



REL 316 / WS 316: Women and the Bible

Wingate University
Spring 2018

Time: Tues./Thurs. 2-3:15pm
Room: Hayes 112
Office Hours: MWF 8-9am; 12-2pm
(T/Th hours available by appointment)

Instructor: Dr. Christy Cobb
Office: Burris 09
Phone: 704-233-8690
Email: C.Cobb@wingate.edu

Course Description:

From Eve to Mary Magdalene, women play essential roles in biblical texts. While many courses, books, and Bible studies focus primarily on men, this course will focus solely on women included in biblical and apocryphal texts as well as the way the Bible has been used to regulate women's roles in society, leadership, churches, and homes. Feminist and womanist biblical criticism will be used throughout this course, as will a focus on gender critical readings. Through critical reading and reflection on both primary texts and secondary texts, students will form their own views of the representations of female characters, named and unnamed, in the Bible. Additionally, students will ponder the ways that these texts still affect women today.

Required Textbooks:

- Bible, any version acceptable, preferred: *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha*, NRSV, 4th edition.
- *Women's Bible Commentary, Third Edition: Revised and Updated*. Newsom, Carol; Sharon Ringe and Jacqueline Lapsley, editors. Westminster John Knox Press, 2012.
- *Mary Magdalene Understood*. Schaberg, Jane and Melanie Johnson-Debaufre. Bloomsbury Academic, 2006.
- *A Year of Biblical Womanhood: How a Liberated Woman Found Herself Sitting on Her Roof, Covering Her Head, and Calling her Husband 'Master.'* Evans, Rachel Held. Thomas Nelson, 2012.

Grading / Course Assignments:

Attendance and Participation (20%): In order to succeed in this course, students must attend class and participate regularly. Participation includes reading the assigned material before class (quizzes may occasionally be given in order to assure students are reading). Students can miss one week of class (two days) without it negatively affecting their grade. Students who miss more than three

weeks (6 class sessions) will receive a 0 for the Attendance/Participation part of their grade. If there are extenuating circumstances that lead to a student missing more than six classes, this must be discussed with the professor as soon as possible. There is no need to bring notes from your doctor, etc. for absences unless requested by the professor.

Reading Quizzes (10%): Brief reading quizzes will be given at random times throughout the semester on the assigned reading material for the day. These may take the form of a short writing response in class, or a multiple choice quiz based on the material. The purpose is to ensure students are consistently reading throughout the semester.

Writing Assignments: Profiles of Biblical Women (30%): For this creative assignment, you will create an in-depth profile for a woman we have read about in class that week. You may choose the format and way that you present this material, but it should be clear that you have read the biblical text closely and critically, as well as the assigned secondary material about this woman. You should also include an image of the woman, if one can be found (from art, popular culture, etc.) Creativity is encouraged in this assignment! These will be due most weeks (but not every week); a total of 11 will be assigned but 10 will be graded (you may choose to either drop your lowest grade or skip one week). These should be turned in on the course Canvas site by Friday of that week. An example of a profile will be given during the first full week of class so that students can see what is expected of these assignments.

Final Project: Additional Profile of a Biblical (or non-biblical) Woman (10%): For your final assignment for this course, you will write a profile of one woman who we did NOT read or discuss in this class in depth. You may include women who we mentioned briefly or who were included in group work but were not the main focus of the class or discussion. In order to complete this, you should read the text associated with this woman as well as the information from the *Women's Bible Commentary* on her, and find at least one other article/source on this figure. The profiles should not overlap (every student should choose a different biblical woman) and will be due by the last week of class in order to be distributed to the rest of the class.

Wikipedia Project (20%): For this group project, we will tackle gender disparity on the Internet, primarily through Wikipedia. As has been well documented, female biblical scholars are not represented equally online, through Wikipedia and other sites; this is also true of female biblical characters. For this project, to be completed in class and outside of class, students will choose either a female biblical character or a female biblical scholar that is not found on Wikipedia and create a new page for this figure. In order for Wikipedia to accept the page and contents, multiple resources must be used to support the information, thus outside research will inevitably be a part of this project. At the end of the semester, students will turn in a portfolio containing screenshots of their work, documentation, and the link to the new page that they created. More specific information will be given in class. Students will be graded both individually for their portion of the work as well as a group. Groups will present their page to the class on **April 26th** during class.

Final Exam (10%): The final exam for this course will be primarily essay format and will cover the main figures and content of the course in a comprehensive and creative way. More detail will be given during the semester.

