

Religion and Feminist/Gender Studies
Religion/Women's Studies 240; U2; Hall of Science 200
Denton-Borhaug; Office: Comenius 109
610 625-8104; denton-borhaugk@moravian.edu
M/W 1:10 pm; Office Hours M/W 2:30 -- 3:30

(Students are encouraged also to drop by my office and see if I'm free, and/or make an appt. with me via email -- please do come to see me a number of times in my office this semester!)

Course Description:

Students study methods from feminist and gender studies to explore the intersection of women's lives and experience, and traditions of Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism. We investigate the personal and political through case studies that address issues such as leadership/ritual roles in diverse institutions; religious text/law; image(s) of the divine; gender, violence and "religious extremism"; religion and the body; and feminist theological exposition. (U2)

Learning Goals

- 1) Students will develop an introductory understanding of feminist and gender studies, and skills to use these theoretical tools to help them analyze diverse aspects of religious institutions, doctrine, leadership roles, ritual, and the interplay of women's religious commitments, questions, conflicts and experience in diverse social and religious contexts.
- 2) Our study will result in an increase of global perspective, and appreciation and understanding of the complexity of religious identity. Students will better understand why the study of religion "matters" in today's world. Students will leave the course with deeper understanding of the dynamics of gender discrimination.
- 3) Students will enhance their reading, viewing, communication, critical thinking, and writing skills. They will also develop increased skill in the use of digital technology.
- 4) Students will grow in skills of collaborative work, listening to others, and claiming their own voices.
- 5) Our study will provide opportunities for students to better understand themselves, their own social location, and multilayered identities with respect to feminism and religions.

Course Materials

Assorted chapters, articles, films, etc. that will be posted in Blackboard and/or available through ebooks. Further instructions regarding any digital tools that will be needed. **Books required for the course include the following:**

Rebecca Sollnit, *Men Explain Things to Me*. Haymarket Books, 2014.

Leona M. Anderson and Pamela Dickey Young, eds. *Women & Religious Traditions*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. Second Edition.

Irshad Manji, *Allah, Liberty and Love: The Courage to Reconcile Faith and Freedom*. New York: Free Press, 2011.

Course Grade

10% Engaged, motivated and intelligent participation in class that shows students' dedication to out of class study.

Students who wish to receive an A for participation will:

- Demonstrate leadership and engagement, especially through their consistent participation in class discussions, excellent note-taking in class, leadership and collaboration with others, and more. All students are required to spend a minimum of 2.5 hours rigorous study outside of class for every hour in class, to read all material and come to class with detailed annotations, written questions, and otherwise excellent preparation for our seminar.
- Exhibit professional behavior with respect to consistent class attendance, and prompt communication with the professor regarding any necessary absences, and by coming to class with all the day's materials enthused and prepared to engage (*note: the only excusable absences are for serious illness, religious observance or family emergency; any absence from class should be communicated to the prof with as much advance notice as possible*).

56% Each Blog entry (14% for each of 4 blogs-- see #s listed below in syllabus)

14% Midterm Exam

20% Final Interview Project

Policy on Academic Honesty

Moravian College expects its students to perform their academic work honestly and fairly. A Moravian student, moreover, should neither hinder nor unfairly assist the efforts of other students to complete their work successfully. This policy of academic integrity is the foundation on which learning at Moravian is built. The College's expectations and the consequences of failure to meet these expectations are outlined below. If at any point in your academic work at Moravian you are uncertain about your responsibility as a scholar or about the propriety of a particular action, consult your instructor. See Student Handbook pp. 32 – 38.

Plagiarism

A major form of academic dishonesty is plagiarism, which we define as the use, whether deliberate or not, of any outside source without proper acknowledgment; an "outside source" is defined as any work (published or unpublished), composed, written, or created by any person other than the student who submitted the work (adapted from Napolitano vs. Princeton). Instructors often encourage—and in the case of research essays, require—students to include the ideas of others in their writing. In such cases, students must take care to cite the sources of these ideas correctly (in other words, to give credit where credit is due).

