



Hartford International
UNIVERSITY FOR RELIGION & PEACE

RS 650: GENDER IN RELIGION AND SOCIETY **Spring 2024**

Thursday 7:00 pm-8:50 pm

Instructor:

Lama Htoi San Lu (She/Her)

Lilly Teaching Fellow, Hartford International University for Religion and Peace

PhD Candidate in Theological Studies, Vanderbilt University

hsanlu@hartfordinternational.edu

Office hours: By appointment (in person or zoom)

Course Format

Hybrid Synchronous

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces the global feminist/LGBTQIA movement and explores developments, approaches, and topics of feminist theology in Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and non-monotheistic traditions. The course examines the intersections, confluences, and complexities of gender and sexual expression in diverse traditions, with a particular focus on women's and LGBTQIA's experiences. With an intention of creating a dialogical model, it aims to cultivate an understanding of religion and gender by exploring theological questions, themes, and methods. It also focuses on developing embodied, creative, and faithful storytelling to generate contextual, constructive interreligious thinking that can enrich students' understanding of women and sexual minorities' voices.

COURSE GOALS

- Identify different experiences of women and sexual minorities in each tradition in a way to unpack various assumptions of the notion of gender and religion.
- Describe the development, methods, and subjects of feminist theology in diverse religious traditions by engaging women and sexual minorities' theological writings and how they understand identity, experience, social and cultural construction, etc.
- Recognize and identify the reasons for prominent convergences and divergences of feminist theologies in diverse religious traditions.
- Develop and/or improve critical thinking and reading skills through individual and group discussions of course texts and lectures: cultivate your capacity to



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write thoughtful and constructively about
comparative and constructive feminist

theologies.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course meets HIU for Religion and Peace **MAIRS** learning outcomes: 1,2,3,4,6;
MAC learning outcome 1.

MAIRS

1. Articulate your own worldview or religious belief system while empathically and respectfully engaging people whose worldviews, religious practices, and religious beliefs differ from your own.
2. Demonstrate fluency in the foundational concepts, insights and methods of Interreligious Studies and the application of those methods within contemporary multifaith settings.
3. At the level needed to take part in substantive dialogue, demonstrate knowledge of the roles of the scriptures and sacred texts of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.
4. At the level needed to take part in substantive study, demonstrate knowledge of the theological and legal traditions within Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.
6. Express your ideas and perspectives clearly in oral and written communication.

MAC

1. As captured in the BCCI competencies, students will be able to use the intellectual, interpersonal, and professional skills needed to provide chaplaincy care in complex, pluralistic environments. These are described in the Sections I-IV of the Common Qualifications and Competencies for Professional Chaplains, set by the Board of Chaplaincy Certification Inc. These include:

Section I: Integration of Theory and Practice Competencies

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

1. Catherine Wessinger, *Theory of Women in Religions* (2020)
2. Rosemarie Tong & Tina Fernandes Botts, *Feminist Thought: A More Comprehensive Introduction*, Fifth Edition (2017) **DTL**



RECOMMENDED TEXTS

- *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theology*
- Carole R. McCann, eds., *Feminist Theory Reader (FTR): Local and Global Perspectives* (second edition) DTL

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. Attendance and Active participation (10 %)

Each week, students will meet for 60 minutes for group work "Outside the two-hour classroom." This weekly one-hour collaborative working session (or group study time) is a part of the course attendance and active participation requirements. Students will meet to brainstorm, develop, and prepare for their group project presentation. The group project assignment should be accomplished prior to mid-term. After the mid-term, students will meet to start planning for their final project.

Note: students will select the date and time for their co-working session and the instructor will create a zoom meeting and post it on canvas.

2. Weekly Posts a 3-2-1 Interactive Notes (30%)

Each student submits/posts interactive notes on the readings assigned twenty-four hours in advance of the meeting time on the course website. Interactive notes will be formatted accordingly:

- No more than one page single spaced
- State the major argument(s) or thesis/purpose of the readings.
- 3 Insights or new learnings
- 2 Questions: questions should be fully developed indicating how they have emerged from the text.
- 1 Application

3. Body Memoir (A Short Autobiography or memoir of your own body) (10%) Due by Feb 15

In this short essay (2-4 pages/500-1000 words in length), you will critically reflect on the way your body is shaped by race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, class, nationality, and religious belief and practices, and other aspects of identity.



