Women, Religion, and Human Rights

W3910y, Spring, 2000

Professor Joan Ferrante

Brief overview of the course:


2. Human Rights Documents, with particular attention to presence or absence of rights of women. Women and Human Rights: The Basic Documents (Center).

3-5. Judaic Tradition: selected readings from Old Testament and later sources, with attention to female sexuality, marriage, divorce, reproduction, public roles of women in society and in religion.

6-8. Christian Tradition: selected readings from New Testament and later sources, with attention to sexuality and virginity, divorce and reproductive rights (family planning and abortion), public religious roles (ordination).

9-11. Islamic Tradition: selected readings from the Qur'an and later sources, with attention to sexuality, marriage, adultery and divorce, participation in public life and education.

12-14. Religion and human rights. Discussion of women's rights in light of religious teachings with focus on possible solutions to current problems within those teachings. General discussion and student projects.

Requirements:

class presentations, paper, and final exam

Required texts:

Women and Human Rights: The Basic Documents (Center)
Holy Bible, New Revised Standard Version, with Apocrypha
Al Qur'an, a Contemporary Translation by Ahmed Ali
Women's Rights, Human Rights, ed. J. Peters and A. Wolper
Women, Religion and Sexuality, ed. J. Becher
Meyers, C., Discovering Eve, Ancient Israelite Women in Context
Plaskow, J., Standing Again at Sinai, Judaism from a Feminist Perspective
Fiorenza, E.S., In Memory of Her. A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins
Torjesen, K., When Women Were Priests
Afkhami, M., Faith and Freedom, Women's Human Rights in the Muslim World
Ahmed, Leila, Women and Gender in Islam

Abbreviations (on reserve):
R&S Religion and Sexism, Images of Woman in the Jewish and Christian Traditions, ed. R.R. Ruether (CC, BC)
WCh Women in the Church, ed. W.J. Sheils and D. Wood (CC, BC)

Outline

Week 2

Readings from Women and Human Rights: The Basic Documents (obtain at the Columbia Center for the Study of Human Rights, 1108 SIPA)

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, all
International Covenant, Civil and Political Rights, thru 28
International Covenant, Economic, Social, Cultural, thru 13

International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, Pt. I
Convention against Torture, Pt I, gist of Pt. II
Supplemental Convention on Abolition of Slavery, 1-4
Declaration on the Elimination of Intolerance Based on Religion, all
Declaration on the Right to Development, 5, 6, 8

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), all
Convention on the Political Rights of Women, 1-3

World Conference on Human Rights: Vienna Declaration, I, 1-23, 28-30; II, 22, 36-53
Programme of Action of the UN International Conference on Population and Development, all
Fourth World Conference on Women: Human Rights of Women, 210-29
Week 3-5 - Judaism

Topics for class discussion:

Week 1 - sexuality: pollution, gender, sexual difference, and value of woman woman as possession or person

Week 2 - family: marriage, reproduction, and divorce

Week 3 - public roles: rabbinate, teaching, worship, queens, judges, prophets goddesses and goddess worship

Readings:

Bible
Judges: 4; 5; 9.53-54; 11:1, 30-40; 13-16; 19.
Ruth
Esther
Proverbs: 1:8; 2:16-19; 4:5-8; 5; 7; 22:14; 31:3, 10-31. (Song of Songs)
Lamentations: 1:1, 8.
Ezekiel: 16; 23.
Daniel: 5:10-12.

Apocrypha
Tobit: 1:8; 2:11-14; 3:7-17; 7; 8:6.
Judith: 8 through end (16).
*Susanna
1 Esdras: 4:13-32.
2 Esdras: 1:30; 9:38-10:54.

*Greek texts

Greenberg, B., "Female Sexuality and Bodily Functions in the Jewish Tradition" (WRS)
"Feminism, Jewish Orthodox, and Human Rights," Religion and Human Rights, Competing Claims Hauptman, J., "Images of Women in the Talmud" (R&S)
Rereading the Rabbis, A Woman's Voice
Kraemer, R.S., Her Share of the Blessings, chs.8, 9 (res)
Levinson, PN, "Women and Sexuality: Traditions and Progress" (WRS)
Meyers, C., Discovering Eve (res)
Shalev, C., "Women in Israel," Peters and Wolper, ch.11
Umansky, E.M., "Women in Judaism: From the Reform Movement to Contemporary Jewish Religious Feminism" (WSp)
Judaism 33.1 (1984), 45-87, on ordination of women rabbis (res, under Gordis)

References:

Baker, A., The Jewish Woman in Contemporary Society, 1993
Bird, P., "Images of Women in the Old Testament," (R&S)
Feld, M., A Spiritual Life: A Jewish Feminist Journey, 1999
Greenberg, Blu, On Women and Judaism
Lassner, J, Demonizing the Queen of Sheba
Lerner, G., The Creation of Patriarchy, chs. 8, 9
Prusak, B.P., "Woman: Seductive Siren and Source of Sin?" (R&S)
Scarf, Mimi, Battered Jewish Wives, Case Studies in the Response to Rage
Wegner, JR, Chattel or Person? The Status of Women in the Mishnah