Students Disability Policy

Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Ms. Elaine Mara, Assistant Director of Academic & Disability Support, located on the first floor of Monocacy Hall (extension 1401). Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the Academic & Disability Support office.

Course Schedule

Unit One: The What and Why of Feminist and Gender Studies, and Religion

Week One and Two:

Aug. 31 Course Introduction

- A Brief History of Feminism; Defining “feminist studies” and “gender studies”
- *Men Explain Things to Me* Storify
- Voicethread, Digital Storytelling, and our final course project
- Sept. 18, 24 and Oct. 27
- Use of Discussion Board and Blog

Voicethread self-intro link to be posted onto our course blog by Sept. 11!

Sept. 2 Read Sollnit

Sept. 7 Finish reading Sollnit;

Also read: Serene Jones, “Oppression,” *Feminist Theory and Christian Theology: Cartographies of Grace*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000. (In Blackboard Course Documents)
... begin Storify Project in class
Popular Response/Discourse regarding Sollnit; Can you connect Sollnit to religion?

Sept. 9 We will divide up the “case studies” in *Women & Religious Traditions*. Each small group dedicated to each case study will:

- “read up” on the religious tradition represented (whichever chapter from **Women & Religious Traditions** pertains to the case study)

ALSO: EVERYONE please read the short intro: this gives important information that will help us in our efforts to define feminism, gender studies, and religion. Please see the group assignment in BB announcements.

- discuss in class with your small group the meaning of the case study, its relevance to Sollnit and Serene Jones, and your own questions and responses;
- have about 7 minutes or so at the end of class to present your findings to the class as a whole.

Sept. 11 midnight: 300-400 word blogs due, as part of your Student Manifesto/Storify Response.

See Denton-Borhaug's Storify (link can be found in our course blog) for instructions as to how you are to go about your blog entry for this first unit of our time together! This is "Blog 1"

Unit Two: Flashpoints

Flashpoint #1: Women's Ordination in Christianity/Roman Catholic Tradition

Sept. 14 Read: *Women & Religious Traditions*, "Women in Christianity," 163 -- 192
Discussion Board Responses due by 11 pm, Sept. 13

Sept. 16 Read: Laurel Zwissler, "Feminism and Religion: Intersections between Western Activism, Theology and Theory." *Religion Compass* 6/7 (2012): 354–368.
Discussion Board Responses due by 11 pm, Sept. 15

Sept. 18, Friday: "Women's Ordination Conference"

"You are also invited to attend our academic seminar free of charge! This will be a once-in-a-lifetime theologically-driven experience with Mary Hunt, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, and Shannen Dee Williams during the day on Friday, September 18th, 9am to 12 noon"

Location: Downtown Philadelphia Marriott
1201 Market Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

website: <https://womensordinationworldwide.squarespace.com/conference-details/>

Sept. 21 Professor Away; We will postpone our viewing of *Radical Grace* until such time as it is available for streaming (more details to come!). For now, you are excused from class this day. Use time to go onto the web and learn everything you can about the "Women's Ordination Conference." The website above is a great place to start. Also see the website for the film, *Radical Grace* -- you will find a lot of information about this group/movement by exploring this as well.

Sept. 23 Professor Away; student-led discussion; pick up on where we left off on Sept. 16 with the great questions raised by class members, and take this further with respect to talking about the Women's Ordination Conference. last 45 minutes recorded and sent to prof (students divided into two "teams"; each team to develop 2 leading questions for this discussion related to this flashpoint -- thank you Samantha for recording this!)

Due to Prof: Email to prof: One paragraph about who you (and your class partner) will interview and why: Due by Sept. 25, Friday

Thursday, Sept. 24, 10 am in Johnston Hall: Convocation featuring Karen Armstrong, author of *Fields of Blood: Religion and the History of Violence*
All Students will attend this event of the college!

Note: We will post "blog 2" about this First "flashpoint" after we have had the chance to see the film and discuss it (instructions will be provided through prof's entry in blog)

Flashpoint #2: Otherness, Religion and Economy: Is systematized debt a form of violence?

