

Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary
WOMEN IN THE CHRISTIAN TRADITION

Course No.: TS-790WCT (3 units)
Semester: Fall 2007 (August 27 - December 14)
Wednesdays, 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores some of the ways that women have lived out their Christian faith. Using the arc of Christian history we will examine how women have served the church, expressed their faith and witnessed to the good news of Jesus. In doing that we will inevitably examine issues of power and authority, calling and giftedness, spirituality and theological perspective. The course is structured as a seminar and will rely on a series of books, films and student presentations to explore these and related issues.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

At the completion of the course students will be able to:

1. Evaluate such factors as gender, social status, age, race and economic status in shaping response to the Christian message.
2. Assess the significance of cultural context for interpreting Scripture within and across cultures.
3. Describe appreciation for the formative influence of key Christian practices of worship in the lives of women.
4. Identify ways in which the institutional church has both shaped and been shaped by society.
5. Analyze contemporary issues from a biblical, theological perspective.
6. Demonstrate skills in theological/historical research and writing.
7. Demonstrate skills in public speaking.

RELATED DEGREE OBJECTIVES

Within the larger curriculum goals of the Seminary, this course will help students to:

1. Demonstrate familiarity with the Church's history, confessions and heritage.
2. Describe the church as a body of people called to represent God's reign as its community, servant and messenger to the world.
3. Reflect on the development of the Christian tradition in the institutional life of the church.
4. Compare traits of own culture with cultures that differ from one's own.
5. Model the values, beliefs and convictions of a Christ-follower.
6. Live out of a sense of calling and a consistent set of core values even when these may be unpopular.
7. Exhibit the courage to do the right thing even when it is not comfortable.
8. Be open to learn from the Church's past, both its successes and failures, as it has attempted to be the people of God on earth.

TEXTS FOR THE COURSE

Required texts are recommended for purchase at Pacific Bookshop. Many of them are available in used editions via internet websites. They will also be on reserve at Hiebert Library.

Beaver, R. Pierce. *All Loves Excelling: American Protestant Women in World Mission*. Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1999. **OR** *American Protestant Women in World Mission: History of the First Feminist Movement in North America*. Eerdmans, 1980.

Brasher, Brenda E. *Godly Women: Fundamentalism & Female Power*. Rutgers Univ. Press, 1998.

Brock, Rita Nakashima, et al. *Setting the Table: Women in Theological Conversation*. Chalice Press, 1995.

Joldersma, Hermina and Louis Grijp, editors & trans. "*Elisabeth's Manly Courage*": *Testimonials and Songs of Martyred Anabaptist Women in the Low Countries*. Marquette Univ. Press, 2001.

McDannell, Colleen. *The Christian Home in Victorian America, 1840-1900*. Indiana Univ. Press, 1986.

Malone, Mary T. *Women & Christianity, Vol 1: The First Thousand Years*. Orbis, 2001.

Winston-Allen, Anne *Convent Chronicles: Women Writing About Women and Reform in the Late Middle Ages*. Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 2005.

REQUIREMENTS

Readings and class discussion: The books listed will be the primary focus of our time together. Please see the attached schedule for discussion dates. Students are expected to prepare for class by reading the assigned books and identifying questions or issues for discussion. A **Wild Card** submitted the week before the scheduled discussion date will allow you to *skip one* of the following authors: *Winston-Allen, Beaver, McDannell or Brasher*. In exchange, please include citations for two book reviews, noting the reviewer's assessment of the book's strengths/weaknesses (sorry, Amazon.com reviews do not count!).

Reading responses: Keeping a reading journal will help students organize and articulate their responses to the various reading assignments. Journal entries should briefly identify the author's approach to the material as well as the main argument of the book. Beyond that students should explore in more depth one issue or question raised by the book. Responses are **due in class as noted on the schedule. Length: minimum one page, single-spaced.**

Research project/class presentation: A research project will provide students with an opportunity to explore an issue or question of personal interest at more depth than can be accomplished in class. Students are invited to **submit a project proposal** outlining the goal and direction of the project and noting the resources available for its completion.

Due date: October 1. The project may be a standard research paper but could take an alternative form. For example, one might gather and analyze oral histories of women who have been involved in missions, ministry or church related education; develop a series of Bible studies; assess the portrayal of Christian women in film or fiction; survey female alumni of MBBS to gather information about career trajectories; etc. Students could choose to focus their research on a particular writer or theologian – contemporary or historical – or explore an issue related to the course. Potential topics are diverse but should be related to women and Christianity. **Students will present their research or findings to the class on the date assigned.** In any case, either a formal paper or summary/assessment of findings will be turned in by the due date noted. Standard academic formatting is expected and, as always, includes proper citation of source material used in the paper as well as a full bibliography. **Final DUE DATE is December 12.**

Possible topics (not an exclusive list!)

Women as Leaders

Working together: men and women sharing church leadership

Contemporary female spirituality

MBBS female alumni – where are they now?

Mujerista theology

Womanist theology

Developing a Christology for women

Exegesis of selected biblical passages related to women's role in church or society

Christian "Chick Lit"

"Evangelical" feminism

Exploring denominational positions on women in ministry

GRADING

A detailed statement of MBBS grading standards is printed in the current Academic Handbook and serves as the basis for all class evaluations. Plagiarism is unacceptable and work deemed as such will be given a failing grade. Papers and essay exams will be graded on clarity of thought, accuracy, comprehensiveness, and originality. Percentage points will be deducted for late papers.

Participation	10 %
Reading journal	40 %
Research project	40 %
Class presentation	10 %

POLICY NOTES

MBBS academic policies are described at www.mbseminary.edu/fresno/policies. These policies provide guidance on academic integrity and plagiarism, incomplete course work,

extensions, dates for changing registration, non-discriminatory and inclusive language, appeals, etc. Students are expected to be familiar with these policies and will be held responsible for adhering to them. If you have questions about how these policies relate to you or to a situation that you face in your studies, please speak to the professor or consult the Registrar or Academic Dean.

Course evaluations are to be completed online and are due one week after the completion of the course. Official grades will not be posted until the student's evaluation of the course is completed.

COURSE SCHEDULE

August 29	Introduction
September 5	Malone: <i>Women and Christianity</i>
September 12	Malone: <i>Women and Christianity</i> Reading response due
September 19	Film
September 26	Winston-Allen: <i>Convent Chronicles</i> Reading response due
October 1	Joldersma: “ <i>Elisabeth’s Manly Courage</i> ” Reading response due PROJECT PROPOSAL DUE
October 10 -	MODULE WEEK – NO CLASS
October 17	Beaver: <i>All Love’s Excelling</i> Reading response due
October 24	Film Student presentations
October 31	McDannell: <i>Christian Home</i> Reading response due Student presentations
November 7 -	NO CLASS
November 12	Brasher: <i>Godly Women</i> Reading response due Student presentations
November 21	THANKSGIVING – NO CLASS
November 28	Brock: <i>Setting the Table</i> Reading response due Student presentations
December 5	Film: <i>Battle for the Mind</i> Student presentations
December 12	Brock: <i>Setting the Table</i> Reading response due Student presentations RESEARCH PROJECT DUE