God was a Woman*, (120-130, WR)

### **The Beginning of the End: The Fall of the Goddess and the Rise of Patriarchy**

**"She wears an Egyptian ring that sparkles before she speaks.  
She wears an Egyptian red ring that sparkles before she speaks.  
She's a hypnotist collector. You are a walking antique."**

Bob Dylan, "She Belongs To Me," 1965

9/14, 17 *Tiamat of Babylon: The Defeat of the Goddess* (Ch. 7, AB)

9/19 *Isis of Egypt: Queen of Heaven, Earth and the Underworld* (Ch. 6, AB)

\*\*9/21----- **Reflection #2** *The Iron Age: The Great Father God...* (Ch. 11, AB)

### **9/24 First Exam**

### **Hidden but Not Forgotten: Divine Images and Women in Hebrew Scripture**

**"It started long ago in the Garden of Eden When Adam said to Eve, baby, you're for me  
So come on baby let's start today, come on baby let's play The game of love, love, la la la la la  
love."**

Wayne Fontana and the Mindbenders, "The Game of Love"

9/26-28 *The Hidden Goddess in the Old Testament* (Ch. 12, AB)

10/01-05, 08-10 *Genesis 1-3* (ERES) and *Eve: The Mother of All the Living* (Ch. 13, AB)

\*\*10/12----- **Reflection #3** "Eve and Adam: Genesis 2-3 Reread," (74-81, WR)

### **10/15 No class meeting/ Fall Break**

### **The Jesus Movement and the Early Christian Movement: Maidens, Martyrs and Marys**

**"Magdalene is trembling, like a washing on a line, trembling and gleaming.  
Never before was a man so kind, never so redeeming."** Joni Mitchell, "Passion Play," 1991

10/17-19 *Mary: The Return of the Goddess* (Ch. 14, AB)

10/22-24 *The Gospel of Mary Magdalene* (ERES)

\*\*10/26 ----- **Reflection #4** "Women in the Early Christian Movement," (84-92, WR)

10/29 "Women's Religions and Religious Lives in the Greco-Roman City" (ERES)

10/31 **Second Exam**

11/02 **Paper Due**

***Medieval Christendom: Mystics, Saints and Witches***

***“Raven hair and ruby lips sparks fly from her finger tips***

***Echoed voices in the night she's a restless spirit on an endless flight.***

***Woo hoo witchy woman see how high she flies.” The Eagles, “Witchy Woman,” 1972***

11/05-09 Selections from *The Malleus Maleficarum*, (ERES)

*“The Roots of European Witchcraft,”* from *A History of Witchcraft*, Jeffrey Russell (ERES)

11/12-14 *“The Christian Past,”* (93-105, WR)

***Abolitionists and the "First Wave" of the U.S. Feminist Movement***

***“But I ask no favors for my sex. I surrender not our claim to equality. All I ask of our brethren is that they will take their feet from off our necks and permit us to stand upright on that ground which god had designed for us to occupy.”***

*Sarah Grimke, 19<sup>th</sup> century abolitionist and feminist*

11/16 *“Abolitionist Feminists,”* from *Women and Redemption*, Rosemary Ruether (ERES)

\*\*11/19 -----***Reflection #5*** *“The Feminist Thought of S. Grimke,”* SMG Manuscript (ERES)

11/21-23 **No class meeting/ Thanksgiving Break**

***The Future: Women and Religion***

***“Hoping and hoping, as if by my weak faith. The spirit of this world, would heal and rise. Vast are the shadows, that straddle and strafe. And struggle in the darkness, troubling my eyes.”*** Joni Mitchell, *“Slouching Toward Bethlehem.”* 1988

11/26-30 *“Forged Under the Sun,”* Fran Leeper Buss, (ERES)

*“Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing”* Ruether (ERES)

12/3 Last Day of Class

***Final (Third) Exam: 2:00 class 12/05 12:00-3:00***

***3:00 class 12/07 12:00-3:00***