Sept. 28

Read: Lisa Isherwood and David Harris, "Consuming Others," *Radical Otherness: Sociological and Theological Approaches*. Durham: Acumen, 2013. 101-122. (See BB docs)

Sept. 30

Read: Marcella Maria Althaus-Reid, "Queering the Cross: The Politics of Redemption and the External Debt," *FEMINIST THEOLOGY* Vol. 15 (3) 2007. 289-301. (available in Reeve's through ATLA)

Oct. 5 IRB Process: Introduction to Final Interview project/ goals/ deadlines

Oct. 7 "Blog 3" -- Relationship of flashpoint #2 to this year's *InFocus*. *More to come!*

"Women, Christianity, Poverty and Inequality"

Lisa Isherwood and Marcella Maria Althaus-Reid explore the logic and symbolism of "Christian redemption" and declare that "The Church today may not be able to imagine an economy based in the gift and love framework, owing to its emphasis on the redemptive death of Jesus. . . ." As Isherwood claims, "Christian doctrine has made us vulnerable to markets through a damaging of desire and a disembodied theology. . . at the very heart of its theology lies a debt economy that is intimately linked with desire." In your 1000 word blog, explore their argument, and link their concerns to this year's InFocus: Poverty and Inequality. Make sure that you identify the important contours of their argument before responding with your own evaluation and response.

Flashpoint #3 Islam and Feminist/Gender Studies: Muslim Feminist/Activist Irshad Manji

Oct. 12 (Fall Recess/ No class)

Read: *Women and Religious Traditions*: "Women in Islam" pp 194 - 224.

Oct. 14

Read: *Allah, Liberty and Love* (**Read the introduction through p 35**)

Oct. 15: IRB forms signed by interviewees

Oct. 19

View in class: Film about Manji

Oct. 21

Read: *Allah, Liberty and Love* (**Read pp 35 -- 103**)

Oct. 26

Read: *Allah, Liberty and Love* (**Read pp 103 -- 134; 205 -- 238**)

October 27th at 7 pm in Prosser Auditorium/ Lecture by Irshad Manji
All Students will attend -- please speak now with your profs/employers

about having this evening free from other classes/work

Oct. 28 In Class: View “Radical Grace” Takehome midterm made available this day. Our midterm will cover everything in class that we have studied up to this point. It will be open book and note, and will be comprised of essays that you write in response to specific questions.

Flashpoint #4 Hearing Women’s Voices and Experiences in Religious Traditions

The goal of this flashpoint is for us to think deeply about attending to women’s voices in feminist/gender studies scholarship. To that end I have selected readings that place a heavy weight on interviews. This will help us to prepare for our own interviews, and digital storytelling about the religious/spiritual lives of the women who we are privileged to hear from our own community.

Nov. 2

Read: <http://www.glamour.com/inspired/blogs/the-conversation/2015/08/miscarriage-mizuko-kuyo>

Also read selected chapters from Bardwell L. Smith, *Narratives of Sorrow and Dignity: Japanese Women, Pregnancy Loss, and Modern Rituals of Grieving*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Nov. 4 Continue with focus on *Mizuko Kuyo*. Reread Chapter on Buddhism in *Women & Religious Traditions*

Nov. 9 In class: Come prepared to discuss chapters 4 (“*The Phenomena of Mizuko Kuyo*”) and 8 (“*The Revival of Death, the Rebirth of Grieving, and Ways of Mourning*”) from *Narratives of Sorrow and Dignity; Japanese Women, Pregnancy Loss, and Modern Rituals of Grieving* (In BB course documents)

Nov. 11 Come prepared to discuss “Strategies of Survival: Women, Abortion, and Popular Religion in Contemporary Japan” (in BB Course Documents) and also be prepared to discuss Chapter 3, “Women in Buddhist Traditions,” *Women and Religious Traditions*.

