

**GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY  
BACHELOR OF ARTS IN LIBERAL STUDIES PROGRAM**

**WOMEN IN THE BIBLE**

BLHV 264-40

Three Credits

Summer, 2017

**Classes meet Tuesdays, May 22 – August 20  
640 Mass Ave Campus**

**8:20 – 11:10 pm  
Room C223**

**Prof. Angela Rasmussen**

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**Office hours:** Tuesdays 7pm-8pm and other times by appointment

**Course Description**

This course surveys women in the Bible through the lens of feminist biblical criticism. Using both literary and historical criticism, it will focus on women in the books of Judges, Judith, Miriam, women in the genealogy of Jesus, and named women in the Pauline epistles. It will also explore the reception history of women in the Bible, especially Eve and Mary the mother of Jesus.

**Goals for Student Learning**

1. Read biblical texts carefully and critically according to genre
2. Analyze and evaluate the evidence and argument of texts
3. Apply different perspectives within feminist biblical criticism to biblical texts
4. Discern, locate, and use appropriate secondary sources in order to interpret primary texts
5. Speak and write about religious texts and diverse viewpoints in a constructive and critical manner

**Textbooks**

*The New Interpreter's Study Bible* (NISB) with *The New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha*, Abingdon Press, 2003, ISBN 978-0-687-27832-9. Other study Bible versions may be acceptable; contact instructor for approval.

Jennie Ebeling, *Women's Lives in Biblical Times* (London: T&T Clark, 2010).

Carolyn Osiek and Margaret Y. MacDonald, *A Woman's Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006).

In addition to readings from the textbook, other material is posted on Blackboard as reading assignments for individual classes.

## **Course Requirements**

*Participation - 10% of total grade:* The participation grade reflects consistent preparation for class, attendance, and participation through speaking and listening during class discussion. Three or more absences will result in a loss of participation points; five or more will result in a zero for participation. Students who have excellent attendance and participation may receive extra credit.

*Reading Quizzes - 25% of total grade:* There will be a short quiz at the beginning of each class (approx. ten minutes) over that day's reading and the content from the previous class. Quizzes cannot be made up; the two lowest quiz grades will be dropped.

*Book Reviews - 25% of total grade:* Students will complete two book reviews. Additional information and a rubric will be on blackboard and discussed in class.

*Creative Interpretation Project – 20% of total grade:* Students will create and present a project that depicts a biblical story from the perspective of a woman in the Bible. The project should show historical consciousness and use library resources to aid in interpretation. Students will complete a research paper (approximately six pages) to prepare for and accompany the project. More details will be provided in class, including ideas for biblical passages, project prompts, and recommended sources.

*Final Reflection Paper - 5% of total grade:* Students will answer one of several possible prompts to reflect upon the readings and themes of the course. The final reflection paper should be 3-4 pages and uploaded to blackboard.

*Final Exam - 15% of total grade:* There will be an in-class cumulative final. Students may use a Bible and may create a study guide to use during the exam.

## **Expectations and Policies**

*Participation:* Students are expected to prepare for and attend every class on time with a positive attitude and to actively listen and speak during discussion. Students are expected to have access to the assigned readings in class. Students are expected to keep cell phones put away during class time.

*Making up Assignments:* Assignments are expected on-time, and grades on late assignments will be lowered. Quizzes and tests are not accepted late.

*Method of Submission:* Unless stated otherwise, assignments should be uploaded to blackboard. If blackboard is down, students should email the assignment to the instructor.

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## **Additional Student Information**

### **Disabilities**

If you are a student with a documented disability who requires accommodations or if you think you may have a disability and want to inquire about accommodations, please contact the Academic Resource Center at 202-687-8354 or [arc@georgetown.edu](mailto:arc@georgetown.edu).

### **Turnitin.com**

Students acknowledge that by taking this course all required papers can be submitted for a Textual Similarity Review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the terms of use agreement posted on the Turnitin.com site.

### **Extreme Weather, Emergencies, and Instructional Continuity**

During inclement weather or other emergencies on a day when we are scheduled to meet face-to-face, check the university's Web site or call (202) 687-7669 for information on whether the university is open. If the university is open, this class will meet. If the university is closed, this class will meet through distance means such as online videoconferencing; check your e-mail for a message from me on how we will proceed in that situation. Due dates for written assignments submitted through Blackboard will not be changed due to campus closings.

The university recently has acquired the capability to send text messages and recorded messages about emergencies to cell phones and other mobile devices. Sign up on MyAccess.

