



## Women in the Ancient World

REL/CLA 328a, Spring 2017

Prof. Shayna Sheinfeld  
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Phone ext. 5258  
Course day/time:  
MWF 1:50–2:50  
Location: Crouse 405

Office: Crouse 438  
Office Hours:  
Mondays 3–4  
Wednesdays 9:30–11:30  
Tuesdays/Thursdays 9:40–10:40  
By appointment

### **Course Description and Goals**

The majority of literary and material evidence from the ancient world was produced by men, for men. So what can be said of women in the ancient world? This class will explore that question using a variety of methodological approaches to the ancient evidence relating to women and their participation in ancient Judaism, Christianity, and Greco-Roman religious traditions. Using texts like Juvenal, *Susanna*, *Leucippe and Clitophon*, the Gospels, Acts of Paul and Thecla and a variety of material evidence, we will try to uncover what can be known about women and the construction of gender and religion in Jewish/Christian/Greco-Roman antiquity, with a focus on the special problems that arise from attempting to make socio-historical claims from literary evidence.

### **Goals:**

By the end of this course, a diligent student will be able to:

- describe and analyze extant literary and material evidence available on/by/about women in ancient Judaism, Christianity, and the Hellenistic worlds
- identify and distinguish between the variety of ways that women are represented in ancient evidence (e.g. historical, fictional, ideal, symbolic)
- describe the social and historical contexts of Judaism, Christianity, and Greco-Roman religious traditions in antiquity, especially as they relate to the portrayal of women
- describe and implement a variety of hermeneutical approaches in the analysis of ancient texts, including feminist, Marxist, post-colonial, queer, and historical-critical
- to critically read and respond to scholarly arguments that discuss women and gender in ancient sources

### Required Texts:

- Ross Shepard Kraemer, ed. *Women's Religions in the Greco-Roman World: A Sourcebook*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. (Sourcebook on syllabus)
- Caroline Vander Stichele, Todd Penner. *Contextualizing Gender in Early Christian Discourse: Thinking Beyond Thecla*. New York: T&T Clark: 2009. (CG on syllabus)
- Primary sources & articles on Moodle
- Access to a Bible with *Apocrypha*, ideally the NRSV translation. There are some available at the bookstore or online. I recommend the *HarperCollins Study Bible with Apocrypha*. Note: you can also access the Bible online (biblegateway.com is a good source; choose the NRSV translation from the dropdown box). Texts will be marked as HB (Hebrew Bible), Apoc (Apocrypha), or New Testament (NT).

### Course Expectations:

- This course will be a mixture of interactive lecture, discussion, and active learning. You are expected to actively and enthusiastically engage in all aspects of the class.
- Readings are listed in the course schedule according to the date they will be discussed. Be sure to **read and annotate** the assigned reading **before coming to class** and bring copies of the readings to class for reference. If you cannot participate in the class discussions based on the readings, *you may be asked to leave*.
- My expectation is that you will spend **1.5–3 hours** preparing for each hour that you are in class. Look ahead at your readings, as some readings will take more time than others.
- Electronic Devices: Laptops, tablets, cell phones, and other electronic devices are **NOT** allowed and must be silenced and stored out of easy reach during class, unless we have planned otherwise. Readings that are available on Moodle may be accessed via electronic devices during class *only if* (1) students do not abuse this policy or engage in other activities on their devices, and (2) the devices are promptly put away after discussion.

### Evaluation:

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| ● Attendance & Participation                   | 10% |
| ● Book Review on <i>Contextualizing Gender</i> | 10% |
| ● Guided Discussion (2 x 5%)                   | 10% |
| ● Final Paper Presentation                     | 15% |
| ● Final Paper                                  | 25% |
| ● Rolling Exam                                 | 30% |

**Attendance & Participation:** Attendance and *enthusiastic participation* are a necessary component of learning in this course. You are expected to attend each class session. You may miss up to 3 classes without penalty, but you will be responsible for the material and readings covered. Four or more missed classes unless excused (with missed work completed) will result in a letter grade reduction in the final grade. Participation will be marked on active engagement during class, including clear engagement with and application of the readings and with in-class activities.

**Book Review:** After reading and discussing the entirety of Stichele & Penner's book, *Contextualizing Gender in Early Christian Discourse: Thinking Beyond Thecla*, you will write an academic review of the book review. Academic reviews are approximately 60% summary and 40% analysis. Your analysis

should assess whether the book accomplished its listed goals, as well as the strengths and (especially) the weaknesses in its argument.

