

LIBERATIONIST FEMINIST INTERPRETATION OF THE BIBLE*

J-TERM 2012

Course Description

In this course we will study biblical scholarship from feminist perspectives with particular attention given to voices from groups that are marginalized in multiple ways in US culture and religion. The broad perspective of the course is thus liberationist feminist. We will review the historical and current subjugation of all women, their disenfranchisement in religion, education and other areas of life, with particular attention paid to the impact of oppressive ideologies and practices in US culture in terms of African-American women and other oppressed cultures and groups as Native American women and Latina women. We will consider also the history of women's participation and their contributions in the construction of ideas, particularly the world of religious thought and practice. We will explore the roots and development of feminist/womanist/mujerista/native feminist biblical criticism and its various contemporary expressions by reviewing some major representatives of scholars who practice a liberationist feminist hermeneutic.

Course Objectives

By means of our learning we shall be able to: define oppressive practices and ideologies of patriarchy; recognize such practices and ideologies in history and in our own context; show acquaintance with women as agents in history, also religious history; outline oppressive methods of biblical interpretation; be familiar with major representatives of feminist/womanist/mujerista/native feminist biblical scholarship; recognize a feminist liberationist reading of the Bible and interpret a text from such a perspective; name ourselves and our place on the feminist liberationist spectrum. At the end of the course we should be somewhat comfortable with putting a new constructive hermeneutic into practice.

Method

This is a two-week intensive course which will meet ordinarily in the morning from 9:00-12:00 beginning on January 9, with two meetings added in the afternoons of Jan.12 and 19 from 2:00-4:00 p.m. There will be no class on January 16, Martin Luther King-Day. The format of the class will be a seminar with discussion based on the guided readings, alternating with short presentations. Absences should be kept to a minimum and the instructor must be notified of any necessary absences.

The maximum number of participants is placed at twelve to allow for productive discussion and engagement with all the material. The instructor will allow additional registrations up to a total of fifteen if more than twelve students wish to take this course.

We will read and discuss, write, but also sing and draw/paint and give liturgical expression to our learning.

- * space and time will be set aside for artistic expression of ideas;**
- * we will watch video presentations and film to intensify our acquaintance with a subject;**
- * prayer and song will surround each class period in a liturgical expression of our concerns.**

Requirements

Students will be asked to write an identity statement before the class begins for which guidelines will be sent out to participants. This statement is intended to be used for class discussion.

Because of the nature of the class there will be no formal final paper but everyone is expected to write regularly as a basis for class discussion and all participants will work on an identity statement to be presented in class.

It is helpful if students have some background in biblical studies, but the course does not require any previous course work to make it possible for people from outside the seminary context to take part. The biblical analysis will proceed from the level of engagement of the individual doing the study.

Participants are asked to keep an ongoing file of newspaper clippings during this course. Each student may choose a focus for these cuttings that fits within a feminist liberationist perspective. For example, homophobia, women and violence, women in advertising, women and race relations, women and work, women and politics, would all be suitable subjects. The clippings may be from newspapers or magazines, local, national, or international or other resources. The purpose is to gain an insight into contemporary practices of patriarchal domination as well as possibilities for women's self-determination and to integrate this information with our readings, study of the biblical text and our statements. Class participants will regularly share their findings with the rest of the class.

Each participant is to gather her or his own collection of quotations relevant to feminist thought and feminist biblical scholarship.

Evaluation

This class will be graded on a non-competitive basis and each student will begin the course with an A grade. Unexcused absences and failure to fulfill requirements will cause a grade to go down as follows: each absence and/or failure to complete a reading or writing assignment will cause the grade to go down from A to A-, to B+ etc.

Resources

A blank sketch book (8x10 or larger if preferred) available at Michael's or similar Arts and Crafts stores.

The New Revised Standard Version - The Harper Collins Study Bible or Oxford Annotated Bible

Carol Meyers *Households and Holiness – The Religious Culture of Israelite Women* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005)

3. Phyllis Tribble and Letty M. Russell eds. *Hagar, Sarah, and Their Children – Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Perspectives* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006)

4. Linda Day and Carolyn Pressler eds. *Engaging the Bible in a Gendered World* (Louisville, Westminster John Knox, 2006)

5. Sharon D. Welch *After Empire – the Art and Ethos of Enduring Peace* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2001)

6. Johanna W.H.van Wijk-Bos *Reformed and Feminist - A Challenge to the Church* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991)

Material posted on CAMS