Nov. 16 catching up: Project/ “blog 4” on Flashpoint #4

Your blog is due on Tuesday, Nov. 17, midnight -- blog guidelines will be posted by the prof *in the blog itself*

Unit Three: The In depth Interview Weeks 12 -- 15

Nov. 18 VoiceThread Workshop I: Finishing Interviews/Beginning Development of Storyboards

Nov. 23 Prof Away at Conference/ Students working on their own on Storyboard Development this week

Nov. 25 (Thanksgiving Recess)

Nov. 30 VoiceThread Workshop II: Digital Storytelling and Women’s Voices with respect to the Religious/Spiritual/Secular

Dec. 2 VoiceThread Workshop III: Digital Storytelling workshop

“Storyboard Due in class this day” -- be prepared to present your storyboard to the class! See instructions below

Dec. 7 VoiceThread Workshop IV: Digital Storytelling workshop

Dec. 9 Begin Digital Storytelling/ Interview Roundtable

VoiceThread 1: Samantha Stoler

VoiceThread 2: Emily Smith

Monday, Dec. 14: 1:30 pm: Final class: Conclusion of Roundtable

VoiceThread 3:

VoiceThread 4: Kathryn Kormash, Susan Tufan

VoiceThread 5:

VoiceThread 6:

VoiceThread Digital Storytelling Project Timeline/Guidelines:

1. **Interview Questions:** Students develop interview questions that are pertinent to what they know about their human subject, with the goal of deep, attentive and rich listening to the telling/exploring of an adult woman's life story with respect to the intersection of religion/spirituality and gender/feminism in her lifestory. **By Nov. 4, submit your list of questions to Dr. Denton-Borhaug**
2. **Conducting Interviews:** **Students conduct their interviews by Thanksgiving.** Students should be prepared both to take notes and to audio-record their interviews. ***This especially will be important for the narrative and "voice thread" element of your presentation. Before Thanksgiving please also review the "tutorial" on VoiceThread Digital Storytelling that is in the BB Announcement Link about this project. Also review the "Digital Storytelling" Tutorial in the same announcement.***
3. **Developing your Storyboard:** Students begin to work on developing their "storyboard" of their presentation. You will:
 - a) listen again to the interview, and make decisions about specific moments that you want to transcribe and then orally include in your VoiceThread. Your VoiceThread should a) provide a very brief overview of this woman's background, b) delve more deeply into specific moments/events in her life representing the intersection of religion/spirituality with gender/feminism; c) include your strong analysis from the perspective of your study this semester, drawing on no fewer than three theoretical resources from our study.
 - b) Choose 3 theoretical sources/analytical tools from our study this semester to help you think through what you have heard, especially related to "c" above. Your voicethread will be a combination of this story about a woman's religious/spiritual life as it intersects with issues of gender and feminism; and ***equally important, will include your analysis of what you have heard. This is where your role will expand from being a "listener" to a story, to a thinker who is also analyzing what she has heard.***
 - c) begin creating your "storyboard" for your VoiceThread. Your "storyboard" will include: a) the ppt slides you intend to include, with notes about titles and text; visuals-graphics/video; music and other sound effects; at least 3 specific theoretical materials from our course

material that you will use to help you analyze your interviews (please use short quotes from resources to ground your selection of analytical tools, as well as quotes that help you to more deeply understand and interpret what you have heard); b) a “script” with the “storytelling and analysis” audio that you plan to import. Your audio will include storytelling, dramatic and significant quotes that you share from the transcript of the interview, and your own analytical response. c) Your storyboard should include enough squares/slides to flesh out the story you intend to tell. Think about what kinds of visuals can enhance this story; what sounds will help us to enter more deeply into what you have heard? d) inform us about your “imagined audience” for this story, and remember that your choice of audience impacts many choices you will make about how to tell this story. **Completed Storyboards are due on Dec. 2; we will use class time to briefly present our plans and get feedback and response from one another.**

4. After Thanksgiving our classes will be dedicated to workshops for students to develop the various elements they need for their VoiceThread. Our class presentations begin on Dec. 9, and conclude during our Course Final Slot on Dec. 14. Each VoiceThread Story will be given one half hour for both presentation and class discussion. Aim at about 12 -- 15 minutes for your VoiceThread Story.