HIST 129a - WOMEN IN CHRISTIANITY: A Transnational Modern History

Course Description
Women have been instrumental in the history of Christianity since they financially supported the itinerant ministry of its founder, Jesus of Nazareth. Despite centuries of patriarchy and doctrinally enforced female submission, the most recent data indicate that in the twenty-first century, women constitute an active and consistent majority of Christians around the world. This survey course will examine the social and cultural history of women in Christianity in the modern period. We will cover the main branches of Christianity (Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, and Protestantism) on six continents. We will focus on the everyday lives and spiritual imaginations—the lived religion—of Christian women during the reform movements and theo-political conflicts of the early modern period; the transatlantic slave trade; the enlightenments, spiritual awakenings, and political revolutions of the eighteenth century; the eras of colonialism and mission; and the recent shift of Christianity’s center of gravity from the West to the global South.

Learning Objectives
• To enable students to identify key themes and movements that have shaped the lived experience, thought, and religious praxis of Christian women around the world in the modern era;
• To develop students’ close reading and analytical writing skills through close engagement with primary texts (i.e., texts written by participants in history) in the writing of brief papers—called gobbets—analyzing selected excerpts (or “gobbets” of text) from these readings;
• To develop students’ ability to engage critically with scholarly texts concerning the history of women in Christianity by way of in-class discussions, a book review, and the final exam;
• To enable students to articulate the diverse ways women have lived and experienced Christian history as their own story, and the ways they have actively shaped and continue to shape the history of the world’s largest religion.

Course Materials

NOTES ON READINGS:
• The *Holy Bible* is central to the theological understanding of Christians. Since the historical evolution of the interpretation of biblical passages will be discussed in certain lectures, students will benefit from access to this sacred text.
• Additional required readings from the Course Calendar will be available on the course’s LATTE page in the form of *selections* from primary sources and/or of “packets” of secondary sources (articles written by scholars). Optional readings and further readings to assist in the analysis of gobbet selections will also be made available on LATTE.

Course Requirements and Evaluation
Attendance & Participation: 10%
Gobbets: 30%
Book Review (=Midterm): 25%
Final Exam: 35%
Attendance & Participation (10%):
Students are expected to attend all scheduled classes, but each student is allowed two excused absences per semester without penalty. Further absences or chronic lateness will result in point deductions. Unpreparedness will also be penalized, since we will discuss the readings in the context of class sessions. Classroom decorum will be a component of students’ participation grade: please be respectful of others and their stated opinions and beliefs during class discussion. Classroom bullying is against both university policy and the spirit of the class and will not be tolerated.

Gobbets (30%):
A gobbet is a concise analysis of a primary source (a document written by a witness or participant in an event in history) through the window of an excerpt from the document itself (excerpts will be provided on a separate handout). Each gobbet will be three to four paragraphs in length and single-spaced, so it will rarely exceed one page. Students will print and submit six separate gobbets, the best five of which will count toward the gobbet grade. The 16 documents from which students may choose to write their 6 gobbets are denoted with a [G] in the Course Calendar. Their respective due dates are listed below. See page 8 of this syllabus for further instruction on how to write a gobbet. Before any gobbet is due, we will have a gobbet-writing workshop.

Book Review (25%):
Each student will read one book chosen from a list compiled by the instructor and will write a review of that book. The review will be four to five pages, double-spaced, in 12-point Times New Roman font, with one-inch margins and must be printed and submitted to the instructor on the day designated for that unit’s particular review due date. The review should (1) give a brief overview of the book’s argument and evidence and (2) critically assess the author’s argument. The review books are listed on page 7 of this syllabus, and most are available at the Brandeis University library.

Final Exam (35%):
The final exam will consist of three essay questions and one gobbet. Potential questions and gobbet documents will be stated in advance and a double-sided 4x6 notecard will be allowed in the exam.

NOTE ON ASSIGNMENTS: In the Course Calendar, you will see several “elective assignment” due dates. Do not let their quantity intimidate you. It simply indicates your freedom to determine which specific gobbets and which book review to submit on their respective due dates. Remember: you will submit only 6 gobbets and 1 book review.

