

## **Women, Religion, and Human Rights**

W3910y, Spring, 2000

**Professor Joan Ferrante**

### **Brief overview of the course:**

1. Outline of course. Students' backgrounds and interests. Discussion of rights of man, relevance to women.
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)  
WSp Women of Spirit: Female Leadership in the Jewish and Christian Traditions, ed R.R. Ruether and E.C. McLaughlin (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

Education: Convention against Discrimination in Education, 1, 2, 5  
Fourth World Conference on Women: Education and Training, all

Health: CEDAW Committee, General Recommendation 14: Female Circumcision, all  
Programme of Action of UN International Conference on Population and Development: Reproductive Rights and Reproductive Health, 7.2, 3, 8, 10, 13, 14, 24, 28, 35, 41, 45  
Fourth World Conference on Women: Women and Health, 95, 96, 104

Marriage: Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age, thru 3  
CEDAW Committee, General Recommendation 21: Equality in Marriage and Family Relations, 3, 7-9, 13, 14, 17, 28, 34, 36, 39, 44-46

Traffic in Persons: Convention on the Suppression of Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of others, thru 6

Violence: Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, all  
CEDAW Committee, General Recommendation 12: Violence against Women, 9, 11, 14, 17, 23  
Fourth World Conference on Women: Violence and Women, 113, 116, 118, 120, 129

Peters-Wolper, Intro, chs. 1-3. Current problems.

### **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

Genesis: chapter 1-3; 12:10-20 (cf.20; 26:6-11); 16:2; 17:9-11; 19:1-11, 30-35; 21:8-12; 25:21-23, 27; 27-28:5; 30:14-17; 31:50; 34; 38:6-26; 39.

Exodus: 12:48; 13:12; 15:20-21; 19:5, 14-15; 20:10, 12, 17; 21:7, 28; 22:16-18, 22;

27:21-28.1; 35:22-29; 38.8. Leviticus: 4:3, 22-23, 27-28, 32; 5:1-6; 12:1-5; 15:19-24; 18:19; 20:18-21; 21:7, 9, 13-14.

Numbers: 1:2; 5:11-31; 11:11-14; 12; 20:1; 25:6-13; 27:1-11 (cf.36:2-8); 30; 31:14-18.

Deuteronomy: 4:16; 5:14, 16; 16:16, 21; 21:10-14; 22:5, 13-21; 23-39; 24.1-4; 25:11; 28:30; 29:10-11.

Joshua: 2; 6:22-25; 15:16-19 (repeated in Judges 1:12-15).

Judges: 4; 5; 9.53-54; 11:1, 30-40; 13-16; 19.

Ruth

1 Samuel: 2:1-10; 19:11-17; 25:14-42; 28:7-25.

2 Samuel: 6:16-23; 11:2-5, 14-17; 12:7-10, 14-17, 24; 13:1-19, 28, 38-39; 20:16-22; 21:10-14.

1 Kings: 1:11-14, 28-35; 2:13-24; 10:1-10; 11:1-5; 21:5-25 (cf.2Kings 9:30-37).

2 Kings: 11:1-16; 22:14-20; 23.6-7.

Esther

Psalms: 22:9-10.

Proverbs: 1:8; 2:16-19; 4:5-8; 5; 7; 22:14; 31:3, 10-31. (Song of Songs)

Isaiah: 3:12; 46:3-4; 49:15; 54:5; 66:13.

Jeremiah: 3:1; 4:4; 7:18; 13:25-27; 44:15-19.

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).

\*Wisdom of Solomon: 6:12-16; 8:2.

Ecclesiasticus (Sirach): 7:19, 24-26; 9:1-9; 14:20-15:6; 22:3; 25:16-26:18; 36:26, 29; 42:9-10, 14.

\*Susanna

1 Esdras: 4:13-32.

2 Esdras: 1:30; 9:38-10:54.

\*4 Maccabees: 14:11-16:1, 14; 18:6-9.

\*Greek texts

Greenberg, B., "Female Sexuality and Bodily Functions in the Jewish Tradition" (WRS)

"Feminism, Jewish Orthodoxy, 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)  
 Patai, R., *The Hebrew Goddess*: 13-18, 23-33, ch.1, 64-66, 78-79, ch.4, 94-96, 98, 103, 110-117, 135, 139, 154, 158-9 (res)  
 Plaskow, J., *Standing Again at Sinai, Judaism from a Feminist Perspective*: ix-xxi, 25-28, 53-66, 72-74, 87-89, 109-116, 123- 4 128, 136-13, ch.5 (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:**

Alexander, S., "Till Death do us Part? Agunot . . . Divorce Reform in Israel," *Mosaic* (1993), 29-46  
 Baker, A., *The Jewish Woman in Contemporary Society*, 1993  
 Bird, P., "Images of Women in the Old Testament," (R&S)  
 El-Or, T., "Visibility and Possibilities: Ultraorthodox Jewish Women...," *Women's Studies International Forum*, Sept.-Dec., 1997  
 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  
 Miller, J.D., "The History of Agunah in American...," *Women's Rights Law Reporter*, 19.1, Fall 1997.  
 Phillips, J.A., *Eve, The History of an Idea*  
 Prusak, B.P., "Woman: Seductive Siren and Source of Sin?" (R&S)  
 Scarf, Mimi, *Battered Jewish Wives, Case Studies in the Response to Rage*  
 Shamir, R, "Religion, Feminism, and Professionalism: The Case of Rabbinical Advocates," *The Jewish Journal of Sociology* 38.2 (1996), 73-88.  
 Tribble, P., *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (1978); *Texts of Terror, Literary Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives* (1984)  
 Wegner, JR, *Chattel or Person? The Status of Women in the Mishnah*  
 Weiner, K and A Moon, *Jewish Women Speak Out: Expanding the Boundaries of Psychology*, 1995.