### **Georgetown Honor System**

All students are expected to follow Georgetown's honor code unconditionally. We assume you have read the honor code material located at <http://scs.georgetown.edu/academic-affairs/honor-code>, and in particular have read the following documents: Honor Council Pamphlet, What is Plagiarism, Sanctioning Guidelines, and Expedited Sanctioning Process. Papers in this course will all be submitted to turnitin.com for checking.

Submitting material in fulfillment of the requirements of this course means that you have abided by the Georgetown honor pledge:

*In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor, and to conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.*

### **Plagiarism**

In accord with university policy, all incidents of suspected plagiarism or other Honor Code violations will be reported to the Honor Council without fail.

If the Honor Council finds that a student has plagiarized or has violated the Honor Code in any other way, the student will receive a grade of F for the course.

## **Policy Accommodating Students' Religious Observances**

The following is university policy:

Georgetown University promotes respect for all religions. Any student who is unable to attend classes or to participate in any examination, presentation, or assignment on a given day because of the observance of a major religious holiday or related travel shall be excused and provided with the opportunity to make up, without unreasonable burden, any work that has been missed for this reason and shall not in any other way be penalized for the absence or rescheduled work. Students will remain responsible for all assigned work. Students should notify professors in writing at the beginning of the semester of religious observances that conflict with their classes.

### **Grading Scale**

93 – 100	A	80 – 82	B-	67- 69	D+
90 – 92	A-	77 – 79	C+	62- 66	D
87 – 89	B+	73 – 76	C	Below 62	F
83 – 86	B	70 – 72	C-		

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## Important Dates

- **June 13:** Book Review Due: Jennie Ebeling, *Women's Lives in Biblical Times*
- **June 27:** Creative Project Due
- **July 7:** Tentative date for additional class meeting
- **July 7:** Research Paper Due
- **August 1:** Book Review Due: Carolyn Osiek and Margaret Y. MacDonald, *A Woman's Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity*
- **August 8:** Final Reflection Paper Due
- **August 15:** Final Exam

## Course Schedule

- Please read the text(s) before each class session.
- Assignment due dates are in bold.
- These readings are subject to change. Texts that are not from the Bible or other required texts are available through blackboard or course reserve and may require internet access to read.

### **Tuesday, May 23                  Feminist Biblical Criticism**

#### **Student Preparation:**

- Exum, "Feminist Criticism: Whose Interests Are Being Served?"
- Bellis, *Helpmate, Harlots, and Heroes*, 4-10; 16-20
- Judges 1

#### **In Class:**

- What do we already know about women in the Bible?
- Syllabus overview
- Introduction to feminist biblical criticism
- Introduction to the Book of Judges
- Apply feminist biblical criticism to Achsah in Judges 1

### **Tuesday, May 30                  The Book of Judges**

#### **Student Preparation:**

- Judges 2-12
- Niditch, "Eroticism and Death in the Tale of Jael," 302-313
- Bellis, *Helpmate, Harlots, and Heroes*, 115-123
- Stewart, "Deborah, Jael, and Their Interpreters," 128-133.
- Yee, "By the Hand of a Woman," 109-126.
- Kramer, "Jephthah's Daughter: A Thematic Approach to the Narrative as Seen in Selected Rabbinic Exegesis and in Artwork," 67-90.
- Stewart, "Jephthah's Daughter and Her Interpreters," 133-37.

#### **In Class:**

- Reading Quiz

- Deborah and Jael
- Woman Warriors
- Jephthah's Daughter

## Tuesday, June 6            The Book of Judges; Rape in the Bible

### Student Preparation:

- Judges 13-21
- Snyder, "Delilah and Her Interpreters," 138-41
- Smith, "Delilah: A Suitable Case for (Feminist) Treatment?," 93-116.
- Tribble, "An Unnamed Woman," 65-92
- "Names and Naming in the Biblical World" in *Women in Scripture*;
- Schulz, *Sacred Witness*, 1-9
- Schneider, "Achsah, the Raped Piliges, and the Book of Judges," 43-58.

### In Class:

- Reading Quiz
- Delilah
- The Book of Judges as a whole
- The raped concubine
- Rape in the Bible and other media

## Tuesday, June 13            Judith and Miriam

### Student Preparation:

- Judith 1-16; Exodus 1-2, 14-15; Numbers 12, 20
- White, "In the Steps of Deborah and Jael: Judith as Heroine," 5-16
- Telford, "Judith and Her Interpreters," 391-395
- James, "Miriam and Her Interpreters," 67-69
- Frymer-Kensky, "Saviors of the Exodus," 24-33.
- Bach, "With a Song in Her Heart," 424-426.
- **Book Review Due:** Jennie Ebeling, *Women's Lives in Biblical Times*

### In Class:

- Reading Quiz
- Judith
- Miriam
- Responses to *Women's Lives in Biblical Times*