Grading Scale:

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

Statement of Academic Integrity:

Membership in the Wingate University is a privilege conferred by reason of demonstrated merit and sustained by a continuing commitment to high standards of performance and conduct. The University expects that all members of the community will voluntarily conduct themselves in a manner reflecting respect for all other members of the community. It is the responsibility of all Wingate University students to abide by the Honor Code. Failure to do so will result in consequences outlined in the Wingate University Student Handbook.

The Wingate University Honor Code states that:

- Wingate University students do not lie, cheat, steal, plagiarize, nor do they tolerate in their company the presence of one who does.
- Wingate university students conduct themselves at all times in a manner that is conducive to the maintenance of a strong, positive environment for study and learning.
- Wingate University students obey the rules and regulations of the University as outlined in the *Student Handbook*.

Disability Statement:

If you have a disability and require accommodations, you are encouraged to let the professor know at the beginning of the semester. In order to receive accommodations you must also register for disability support services by contacting Kristin Wharton at 704-233-8366 or through email at kwharton@wingate.edu. All communication will remain confidential.

Course Schedule:

Introductory Material / Definitions

Jan. 11: Introduction to the Course

- Definitions; Expectations

Jan. 16: Feminist Biblical Interpretation

- “When Women Interpret the Bible” in *Women’s Bible Commentary* (WBC), pg 1 -7.
- “Feminist Biblical Criticism” posted on Canvas

Jan. 18

- “Introduction” to *A Year of Biblical Womanhood* by Rachel Held Evans

Women of the Hebrew Bible

Eve

Jan. 23

- Genesis 1-3
- “Genesis” in WBC, pgs. 27-45.
- “Eve and Her Interpreters” in WBC, pgs. 46-50.

Jan. 25

- Tribble, “Eve and Adam: Genesis 2-3 Reread” (CANVAS)
- Gafney, “Genesis” from *Womanist Midrash*, pgs. 15-27. (CANVAS)
- BRING to class the image of Eve you found for your profile (printed, please)

Profile on Eve DUE on Friday

Women of Genesis

Jan. 30: Sarah and Hagar

- Genesis 12-20
- “Sarah, Hagar, and Their Interpreters” in WBC, pgs. 51-55.
- Gafney, “Sarah” and “Hagar” from *Womanist Midrash*, pgs. 30-45. (CANVAS)

Feb. 1: Rebekah, Rachel, Leah, and Dinah

- Genesis 24; 29-31; 34
- Gafney, “Rebekah” pgs. 45-52; “Rachel” and “Leah” pg. 54-67 (CANVAS)
- ((Evans, “October” and “November,” pgs 1-46))

Profile on a woman in Genesis DUE on Friday

Women of Judges

Feb. 6: Deborah and Jael

- The Book of Judges (as you read, note the number of women you encounter)
- “Judges” in WBC, pgs. 113-127.
- “Deborah, Jael, and their Interpreters” by Anne W Stewart in WBS, pgs 128-132.

Feb. 8: Jephthah’s Daughter, Delilah, and the Concubine of a Levite

- “Jephthah’s Daughter and Her Interpreters” by Anne W Stewart in WBS, pgs. 133-137.
- “Delilah and Her Interpreters” by Josey Bridges Snyder in WBS, pgs. 138-141.
- Tribble, Phyllis, *Texts of Terror*, “An Unnamed Woman: The Extravagance of Violence” (Canvas)
- Optional: “Concubine of a Levite” by Ken Stone from Jewish’s Women’s Archive Encyclopedia (CANVAS)

Profile on ONE woman in Judges DUE on Friday

Ruth, Naomi, and Esther

Feb. 13: Ruth and Naomi

- The book of Ruth
- “Ruth” in WBC, pgs. 142-149
- Tribble, Phyllis. *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*. “A Human Comedy” pg. 166-199.

Feb. 15: Esther

- The Book of Esther
- “Esther” in WBC, pgs. 201-207.
- ((Evans, “December” and “January,” pgs 47-98.))

Profile on Ruth, Naomi, or Esther DUE on Friday

Proverbs and Song of Songs

Feb. 20: Woman of Wisdom/Woman of Folly with Guest Lecturer, Dr. Paige Rawson

- Proverbs
- “Proverbs” in WBC, pgs. 232-243.
- “A Strong Woman” (Canvas)
- Rivera, Mayra, “God at the Crossroads: A Postcolonial Reading of Sophia” (Canvas)

Feb. 22: Song of Songs

- Song of Songs
- “Song of Songs” by J. Cheryl Exum in WBC, pgs. 247-254.
- “Gender and Class in Song of Songs” (CANVAS) AND “Sex in Song of Songs” (CANVAS)

****Profile on Proverbs woman or Song of Songs woman DUE on Friday****

Apocryphal Women: Judith and Susannah

Feb. 27: Judith

- The book of Judith
- “Introduction to the Apocrypha” by Eileen M. Schuller in WBC pgs. 365-366.
- “Judith” by Denise Dombkowski Hopkins in WBC, pgs 383-390.
- “Judith and Her Interpreters” by Nicole Tilford in WBC, pgs 391-395.