**Guided Discussion:** Twice during the term you will introduce the topic and readings for the class (~5 minutes), with an emphasis on the secondary scholarship. I will pass around a sign-up sheet during the first two weeks of class. For your discussion, you will introduce the day's readings, focusing on (1) an overview, (2) the thesis/argument if there is one and the main points, and (3) 2–3 questions to help guide the discussion. We will discuss this more in class and guidelines will be posted to Moodle.

**Final Paper Presentation:** In the few weeks of class, you will be responsible for a formal presentation on your research topic. The presentation should include a clear thesis statement/argument, an introduction of the primary source(s), the hermeneutical lens(es), and an overview of the arguments that are being made. This presentation should be practiced and polished. You are encouraged to use visual aids such as PowerPoint or handouts.

- 5% of the presentation grade will be your responses to your peers' presentations. You will need to submit to me and to them general thoughts that must include at least two (2) specific positive statements and at least one (1) piece of constructive criticism. We will discuss this more in class.

**Final Paper:** The final paper is an opportunity to apply some of the methods learned during the course in an original analysis. You will analyze of one or two primary sources (i.e. ancient literature/artifacts) using one (or more) distinct hermeneutical perspectives. Papers will be 8-10 pages in length; additional guidelines will be posted on Moodle. I will also post paper topic suggestions, but you are welcome to address a question or interest that occurred to you at any point throughout the class.

- 5% of your final paper grade will be based on your topic/hermeneutic submission (4/10) and abstract submission (4/17)

**Rolling Exam:** Rather than two distinct longer exams (midterm, final), we will engage in what I call a “rolling exam.” This exam will take place throughout the semester. One or two times a week during class you will answer 1–2 questions based on the readings from the previous night. Questions may be descriptive (e.g. What was the author's thesis in article X) or may ask you to synthesize or analyze materials (e.g. How might we apply the author's theory of X to this primary source?). Questions will be graded out of 2 (2 = good answer, 1 = needs work, 0 = unacceptable; half and quarter points are possible). The three (3) lowest scores will be dropped. Exam questions *must* be answered during class and should take no longer than 10 minutes; absences will result in an automatic zero.

#### **Additional Information:**

**Late Policy:** All assignments are due by the start of class on the date specified on the syllabus unless otherwise noted. Assignments may be turned in up to two days late; late assignments may have up to one letter grade subtracted (A- becomes B+) for each day late. If you think you will be more than two days late with an assignment, *you must make an appointment with me ahead of time* in order to discuss the situation; otherwise **assignments more than 2 days late will not be accepted.**

**Communication:** I will respond to emails within 24 hours during the week, and within 36 hours on

weekends or breaks. If there is an impending deadline, I will attempt to respond as soon as possible. I encourage you to take advantage of office hours; if you can't come during office hours, send an email to arrange a meeting.

**Academic Honesty: Plagiarism is a serious issue.** Plagiarism—any attempt by a student to represent the work of another as one's own—will not be tolerated. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, all of the following: copying the answers of another student on an examination, copying or substantially restating the work of another person or persons in any oral or written work without citing the appropriate source, and collaboration with someone else in an academic endeavor without acknowledging his or her contribution. All instances of plagiarism will be dealt with according to university policy, *no matter how minor*.

**I am committed to making our classroom an inclusive and supportive learning environment for people of all ethnicities, religions, sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions.**

**Learning Challenges:** Students who may need additional assistance due to learning differences or challenges are expected to see me during the first two weeks of the semester. I am willing to make accommodations whenever possible, but only if proper documentation has been provided *and you see me in advance*. If you think you need accommodations but are not certain how to find them, I can assist you by helping you reach the College's coordinators for disabilities, Dr. Mary Gulley (x5223), who will prepare a signed Accommodation Notice. Note that in any course the instructor must sign the back of the Accommodation Notice before any necessary accommodations can take effect.

## Course Schedule

### **PLEASE BRING YOUR READINGS TO CLASS EVERY DAY.**

#### **Wed 2/1**

- Topic: Introduction: What challenges are we facing in the study of women in the ancient world?