Students with Disabilities
If you are a student with a documented disability at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see the instructor immediately.

Workload Expectations
Success in this four-credit course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of nine (9) hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, papers, discussion sections, preparation for exams, research, etc.).

Academic Integrity
You are expected to be familiar with and to follow the University’s policies on academic integrity, as described in Section 4 of Rights and Responsibilities. Faculty will refer any suspected instances of alleged dishonesty to the Office of Student Development and Conduct. Instances of academic dishonesty may result in sanctions including but not limited to failure in the course, failure on the assignment in question, or suspension from the University and/or educational programs. If you are in doubt about the instructions for any assignment in this course, it is your responsibility to ask for clarification.
Communications:
Any course announcements or changes to this syllabus (e.g., in case of class cancellations due to snow days) will be sent to students via e-mail and posted on LATTE.

Accessibility of this Class for Students Who Have Experienced Violence or Abuse:
I want this class to be accessible to all students at Brandeis, including those who have experienced or witnessed sexual, gender-based, racial, or other forms of violence or abuse. In this course, we will read and discuss material that some may find triggering (on topics such as Christian justifications for slavery and social inequality, abuse in religious contexts, theological justifications for discrimination against LGBT persons, and graphic arguments against abortion). Feel free to leave the room during a discussion that you find triggering. If you do so, please arrange to see me during office hours so we can cover academically necessary material in a way that does not re-traumatize you.

Electronic Devices:
Students may use laptops to take notes in class. If, however, I determine that a student is using a laptop for browsing social media sites or is distracting other students from learning, I will ask you to take course notes on paper from that point on. Cell phones must be turned to silent mode and kept in students’ bags throughout the entire class. Texting in class will not be tolerated. Please refrain from audio or video recording of class sessions.

Course Calendar
INTRODUCTION: Major Historical Themes
January 17: Course Introduction & Brief Lecture: Terminology and Problems of Periodization
   Reading: MTM: Chapter 1

January 19: Thematic Overview and an Introduction to Gobbets
   Readings: Secondary Source Packet: Women’s Christian History is World Christian History
   READ TWO: EITHER Braude (US) OR Robert (Global Christianity)
   AND EITHER Kizenko (Russian Orthodoxy) OR Mwaura (African Catholicism)
   “Writing a Gobbet” (page 8 of this syllabus)

First Thematic Interlude
January 24: Christian Women and the Holy Mother: Marian Theology in the Last Five Centuries

OUT-OF-CLASS GATHERING (TBD, with snacks provided):
Gobbet-writing workshop using an excerpt from the papal encyclical, Redemptoris Mater

UNIT ONE: 16th & 17th Centuries: Religious Renewal Movements & Theo-Political Conflict
January 26: Women in Europe’s Reformations
   RBM: Pages 119-146     MTM: Chapters 2 & 3

January 31: Women in 17th-Century Theo-political Conflicts
   RBM: Pages 146-148     MTM: Chapter 4
February 2: Catholic Women in Early Colonialism
Readings:
- [G] Marie de l’Incarnation. *From Mother to Son* [letters, 1640-1671]
  - RBM: Chapter 12
  - MTM: Chapter 5
ELECTIVE ASSIGNMENT DUE: Gobbet on Teresa of Avila

February 7: Witchcraft Trials of Europe and the Americas: Case Study of Salem
Readings:
- [G] texts from Salem witchcraft trials [testimonial & legal documents, 1692]
ELECTIVE ASSIGNMENT DUE: Gobbet on Madame Guyon OR Marie de l’Incarnation

Second Thematic Interlude
Readings:
- [G] The Domostroi: Rules for Russian Households [instructional, 16th cent.]
  - Secondary Source Packet (read two): Lived Religion in the Home
    - G.L. Freeze (Russia), Gatskell (South Africa), Williams (Britain)

UNIT TWO: 18th Century: Awakenings, Enlightenments, Transatlantic Slavery, & Revolutions
February 14: Christian Women & the Enlightenments
Readings:
  - MTM: Chapter 6
ELECTIVE ASSIGNMENT DUE: Book Review from Unit One
ELECTIVE ASSIGNMENT DUE: Gobbet on Salem witchcraft OR The Domostroi

