

## Women in the Biblical Tradition REL 308J 2006

### Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. Jane Webster

Class hours: 9:00-12:30 Monday to Friday in H207

Office hours: Hines 206A, after class each day and by appointment

phone: 399-6440 (o) 234-1844 (h)

email: jwebster@barton.edu

### Description and Goals

When we know something about the major biblical narratives and themes, we can better understand how it has shaped our tradition, politics, and culture. We can also begin to appreciate the role of the bible in the construction of social values, mores, and ethical codes.

In this course, we will examine how the bible shapes our understanding of “the religious female.” We will do this in three main steps. First, we will analyze selected stories that feature women by identifying narrative features that construct bias, and then we will retell the story, reversing the bias. Second, we will analyze art that features these same women and imagine new art that tells “the story” differently. Third, we will reflect on the way that the Bible shapes our understanding of the role of women in society today.

This course will be taught using problem-based learning. Problem-based learning helps people to think critically, to solve problems, and to make informed decisions. You will be presented with a realistic problem that captivates biblical scholars; you will then use the perspectives, the knowledge, and the skills that professionals use in attempting to solve it. You will develop skills useful in other disciplines, and be challenged to go beyond disciplinary boundaries. You will set goals and make decisions independently. You will learn *how* to think, not just *what* to think about our culture. My role as the instructor is to provide resources that will help you to solve your problem. A team of experts will be joining us in the latter part of the course to evaluate your final projects.

My hope is that you will engage this intellectual adventure, and begin to appreciate how the Bible shapes our culture and values, and how we shape its interpretation.

### Learning Objectives: Content

At the end of this course, you will be able to ...

1. Identify significant women and their role in the biblical metanarrative;
2. Identify the range of religious roles ascribed to biblical women;
3. Identify the socio-historical and cultural factors that affect the presentation of women in the Bible, in Midrash (the practice of retelling biblical stories), and in Art;
4. Identify and apply techniques of creating bias in writing and art;
5. Become familiar with the language of feminist inquiry and concerns;
6. Find resources that will help you to extend your study of the Bible.

### Learning Objectives: Transferable Skills

In this course, you will have an opportunity to ...

1. Identify various stages in the process of problem solving, and to take initiative in problem-solving.
2. Develop strategies to improve effective collaborative learning.
3. Develop writing skills through peer review.
4. Engage in respectful discussion.

5. Develop oral presentation skills.
6. Research a topic of interest.
7. Reflect on your own development as a student.

**Assessment:**

You will be evaluated in two distinct ways. First, you will have a chance to test out what you are learning as you proceed through the course (formative evaluation). This may take the form of drafts, small quizzes, short reflection or essay papers, worksheets, discussion boards, and/or learning logs. You will write reflection papers at the end of the day, posing questions you still have and offering solutions. You will reflect on your own skill development. You will receive verbal or written feedback on these small assessments and they will go into your portfolios. Total for formative assessment: 50%.

In addition to the formative assessments, you will also submit four specific summative pieces: the proposal, the rewritten story, the teacher’s manual and study questions, and a description of cover art. These will be evaluated by the external experts. Total for summative assessment: 50%.

**Expectations:**

- You will complete all assignments before their respective class.
- You will learn collaboratively with other students in the class. This means that you will contribute to the learning of others at every opportunity, and that you will be willing to listen to the suggestions and information brought to the class by others. You will actively involve and encourage all members of your team and take your share of the responsibility.
- You will arrive on time and attend all classes. If you must be absent, you will take responsibility for all academic activities and deadlines. Absences are excused only for personal illness and family emergency.

**Grading Scale**

|           |          |          |          |                     |
|-----------|----------|----------|----------|---------------------|
| A+ 97-100 | B+ 87-89 | C+ 77-79 | D+ 67-69 | Less than 60 = fail |
| A 93-96   | B 83-86  | C 73-76  | D 63-66  |                     |
| A- 90-92  | B- 80-82 | C- 70-72 | D- 60-62 |                     |

**Policy on Academic Dishonesty**

“Academic dishonesty is defined as any act of cheating and plagiarism. Cheating is defined as giving or receiving aid, including attempting to give or receive aid, without the specific consent of the professor, on quizzes, exams, assignments, etc. Plagiarism is defined as presenting as one’s own the writing or work of others. Whenever phrasing is borrowed, even if only two or three words, the indebtedness should be recognized by the use of quotation marks and mention of the author’s name. The language of another is not made the author’s own by omission, rearrangement, or new combinations; such an act is plagiarism” (*Barton College General Catalog*).

**Required Texts:**

- Required: *Harper Collins Study Bible* New Revised Standard Version with Apocrypha.
- Required: a number of documents from Blackboard, including the Introduction and Structure of the Bible and the Biblical Metanarrative chart.

- Recommended: *Women's Bible Commentary Expanded Edition* by Carol Newsom and Sharon Ringe (Westminster John Knox, 1998).

### **Proposed Course Outline**

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|--------------|--|
| Mon Jan 2    | Introduction to the course and to the Biblical text.<br>Maneuvering through the Bible – worksheet                      |
| Tues Jan 3   | Test on maneuvering through the Bible.<br>Finding women's stories – worksheets<br>Women's stories presentations        |
| Wed Jan 4    | Test on women's stories<br>Identifying Bias – Trackstar worksheet<br>Bias in Women's stories – 3 worksheets            |
| Thurs Jan 5  | Worksheets (Trackstar + 3 women) due<br>Re-writing Bias<br>Proposal preparation – proposals due by 5:30 into turnitin. |
| Fri Jan 6    | How to re-tell the stories – samples<br>Re-writing stories   |
| Mon Jan 9    | Re-written story due<br>Adding Study questions   |
| Tues Jan 10  | Teacher's Manual and Study Guide due – revisions<br>Adding Cover art   |
| Wed Jan 11   | Cover art<br>Cover art due.  |
| Thurs Jan 12 | Presentations<br>Interpretation and Reflection   |
| Fri Jan 13   | Transfer of Skills seminar<br>Reflections and evaluations  |