4. Class Presentation and Presenter paper (10%)

- Student will prepare a fifteen-minute presentation on one of the assigned readings in which you present the material and lead the class in discussion. Your presentation paper should include both the author's argument and perspective and your critical reflection on the readings. The paper should be a double-spaced five-page paper (about 1500 words) in length, and you will post it on Canvas before the class.

5. Collaborative Group Project (10 %)

- 2 or 3 groups of students will explore diverse religious feminist/LGBTQIA movements from local and global contexts that highlight their subversive resistance against any kinds of status quotes, oppressive structures, and power and principality. For instance, US Women's National Soccer team fight for equal pay
- Weekly co-working session: Students will meet for 60 minutes "outside the classroom" to work on their group project such as brainstorming and planning for class presentation prior to mid-term.

6. Final Project (10 %) **due Last day of class**

- a Creative piece which can be correlated to your final paper; or it could be a spoken word, poem, song, short story, podcast, video presentation, a case study, a glossary (in your own words), timeline for global feminist/LGBTQIA movement.
- Collaborative working space: After the midterm, students will meet with their group for 60 minutes to start planning their own final project.

7. Final Paper: Comparative and Constructive Theological Insights (20%) **due May 1 @ 11:59 pm (EST)**

HIU GRADING SCALE:

A (95-100) Demonstrates excellent mastery of the subject matter, a superior ability to articulate this, and provides helpful connections to daily life or contemporary issues. Exceeds expectations of the course.

A- (90-94) Demonstrates mastery of the subject matter, ability to articulate this well, and makes connections to daily life or contemporary issues. Exceeds expectations of the course.



B+ (87-89) Demonstrates a very good understanding of the subject matter, able to articulate lessons learned in the assignment well. Meets course expectations.

B (83-86) Demonstrates an understanding of the subject matter and the ability to articulate lessons learned. Meets expectations of the course.

B- (80-82) Demonstrates an understanding of the material at hand, has some difficulty articulating this, and basic connection of the material to daily life or contemporary issues/life. Meets basic expectations for the course.

C+ (77-79) Demonstrates a basic comprehension of the subject matter, weak articulation and connections. Barely meets expectations for the course.

C (70-76) Demonstrates a minimal comprehension of the subject matter and has difficulty making connections—or is egregiously late in submitting homework. Barely expectations of the course.

F (below 70) Is unable to meet the basic requirements of the course.

COURSE POLICIES:

- Openness and Curiosity
- Deep Listening to the texts and to each and every one of us in class (anti-oppressive listening by Dr. Alisha Jones)
- Understanding before Criticism
- Both/And thinking rather than either/or
- Willingness to be challenged as well as affirmed.

COURSE SCHEDULE

(Jan 16-21): Prolegomena

- Introduction of the Course & each other



The Diversity in Feminist Thinking

WEEK 1 (Jan 22- 27): The Diversity in Feminist Thinking

Theme: **Liberal & Radical Feminism**

Primary Reading:

- Tong & Botts, “Introduction,” “Liberal Feminism,” & “Radical Feminism,” in *Feminist Thought* (2017)

Suggested Reading:

Anne M. Clifford, “Introduction & Ch. 1,” in *Feminist Theology: Introducing*

WEEK 2 (Jan 28-Feb 3): The Diversity in Feminist Thinking

Theme: **Marxist and Socialist Feminism (s) & Ecofeminism**

Reading:

- Tong & Botts, “Marxist and Socialist Feminism,” & “Ecofeminism,” in *Feminist Thought* (2017)

WEEK 3 (Feb 4- Feb 10): **The Diversity in Feminist Thinking**

Theme: **Women of Color Feminism (s) in the U.S. & on the World Stage**

Primary Reading:

- Tong & Botts, Ch. 4 “Women of Color Feminism(s) in the United States” & Women of Color Feminism (s) in the World Stage in *Feminist Thought* (2017)

Suggested readings:

- Audre Lorde, “The Master’s Tool Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House,” in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (2007)



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- Gloria Anzaldua, "The Homeland,"
"Movimientos de rebeldia y las culturas que
traicionan," in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* 25th Anniversary
Fourth Edition (2007)