February 16: Women & the Great Awakening
Readings:
- [G] Sarah Osborn on True Christianity [letter, 1755]
  - RBM: Chapter 13

MIDTERM RECESS: February 20-24

February 28: Christian Women & the 18th-Century Revolutions [America, France, Saint-Domingue/Haiti]
Readings:
- [G] Women in the American Revolution [letters/memoir, 1765-1783]
  - Secondary Source Packet: Christian Women in the French Revolutions (Desan)
  - RBM: Chapter 14
ELECTIVE ASSIGNMENT DUE: Gobbet on Mary Wollstonecraft OR Sarah Osborn

March 2: The Transatlantic Slave Trade & Slavery as a Christian Problem
Readings:
- [G] Selected poems by Phillis Wheatley (1753-1784)
  - Secondary Source Packet (read one): Christianity & Slave Society
    - Lyerly (Colonies), Peabody (French Antilles)

Third Thematic Interlude:
March 7: Preaching & Acts of Service: Ministry, Charity, & Philanthropy over Five Centuries
Readings:
- [G] Catherine Booth on Women’s Right to Preach [treatise, 1859]
  - Mother Teresa, “Something Beautiful for Jesus” [journals/letters, 20th cent.]
ELECTIVE ASSIGNMENT DUE: Gobbet on Abigail Adams OR Phillis Wheatley
UNIT THREE: 19th Century: Colonialism & Mission and the “Feminization” of Christianity

March 9: The “Feminization” of Catholic and Orthodox Monasticism in Western & Eastern Europe
Readings: MTM: Chapter 7 RBM: Chapter 15 [optional: on wider context]

ELECTIVE ASSIGNMENT DUE: Book Review from Unit Two

March 14: Gendered Expectations in Victorian England and its Global Implications
Readings: [G] Hannah More on Female Education [treatise, 1799; reprint 1853]
Secondary Source Packet (read Welter + one): The Cult of True Womanhood
Welter (America), Anderson (Britain), Boylan (19th century)
RBM: Chapter 16 [optional: on wider context]

ELECTIVE ASSIGNMENT DUE: Gobbet on Catherine Booth

2-part series: Women & Mission in the Age of Intensive Competing Colonialisms
March 16: Colonialism and Mission: Protestant Women as Missionaries
RBM: Chapter 17

March 21: Colonialism and Mission: Indigenous Women as Converts, Causes, and Casualties
Secondary Source Packet (read one): Indigenous Women Encounter Missionaries
Kan (Siberia & Alaska), Oyewumi (Africa)

ELECTIVE ASSIGNMENT DUE: Gobbet on Hannah More OR Ann Judson

Fourth Thematic Interlude:
March 23: Christian Women in Political Protest and Social Activism Over Five Centuries
MTM: Chapter 8
Secondary Source Packet: Political Activism [Tucker (Global)]

UNIT FOUR: 20th & 21st Centuries: Global Conflict and Theological Expansion
Readings: Lidia Vashchenko, a Siberian Pentecostal woman seeking asylum in the U.S.
Embassy in Moscow [testimonial of human rights violations, 1978]
RBM: Chapters 18 & 19

ELECTIVE ASSIGNMENT DUE: Book Review from Unit Three
ELECTIVE ASSIGNMENT DUE: Gobbet on Missionary Journal OR Ida B. Wells-Barnett

2-Part Series: The Shift of Christianity’s Center of Gravity from the Global West to the Global South
March 30: Secularization: Have Women Sounded the Death Knell for Christianity in the West?
Readings: RBM: Chapter 20 & Epilogue

April 4: The Rise of Pentecostalism & the Decolonizing Global South: Indigenized Spirituality and Liberation Theology in Latin America, Africa, Oceania, and Asia
[“praise poetry,” Ghana]
Selections from Feminist Theology Reader (ed. Ursula King) (read two):
Rebera (Sri Lanka & Australia), Eneme (Cameroon), Bingemer (Brazil), Mananzan (Philippines)
MTM: Chapter 10 & Conclusion
April 6: Feminist/Womanist Theology in the US & Around the Globe: The Case of Christology
[essay, Singapore]
MTM: Chapter 9
Secondary Source Packet: Can a Male Savior Save Women? (Ruether)