Week 6-8 - Christianity

Topics for class discussion:
sexuality: adultery, fornication, lust
virginity and chastity
Virgin Mary and church as bride of Christ

family: authority, domestic violence
marriage and divorce
reproduction, birth control, abortion

public roles: women disciples in NT
women in church, saints, abbesses, heretics
ordination of women

Readings:

New Testament

Paul to Colossians: 3.11-12, 18-19; 4.15.
Paul to Thessalonianas: 2.7; 5.3.
*Paul 1 to Timothy: 2.8-15; 3.2, 8-13; 5.1-16.
*Paul 2 to Timothy: 1.5; 3.5-6; 4.19-21.
*Paul to Titus: 2.1-10.
Paul to Philemon: v.2.
Letter to the Hebrews: 7.11-16; 11.31; 13.4.
1 Peter: 2.2; 3.1-7.
2 John.
Revelation: 2.19-23; 9.7-10; 12; 14.3-4; 17; 18.1-17; 19.7-8; 21.1-2, 9-10.

*not by Paul

Alsdurf, J and P, Battered into Submission: The Tragedy of Wife Abuse in the Christian Home (BC, SIPA)
Carter, N., Ruether, R., "Entering the Sanctuary: The Struggle for Priesthood ... Episcopalian and Roman Catholic" (WSp)
Crawford, J, "Attitudes to Female Sexuality in the Anglican Church in New Zealand" (WRS), Heyward response
Daly, M., The Church and the Second Sex (res)
Faludi, S., Backlash, The Undeclared War against American Women, 19-27, ch.14 (BC res)
Fiorenza, E.S., In Memory of Her, A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins, ch.5, 6, 8 (res)
Henning, C.M., "Canon Law and the Battle of the Sexes" (R&S)
John Paul II, On the Dignity and Vocation of Women (res)
Petchesky, R.P., Abortion and Woman's Choice, The State, Sexuality, and Reproductive Freedom, chs. 7, 9 (BC res)
Porcile-Santiso, MT, "Roman Catholic Teachings on Female Sexuality" (WRS), Ruether response
Stendahl, K, The Bible and the Role of Women, A Case Study in Hermeneutics (res)
Torjesen, K.J., When Women Were Priests
Wills, Gary, Structures of Deceit, Papal Sin, chs.5-8 (res)
References:

Byrne, L., Woman at the Altar
Carmody, D.L., The Double Cross, Ordination, Abortion, and Catholic Feminism
Gray, Eliz. D., In the Image of her?
Hopke, T., Women and the Priesthood
Jantzen, G.M., Power, Gender and Christian Mysticism
Johnson, P.D., Equal in Monastic Profession, Religious Women in Medieval France
Kraemer, R.S., M.R. D'Angelo, Women and Christian Origins, 1999
Lerner, G., The Creation of Feminist Consciousness, ch.7, "One Thousand Years of Feminist Bible Criticism"
Lorentzen, R., Women in the Sanctuary Movement
McNamara, J., Sisters in Arms, Catholic Nuns through Two Millenia
Nesbitt, P.D., Feminization of the Clergy in America, Occupational and Organizational Perspectives
Noble, D.F., A World Without Women, the Christian Clerical Culture of Western Science
Pagels, E., Adam, Eve, and the Serpent; The Gnostic Gospels
Prelinger, C.M., ed., Episcopal Women, Gender, Spirituality and Commitment in an American Mainline Denomination
Reiman, J., Abortion and the Ways We Value Life
Stanton, E.C., The Women's Bible
Wahl, JA, The Exclusion of Women from Holy Orders
Young, P.D., Feminist Theology/ Christian Theology
Women in the Church; Women of Spirit; Religion and Sexism
Criminal Injustice, Violence against Women in Brazil (res)
Feminist Theology from the Third World, a Reader, ed. Ursula King

Weeks 9-11 - Islam

Topics for discussion:

sexuality: male-female relations
adultery
female circumcision (FGM)
family: marriage
divorce and custody
inheritance