**Tuesday, June 20                  Eve: Mother of All Living**

**Student Preparation:**

- Genesis 1-3
- Stewart, “Eve and Her Interpreters,” 46-50
- Tribble, “Eve and Adam: Genesis 2-3 Reread.”
- Gellman, “Gender and Sexuality in the Garden of Eden,” 319-335
- Harrison, “Eve, the Mother of God, and Other Women”

**In Class:**

- Reading Quiz
- Feminist criticism and Eve
- Reception history of Eve

**Tuesday, June 27                  Women in Law and Metaphor                  \*\* Date subject to change \*\***

**Student Preparation:**

- Deuteronomy 21-25; Proverbs 7-9; Lamentations 1-5; Ezekiel 16
- Bird, “Images of Women in the Old Testament,” 20-45;
- Frymer-Kensky, “Women of Metaphor, Metaphors of Women” 333-338.
- **Creative Project Due**

**In Class:**

- Reading Quiz
- Women in Israelite law
- Women in metaphors and Israel as a woman
- Females as characters vs abstract
- Student presentations of creative projects

**Friday, July 7                  Women in the Genealogy of Jesus: Tamar and Rahab**

**\*\* Date subject to change \*\***

**Student Preparation:**

- Matthew 1; Genesis 38; Joshua 1-6
- Bird, “The Harlot as Heroine,” 197-218
- Schneider, “Rahab in Rehab: Christian Interpretation of the Madame of Jericho,” 31-42
- **Research Paper Due**

**In Class:**

- Reading Quiz
- Tamar
- Rahab
- Prostitution in Ancient Israel
- Perceptions of Prostitutes

**Tuesday, July 11                      Women in the Genealogy of Jesus: Ruth and Bathsheba**

**Student Preparation:**

- Ruth 1-4; 2 Samuel 11-12
- Tribble, “A Human Comedy,” 166-196
- Fewell and Gunn, “A Son Is Born to Naomi!,” 233-239
- Davidson, “Did King David Rape Bathsheba?,” 81-95

**In Class:**

- Reading Quiz
- Ruth the Moabite
- Bathsheba
- Bathing in Ancient Israel
- Why these women in the genealogy of Jesus?

**Tuesday, July 18                      Mary, Mother of Jesus**

**Student Preparation:**

- Luke 1-2; John 2; handout
- “Mary and Her Interpreters,” 512-516
- Johnson, *Truly Our Sister*, selections
- [“Mary Breastfeeding Jesus, Christmas’ Missing Icon”](#)
- Rubin, “Mary’s Breasts and Family Nurture,” 211-16

**In Class:**

- Reading Quiz
- Mary in the Gospels
- Mary’s reception history
- Feminist criticism and Mary
- Mary and breastfeeding

**Tuesday, July 25                      Mary Magdalene and Named Women in the Pauline Epistles**

**Student Preparation:**



- John 19-20 and handout
- Brown, “Women in the Fourth Gospel”
- Wilson, “Mary Magdalene and Her Interpreters,” 531-534
- O’Collins and Kendall, “Mary Magdalene as Major Witness to Jesus’ Resurrection”

**In Class:**

- Reading Quiz
- Mary Magdalene: a close reading of the biblical texts
- Mary Magdalene’s reception history

**Tuesday, August 1      Named Women in the Pauline Epistles**

**Student Preparation:**

- Romans 16 and handout
- MacDonald, “The Religious Lives of Women in Early Christianity,” 640-647;
- “The Women in Paul’s Life,” *Christianity Today*.
- Stephenson, “Junia, Woman and Apostle,” 117-134.
- **Book Review Due:** Carolyn Osiek and Margaret Y. MacDonald, *A Woman’s Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity*

**In Class:**

- Reading Quiz
- Overview of textual criticism
- Junia vs Junias
- Compare footnotes on named women in Bible versions
- Discussion of *A Woman’s Place*

**Tuesday, August 8      Pauline Epistles: Commands and Prohibitions about Women**

**Student Preparation:**

- 1 Corinthians 14; 1 Timothy 2; Proverbs 31; Ephesians 5; handout
- Estep, “Women in Greco-Roman Education and Its Implications for 1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Timothy 2”
- Hays, “Paul on the Relation between Men and Women”
- Campbell-Reed, “Should Wives Submit Graciously?,” 264-274
- Rachel Held Evans, *A Year of Biblical Womanhood* (intro and pages 291-296)
- **Final Reflection Paper Due**

**In Class:**

- Reading Quiz

- Interpretations of command to be silent
- Education of women in the ancient world
- Deaconesses or deacons' wives?
- Review session for final exam
- Cumulative class discussion

**Tuesday, August 15: FINAL EXAM**