Mar. 1: Susannah

- The Greek Book of Daniel
- “The Greek Book of Daniel” by Nicole Tilford in WBC, pgs 426-431.
- “Susannah and Her Interpreters” by Nicole Tilford in WBC pgs. 432-433.
- Evans, “February” and “March,” pgs. 99-145.
- In class discussion of the first half of Evans’ *A Year of Biblical Womanhood*

****Profile on Judith or Susannah DUE on Friday****

****Spring Break****

Women in the New Testament and Early Christianity

Mary, the Mother of Jesus

Mar 13

Matthew 1-2 and Luke 1-2

Gaventa, Beverly. “Threatened and Threatening: Mary in the Gospel of Matthew” (Canvas)

Gaventa. “Disciple, Prophet, and Mother: Mary in Luke-Acts” (Canvas)

Mar 15

John; Mary at the Cross (in class: Protoevangelium of James)

Gaventa, “Cana and the Cross: The Mother of Jesus in the Gospel of John (Canvas)

Jacobs, Sharon, “Reading Mary alongside Indian Surrogate Mothers (CANVAS)

****Profile on Mary, Mother of Jesus DUE on Friday****

Women in the Gospels

Mar 20: Women in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John

For this class, CHOOSE one gospel to read (or skim) and make notes on the women (named and unnamed) as well as any other aspects of the text that include or reference women. Read the chapter in WBC for the gospel you chose. Bring your notes to class for a group discussion on each gospel.

Mar 22: Mary and Martha

- Luke 10:38-42; John 11
- Mary and Martha in Luke and John
- Schussler Fiorenza, Elisabeth. "A Feminist Critical Interpretation for Liberation: Martha and Mary: Luke 10:38-42"

****Profile on ONE woman found in the Gospels DUE on Friday****

Women in Paul's Letters

Mar 27: 1 Corinthians

- 1 Corinthians
- "1 Corinthians" in WBC, pgs. 557-565.
- Wire, "Women Prophets in the Corinthian Church" (Canvas)

Mar 29: Romans 16; Galatians 3:28; Philippians

- Schussler Fiorenza, Elisabeth, "Neither Male Nor Female Galatians 3:28: Alternative Vision and Pauline Modification" (CANVAS)
- "Women Leaders in the Philippian Church?" (CANVAS)
- ((Evans, "April" and "May," pgs. 146-200.))

****Profile on a woman mentioned by Paul DUE on Friday****

Mary Magdalene

Apr 3

- Luke 8:1-3; John 20
- Schaberg & Johnson-DeBaufre 1-66.

Apr 5

- The Gospel of Mary (Canvas)
- Schaberg & Johnson-DeBaufre 67-97.

****Profile on Mary Magdalene DUE on Friday****

Mary Magdalene, cont. AND the Women at the Tomb

Apr 10

- Mark 15; Matthew 27; Luke 23; and John 19
- Schaberg & Johnson-DeBaufre 98-126
- (Optional Reading): Finish Schaberg's book if you choose.

Apr 12 – No Class Founder's Day

Women in Acts and Early Christianity

Apr 17: Rhoda, Priscilla, and Lydia

- Acts 2, 12, 16, and 18
- "Acts" in WBC, pgs. 536-546.
- Additional Reading: TBA (CANVAS)

Apr 19: Thecla

- The Acts of Thecla (CANVAS)
- Matthews, Shelly “Thinking of Thecla: Issues in Feminist Historiography” (Canvas)
- ((Evans, “June” and “July,” pgs. 201-249.))

Profile on a Woman in Acts OR Thecla DUE on Friday

Now What?

Apr 24

Gender of God

Johnson, Elizabeth A. *She Who Is*. “Introduction: To Speak Rightly of God” pages 3-16
New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1992.

Apr 26

Discussion of *A Year of Living Biblically* by Rachel Held Evans; Semester Overview

Evans, “August” and “September,” pgs. 250-308.

Group Presentations of Wikipedia Pages

Final Exam: Wednesday, May 2nd, 1:30-4:30pm