PASSEOVER AND SPRING RECESS: April 10-18

Thursday, April 20: U.S. Culture Wars Turned Global
Smith (constitutional consequences), Worthen (theological origins)

For this interactive class, students will read one of the above articles on the historical development of the Christian Right, and during class, three groups will each read short pieces expressing opposing viewpoints about one of the themes listed below. The session will be a collaborative, discussion-based lecture concerning (a) the historical development of the Christian Right and its conflation of conservative Christianity with Republican politics; (b) recent developments, including similar debates around the world (particularly in Russia and Uganda); and (c) what a knowledge of history might teach us about the possibility of developing strategies for respectful and constructive discourse with persons who hold views different from one’s own.

- “Traditional Family Values” & Politics
- Women’s Sexuality: Contraception, Abortion, Sex Education
- The Status of LGBTQ Individuals in Society and the Church

ELECTIVE ASSIGNMENT DUE: Gobbet on Madam Afua Kuma OR Sharon A. Bong

April 25: Confronting Abuse: Women as Victims, Abusers, and Change Agents
Readings: Exploration of the goals and priorities of two Christian websites re: abuse
Secondary Source Packet (read one): Christian Women & Abuse
Haddad (South Africa), Matsui (Japan)

April 27: The Ongoing Battle over Women’s Ministry and Ordination
Readings: Exploration of rhetoric on two websites re: women’s ministry & ordination

Final Thematic Interlude:
May 2: Women’s Contributions to Christian Art, Iconography, Literature, and Music

For this session, no reading will be assigned, but each student will bring one piece of literature, music, or art created by a Christian woman to discuss at specified times during the lecture. Students will have their choice of time period, and a list of potential sources will be provided after the Passover/Spring Recess.

ELECTIVE ASSIGNMENT DUE: Book Review from Unit Four

FINAL EXAM: Date, time, and location TBD. Final Exam Period = May 5-12.
“WOMEN IN CHRISTIANITY” BOOK REVIEW LIST:
Select one book from this list to read and review. Most books on this list are available at the Brandeis University Library, but you may want to purchase your own copy, since the book review requires a close reading.

UNIT ONE + First Thematic Interlude:  

UNIT TWO + Second Thematic Interlude:  

UNIT THREE + Third Thematic Interlude:  

UNIT FOUR + Fourth Thematic Interlude:  
Liveris, Leonie B. *Ancient Taboos and Gender Prejudice: Challenges for Orthodox Women and the Church*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005.
Writing a Gobbet

A gobbet contains four elements. You need to...

1. **Introduce the document**
   - Introduce the title of the document, the author/s (if known), the date, the genre, and the intended audience and purpose.

2. **Discuss the excerpt**
   - Discuss what the excerpt is about. Before writing, spend some time identifying and highlighting the *important* words and phrases in the excerpt, in order to help you sum up the overall theme of the excerpt. Ask yourself the question: “What is the excerpt about?”

3. **Discuss how the excerpt relates to the wider document**
   - Think about how your analysis of the excerpt points to issues and themes in the wider document. Ask yourself the question: “How can I connect the excerpt to other key themes or points in the document?” Undertaking this task may cause you to reconsider what you think the excerpt is about.

4. **Discuss how the document relates to the wider historical context**
   - Think about how your analyses of the excerpt *and* the wider document point to issues and themes in history – past, present (when the document was written) and future. Ask yourself the questions: “How does this document connect to other issues and themes in history?” and “Why is this document important?”

You can think about the gobbet writing process in terms of a pyramid. The base of a pyramid widens as you move from the top to the bottom. Likewise, the scope of a gobbet widens from the excerpt, to the wider document, to the wider historical context as you move through the writing process.

![Pyramid Diagram]

Alternatively, you can imagine writing a gobbet like exiting a cave. When you are at a distance from the exit you only see the part of the landscape directly outside the cave (the excerpt). As you approach the exit you see more of the landscape (the document). Finally, when you step outside the cave, you see the full panorama (the historical context).