**While reading *Contextualizing Gender in Early Christian Discourse: Thinking Beyond Thecla* (Feb 3–17), continue to bring a hard copy of the Acts of Thecla to class**

#### **Fri 2/3**

- Topic: Introducing the Acts of Paul and Thecla
- Readings: #105 in Sourcebook; InterseXions, CG (both also on Moodle; bring a *hard copy* to class)

#### **Mon 2/6**

- Topic: Gender-Critical Methodology; Hermeneutical Lenses
- Readings: (1) Chapter 1, CG; (2) Excerpts from Handbook for Biblical Interpretation (Moodle)

#### **Wed 2/8**

- Topic: Contextualizing Gender in Antiquity; Historical Introduction
- Readings: (1) Chapter 2, CG

**Fri 2/10**

- Topic: Literary and Social Landscape of Women/Gender in Antiquity
- Readings: (1) Chapter 3, CG

**Mon 2/13**

- Topic: Ideological Nature of Reading
- Readings: (1) Chapter 4, CG

**Wed 2/15**

- Topic: Reading (for) Gender
- Readings: (1) Chapter 5, CG; (2) (Dis)closure, CG

**Fri 2/17**

- Topic: Thinking about Writing about Thecla
- Readings: (1) Matthews, “Thinking of Thecla: Issues in Feminist Historiography” (Moodle); (2) Franzmann, “Hearing Voices—A Process for Reading and Writing About Women in Religion,” in *Women and Religion* (Moodle); (3) Bring the Acts of Thecla to class today

**Mon 2/20**

- Topic: Everyday Women: What can we know?
- Readings: (1) #48, #62, #66 Sourcebook; Ross Shepard Kraemer, “Gender” in *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Mediterranean Religions* (281–308) (Moodle)

**Due: Book Review, Contextualizing Gender (Moodle)****Wed 2/22**

- Topic: Interpreting Material Evidence 1
- Readings: (1) Ross Kraemer, "Jewish Tuna and Christian Fish" (Moodle)

**Fri 2/24**

- Topic: Interpreting Material Evidence 2
- Readings: (1) Davina C. Lopez, "Before Your Very Eyes" in *Mapping Gender* (Moodle)

**Mon 2/27**

- Topic: Education & Literacy
- Readings: (1) Excerpts from Lefkowitz & Fant, *Women's Life in Greece & Rome: A Sourcebook in Translations* #1, 75, 213–217, (Moodle); (2) Cribiore, “Women and Education” in *Gymnasium of the Mind* (Moodle)

**Wed 3/1**

- Topic: Women in Greek & Roman Religions
- Readings: (1) #11–12, #16–18 Sourcebook; (2) L.R. LiDonnici, “Women’s Religions and Religious Lives in the Greco-Roman City” in *Women and Christian Origins* (Moodle)

**Fri 3/3**

- Topic: Magna Mater. Guest speaker: Dr. Meredith Warren (The University of Sheffield, Sheffield, UK)
- Readings: (1) TBA; (2) “Magna Mater Comes to Rome” (Moodle)

**Mon 3/6**

- Topic: Vestal Virgins
- Readings: (1) #81–82 Sourcebook ; (2) M. M. Lindner, “Cult and College,” in *Portraits of the Vestal Virgins, Priestess of Ancient Rome* (Moodle)

**Wed 3/8**

- Topic: Sacrificial Procession
- Readings: TBA

**Fri 3/10**

- Topic: (Jewish) Women in Egypt: Philo
- Readings: (1) #13–14 Sourcebook; (2) Joan Taylor, “Spiritual Mothers: Philo on the Women Therapeutae,” *JSP* 23 (2002): 37–63 (Moodle).

**Mon 3/13**

- Topic: Elite Women in Rome (Isis Cult & Judaism) in Josephus
- Readings: (1) Josephus 18:65–84 (Moodle); (2) Shelly Matthews, “Crimes of Passion: Religion, Sex, and State Subversion in *Antiquities* 18:65–84 (Moodle)

**Wed 3/15** Ides of March

- Topic: On Aspasia
- Readings: (1) Aelian, *Varia Historia* 12 “On Aspasia” [<http://penelope.uchicago.edu/aelian/varhist12.xhtml>]

**Fri 3/17**

- Topic: Pharisees
- Readings: (1) Tal Ilan, “‘Fear not the Pharisees’ (bSotah 22b): The Attraction of Aristocratic Women to Pharisaism” in *Integrating Women into Second Temple History* (Moodle)