Week 4 (Feb 11-Feb 17): The Diversity in Feminist Thinking

Theme: **Queer Theory**

Reading:

- Tong & Botts, Ch. 10 "Third-Wave and Queer Feminisms" in *Feminist Thought* (2017)
- Annamarie Jagose, "Introduction," "Theorizing Same-Sex Desire," "Queer," "Contestations of Queer," in *Queer Theory: An Introduction* (1996)

Suggested readings:

- Tong & Botts, "Existentialist, Poststructural, and Postmodern Feminisms," in *Feminist Thought* (2017)
- Audre Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power," in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (2007)

Week 5 (Feb 18-Feb 24): Women and Religion

Reading:

- Catherine Wessinger, "Introduction," "Ch. 1: Foundations, Methodology, and Key Terms," "Issues for Women in Religion," "Conclusion," in *Theory of Women in Religions* (2020)

Week 6 (Feb 25-March 2): Midterm Review



Gender in Diverse Religious Traditions

Week 7 (March 3-March 9): Gender in Judaism

Reading:

- Judith Plasko, “Introduction,” “Israel: Toward A New Concept of Community,” “Toward A New Theology of Sexuality,” in *Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism from a Feminist Perspective* (1990)
- Sarah Imhoff, “Introduction,” in *Masculinity and the Making of American Judaism* (2017)

Week 8 (March 10-16): Gender in Buddhism

Reading:

- Scott A. Mitchell, “Ch. 1: A Short Introduction to Buddhism,” & Ch. 10. “Buddhist Identities: Race, Gender, Sexuality,” in *Buddhism in America: Global Religion, Local Context* (Ch. 1 & 10) (2016)
- Sharon A. Suh, *Occupy This Body: A Buddhist Memoir* (2019)

Week 9 (March 17-23): Gender in Christianity

Theme: Women’s Experiences

Reading:

- Rosemary Radford Ruether, “Feminist Theology: Methodology, Sources, and Norms,” in *Sexism and God-Talk*
- Delores Williams, “Ch. 7: Womanist-Feminist Dialogue: Differences and Commonalities,” in *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk* (2013)

Week 10: March (25-29)

- **No Classes: Advising Week/Reading Day**



Week 11 (March 31-April 6) Gender in Christianity

Reading:

- Marcella Althaus-Reid, "Introduction," Ch. 3 "When God is a Rich White Woman Who Does not Walk: the Hermeneutical Circle of Mariology in Latin American," Ch. 5 "On Wearing Skirts without Underwear: Poor Women Contesting Christ," Ch. 12 "Scenes from Queer Cruci/Fictions: Matan a una Marica (They Killed a Faggot) in *From Feminist Theology to Indecent Theology* (2004)

Week 12 (April 7-13) Gender in Islam

Reading:

- Riffat Hassan, "Feminism in Islam," in *Feminism and the World Religions*, ed. Arvind Sharma and Katherine K. Young (Albany, NY: SUNY, 1999), 248-278.
- Asma Barlas, "The Qur'an, Sex/Gender, and Sexuality: Sameness, Difference, Equality," in *Believing Women in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), 129-166.
- Amina Wadud, "Qur'an, Gender and Interpretative Possibilities," in *Inside the Gender Jihad: Women's Reform in Islam* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2006), 187-216.
- Sa'diyya Shaikh, "Transforming Feminisms: Islam, Women, and Gender Justice," in *Progressive Muslims: On Justice, Gender, and Pluralism*, ed. Omid Safi (Oxford: Oneworld, 2003), 147-162.

Suggested Readings:

- Margot Badran, "Engaging Islamic Feminism," in *Islamic Feminism: Current Perspectives*, ed. Anitta Kynsilehto (Tampere, Finland: Tampere Peace Research Institute, 2008), 25-35.

Week 13 (April 14-20) Gender and Interreligious Engagement

Reading:

- Kwok Pui-Lan, *Globalization, Gender, and Peacebuilding: The Future of Interfaith Dialogue* (2012)



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Week 14 (April 21-27)- Summary Day Final Project due @ 5:00 pm

April 29: Last day of Class

April 30-May 1: Exam Days

Final Paper due by May 1, 2024 @ 11:59 pm (EST)