public roles: women in Islamic history
right to work, travel
veil

Qur’an

2:26-27, 30-36, 81-88, 111-14, 177-78, 185-87, 197, 221-23, 226-37, 240-41, 282
3:2-3, 6, 14, 33-63, 195
5:5-6, 12-19, 44-51, 73-75, 110-16
7:11-28, 80-84
9:26, 67-68, 71-72
11:69-81; 12:7-35, 50-54
13:8, 22-23; 15:25-44, 57-74
16:4, 54-59, 62, 71-72, 78, 92, 97, 126
23:1-16
24:1-14, 23-26, 30-33, 60-61
26:155-75; 27:15-44, 54-58
28:7-16, 22-28; 29:29-34
30:20-21; 31:14-15
32:7-11
33:4-7, 28-37, 49-55, 58-59, 73
36:55-56; 37:133-36, 149-59
38:49-59, 71-85; 39:6
40:8, 40, 67; 41:5
42:49-50; 43:15-25, 69-70
46:12, 15-18; 48:4-6, 25-26
49:10-11; 51:24-30, 47-49
53:19-32, 43-46; 55:55-56
56:58-61; 58:1-4
60; 61:6
64:14; 65
66; 70:11-15, 29-31
74:11-16; 75:36-40
80:33-36; 81:1-9
Afkhami, M., Faith and Freedom; and H. Vaziri, Claiming our Rights: A Manual for Women's Human Rights Education in Muslim Societies; and E. Friedl, Muslim Women and the Politics of Participation: Implementing the Beijing Platform, 1997
Ahmed, L., Women and Gender in Islam, ch 3, 4, 5 (93-99), 8, 10, 11 (res)
El Saadawi, Nawal, The Hidden Face of Eve, Women in the Arab World, chs. 1, 4-8, 19, 20; Memoirs from the Women's Prison
Haddad, Y.Y., and J.L. Espoito, eds., Islam, Gender, and Social Change
Haeri, Shahla, Law of Desire, Temporary Marriage in Shi'i Iran
Hassan, R., "An Islamic Perspective" (WRS)
Mayer, A.E., Islam and Human Rights, Tradition and Politics, chs. 4, 5, 6; "Islamic Law and Human Rights," RHR, Competing Claims
Mernissi, F., Beyond the Veil, Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society, vii-25 (res)
Stowasser, B.F., Women in the Qur'an, Traditions and Interpretation, ch. 10 (res)

Reference:

Abouzeid, L., Year of the Elephant, A Moroccan Woman's Journey toward Independence
Ahmad, A. Women and Social Justice, 1991
Arebi, Saddeka, Women and Words in Saudi Arabia, The Politics of Literary Discourse
L. Beck, N. Keddie, eds., Women in the Muslim World
Berkey, J., The Transmission of Knowledge, Medieval Cairo: A Social History of Islamic Education
Boughiba, A, Sexuality in Islam
Combs-Schilling, E., Sacred Performances, Islam, Sexuality, and Sacrifice (res)
Fernea, E.W., In Search of Islamic Feminism, 1998
Lassner, J., Demonizing the Queen of Sheba
Layish, A., Women and Islamic Law in a Non-Muslim State, A Study based on the Decisions of the Shari'a Courts in Israel
Malti-Douglas, F., Woman's Body, Woman's Word, Gender and Discourse in Arabo-Islamic Writing; Men, Women, and Gods, Nawal El Saadawi and Arab Feminist Poetics
Mernissi, F., The Veil and the Male Elite, A Feminist Interpretation of Women's Rights in Islam; Dreams of Trespass, Tales of a Harem Girlhood
Schimmel, A., My Soul Is a Woman, The Feminine in Islam
Wadud, A., Qur'an and Woman, Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective, 1999
M Yamani, ed, Feminism and Islam, Legal and Literary Perspectives
Double Jeopardy, Police Abuse of Women in Pakistan, Women's Rights Project, Asia Watch of HRW (res)
Crime or Custom? Violence Against Women in Pakistan, HRW, 1999

Week 12 - Religion and Rights

Bunch, C., "Women's Rights as Human Rights: Towards a Re-vision of Human Rights," HRQ (1990), 486-98 (res)
Connors, J., "UN Protections of Women's Human Rights"
Human Rights of Women, National and International Perspectives, ed. R.J. Cook, chs. 1, 3, 7, 9, 14 (BC res)
Religion and Human Rights, Project on Religion and Human Rights, 3, 5 (res)
Women's Rights, Human Rights, ed. Peters and Wolper, 8, 11, 13, 15, 16, 18, 19, 23-25, 32

Reference:

Token Gestures, Women's Human Rights and UN Reporting (International Human Rights Law Group)
The World's Women, 1970-90, Trends and Statistics (UN)

Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality,
Development and Peace, July, 1985 (UN)
Platform for Action and the Bei Jing Declaration, UN

Hargrave, M, "Women's rights: the road to the millenium," in Human Rights, ed. P. Davies
Jantzen, G., Becoming Divine: Towards a Feminist Philosophy of Religion, 1999
Tomasevski, K., Women and Human Rights

The Human Rights Reader, ed. W. Laqueur and Barry Rubin
An-Na'im A.A., Human Rights in Cross-Cultural Perspectives, A Quest for Consensus
Donnelly, J., Universal Human Rights in Theory and Practice
Henkin, L., The Age of Rights; The Rights of Man Today
Religious Diversity and Human Rights, ed. I. Bloom, P. Martin, W. Proudfoot
Human Rights Watch Women's Rights Project, individual reports

**Weeks 13-14**

Presentation of individual projects