### **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

Matthew: 1.16-25; 5.27-28, 31-32; 8.14-15; 10.35-39 (cf. Luke 14.26); 12.42; 13.54-57; 15.1-7; 19.19, 29; 20.20-21 (cf. Mark 10.35-40);

22.23-30 (Mark 12.18-25, Luke 20.27-35); 23.37; 24.40-41; 25.1-13; 26.69-75 (cf. Mark 14.66-72, Luke 22.55-62, John 18.16-27); 27.17-20, 55-61; 28.1-10.

Mark: 3.31-35 (cf. 6.3 and Matt.12.46-50); 5.22-43 (Matt.9.18-25); 6.17-29 (Matt.14.1-12); 7.25-30 (Matt.15.22-29); 10.2-12 (Matt.19.3-12, Luke 16.18); 12.42-44 (Luke 21.2-4); 14.3-9 (Matt.26.6-13); 15.40-41, 47, 16.1-20.

Luke: 1; 2; 7.37-50; 8.1-3; 10.38-42; 11.27-31; 13.10-17, 20-21; 14.26; 15.4-10; 23.27-29, 55-56; 24.1-43.

John: 2.1-5, 12; 4.7-42; 8.3-11; 11.1-6, 17-45; 12.1-8; 19.25-27; 20.1-3, 10-18, 24-25.

Acts: 1.13-14; 2.17; 4.32-5.11; 9.36-42; 10.28; 12.12-17; 13.50; 16.1, 3, 13-23, 40; 17.4, 34; 18.1-3, 18, 26; 19.24-28; 21.8-9; 22.1-4; 24.24-25.

Paul to Romans: 1.26-27; 2.1, 22, 25-29; 4.9-16 (cf. 15.8); 5.14-15, 18-19; 7.2-6; 8.22; 9.7-12; 13.8-10; 16.1-16.

Paul 1 to Corinthians: 5.1, 9-11; 6.9-10, 13-19; 7; 11.3-16; 14.26-40; 16.19.

Paul 2 to Corinthians: 6.18; 11.1-3.

Paul to Galatians: 1.9; 2.15; 3.17-29; 4.1-5, 19-31; 5.1-6, 19-21.

Paul to Ephesians: 5.21-6.6.

Paul to Philippians: 4.2-3.

Paul to Colossians: 3.11-12, 18-19; 4.15.  
Paul to Thessalonians: 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.  
James: 2.10-11, 22-26.  
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)  
Ehrman, B.D., The New Testament and other Early Christian Writings, A Reader; The New Testament, A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings  
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)  
Pagels, E., "What Became of God the Mother? Conflicting Images of God in Early Christianity," Signs 2 (1976) (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  
Field-Bibb, J., Women Towards Priesthood, Ministerial Politics and Feminist Praxis (Methodist, CofE, RC in England)  
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 Millennia  
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  
Vasoli, R.H., What God Has Joined Together, The Annulment Crisis in American Catholicism, 1998  
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  
4:1-43, 57, 117, 124-30, 154-62, 176  
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  
19:1-36; 20:25-41, 116-24  
21:89-92; 22:1-5  
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

92:1-4; 111

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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. Esposito, eds., *Islam, Gender, and Social Change*

Haeri, Shahla, *Law of Desire, Temporary Marriage in Shi'i Iran*

Hambly, G.R.G., ed., *Women in the Medieval Islamic World*, 1998

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*

Badran, M., "Feminisms and Islamisms," *Journal of Women's History*, 10.4, Winter, 1999; ed., w M Cooke, *Opening the Gates, A Century of Arab Feminist Writings*

L.Beck, N. Keddie, eds., *Women in the Muslim World*

Berkey, J., *The Transmission of Knowledge, Medieval Cairo: A Social History of Islamic Education*

Bouhdiba, A, *Sexuality in Islam*

Combs-Schilling, E., *Sacred Performances, Islam, Sexuality, and Sacrifice* (res)

Fernea, E.W., *In Search of Islamic Feminism*, 1998

Jawad, H., *The Rights of Women in Islam*, 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  
Human Rights Watch, World Report, 1999, Women's Rights, 427-45

### **Reference:**

Religion and Human Rights: Competing Claims? ed. C. Gustafson, P.H. Juviler, 1999  
The Human Rights Watch Global Report on Women's Human Rights (1995), HRW, WRP  
Women in the Front Line (Report of Amnesty International, 1991)  
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

Freedman, L., "The Challenge of Fundamentalism," *Reproductive Health Matters*, 8, November, 1996.

Galey, M.E., "International Enforcement of Women's Rights," HRQ 6 (1984)

Harding, J., "Should Women Think in Terms of Rights? Ethics (1984)

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