**Spring Break March 18-26****Mon 3/27**

- Topic: Jewish Royalty: Josephus on Queen Shelamzion Alexandra
- Readings: (1) Josephus *Antiquities* 13.405–432; (2) Josephus *War* 1.107–119; (3) Joseph Sievers, “The Role of Women in the Hasmonean Dynasty,” (Moodle)

### Wed 3/29

- Topic: (Old Testament) Pseudepigrapha
- Readings: (1) Judges 11 (HB); (2) Pseudo-Philo 40 (Moodle); (3) 4 Ezra 9:26–10:59 (Moodle); (4) Loren T. Stuckenbruck, “Ezra’s Vision of the Lady: The Form and Function of a Turning Point” (Moodle)

### Fri 3/31

- Topic: Apocrypha
- Readings: (1) Judith (Apoc), (2) Susanna (Apoc); (3) Amy-Jill Levine, “Sacrifice and salvation: otherness and domestication in the Book of Judith” in *Women in the Hebrew Bible: a reader* (Moodle)

### Mon 4/3

- Topic: NT Apocrypha. Guest speaker: Dr. Eric Vanden Eykel (Ferrum College, Ferrum VA)
- Readings: (1) Protevangelium of James (Moodle); (2) Julia Kelto Lillis, “Paradox in Partu: Verifying Virginity in the Protevangelium of James,” (Moodle)

### Wed 4/5

- Topic: Women in the NT I
- Readings: (1) Paul: 1 Corinthians 7, 11:2–16, 14:33b–35; Romans 16:1–16 (NT); (2) Acts (NT); (4) Shelly Matthews, “More than a few Greek Women of High Standing: ‘God’Fearing Nobelwomen in Acts,” (Moodle)

### Fri 4/7

- Topic: Women in the NT II: Mary Magdalene. Guest speaker: Dr. Sara Parks (McGill University, Montreal, Canada)
- Readings: (1) Gospel of Luke; (2) Mary Rose D’Angelo, “Reconstructing ‘Real’ Women from Gospel Literature: The Case of Mary Magdalene”

**Mon 4/10** No class (Passover begins this evening)

**Due: Paper Topic & Hermeneutic Approach via Moodle**

### Wed 4/12

- Topic: Jewish Martyrdom
- Readings: (1) #109 Sourcebook; (2) Robin Darling Young “The ‘woman with the soul of Abraham’: traditions about the Mother of the Maccabean Martyrs” in *Women Like This* (Moodle)

### Fri 4/14

- Topic: Christian Martyrdom
- Readings: (1) #114 Sourcebook (Perpetua & Felicitas); (2) Pliny the Younger (Moodle); (3) Judith Perkins, “The Rhetoric of the Maternal Body in the *Passion of Perpetua*” in *Mapping Gender* (Moodle)

**Mon 4/17**

- Topic: Hellenistic Novels
- Readings: (1) Sourcebook #22–31B (excerpts from Hellenistic novels); (2) Bowersock, “Truth in Lying” in *Fiction as History* (Moodle)

**Abstracts Due****Wed 4/19**

- Topic: Jewish/Christian Novels
- Readings: (1) Sourcebook #106; (2) Richard I. Pervo, “Aseneth and Her Sisters: Women in Jewish Narrative and in the Greek Novels”

**Fri 4/21**

- Topic: Women in Rabbinic Literature I
- Readings: (1) Sourcebook #35–37, 46; (2) Tal Ilan, Feminist Commentary on the Mishnah and the Babylonian Talmud

**Mon 4/24:**

- Topic: Women in Rabbinic Literature II
- Readings: (1) BT Kiddushin 80b–81a (Moodle) (2) Tal Ilan, “The Quest for the Historical Beruriah, Rachel, and Imma Shalom” (Moodle)

**Wed 4/26**

- Topic: *The Feminine Divine*: Isis
- Readings: (1) Sourcebook #129– 131B

**Fri 4/28**

- Topic: *The Feminine Divine*: Gnosticism
- Readings: Sourcebook #132–133; (2) Anne McGuire, “Women, Gender, and Gnosis in Gnostic Texts and Traditions” (Moodle)

**Mon 5/1**

- Topic: Presentations

**Wed 5/3**

- Topic: Presentations

**Fri 5/5**

- Topic: Presentations

**Mon 5/8**

- Topic: Finish Presentations; Course Reflection

**Final Exam Time: Monday May 15, 1:30–4:30**

Final Papers are due at this time; be prepared to talk about the changes you have made since your presentation/your finished product in class.