

EARLY CHRISTIAN WOMEN HS 4518

Mary Ann Donovan, SC, JSTB

Thurs 2:10-5:00, MUDD 206

Description: What can we know of the lives and deaths of early Christian women from the available texts? Can we say anything about their involvement in worship or in doctrine? Using appropriate methodologies, we will explore such questions with the help of primary and secondary sources.

Requirements:

- 1) Attendance; readings; group &/or individual preparation and presentations as assigned
- 2) For **masters students**; two 8-10 page papers. The first, due the Thursday before fall break, will assess the situation of women in a NT text. The second, due the last Thursday of the semester, will demonstrate exegesis of a primary text read in the second half of the course. (No extensions on any papers.)
- 3) For **doctoral students**: a research paper of 25 pages, including bibliography. Turabian format, with footnotes (not endnotes). Topic, outline, and bibliography due Thursday before fall break. As well as familiarity with primary and secondary sources, bibliography should show familiarity with appropriate periodical literature, and the use of one's research language/s. The paper should demonstrate exegetical competence. Paper due last Thursday of semester. (No extensions.)

Objectives:

- 1) to become familiar with the cultural and social situations of women in the period;
- 2) to develop skill in interpreting the situation of women reflected in the New Testament texts;
- 3) to gain skill in using at least one exegetical method.

Assessment:

- 1) Class participation and written assessment will demonstrate competence in objective 1.
- 2) The first of the two papers for masters students will demonstrate competence in objective 2, and the second of their two papers will demonstrate competence in objective 3.
- 3) Research papers written by doctoral students will demonstrate competence in objectives 2 and 3.

Grading: 40% participation; Masters students - 30% for each paper; Doctoral students - 60% paper.

Books:

Kraemer, Ross Shepard and Mary Rose D'Angelo. *Women and Christian Origins*. New York: Oxford UP, 1999. Required.
Reader. Required.
Ward, Benedicta. *Harlots of the Desert*. Kalamazoo: Cistercian, 1987. Optional.

Course Outline

September 7 Orientation

- Syllabus
- Definitions
- Methodology

September 14 Women in the Greco-Roman World *Reading for Sept 14 class:* READER Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings*, "Introduction," pp.3-21. Study the grid so as to be able to apply it. "Goddesses and Gods" from Sarah Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity*," pp.1-15 with notes, pp. 231-232. From Kraemer, *Maenads, Martyrs, Maidens, Monastics*, #s 11, 20, 25, 78,80. KRAEMER & D'ANGELO, c.1, Judith P. Hallett, "Women's Lives in the Ancient Mediterranean," pp.13-34 & 4, Lynn R. LiDonnici, "Women's Religions and Religious Lives in the Greco-Roman City;" pp.80-102.

September 21 Jewish Women and Christian Origins. *Readings for Sept 21 class:* KRAEMER & D'ANGELO, c.2 , Ross S. Kraemer, "Jewish Women and Christian Origins: Some Caveats," and c. 3, *ibid.*, "Jewish Women and Women's Judaism(s) at the beginning of Christianity." READER From Kraemer, *Maenads, Martyrs, Maidens, Monastics*, #s 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 45, 46, 47, 84, 85, 86, 87.

September 28 Women in John and Mark. *Readings for Sept 28 class:* READER: Raymond E. Brown, "Roles of Women in the Fourth Gospel," Appendix II in *the Community of the Beloved Disciple* (NY:Paulist, 1979), pp.183-198. Luise Schottroff, *Lydia's Impatient Sisters: A Feminist Social History of Early Christianity*, pp.3-65; **be able to apply** pp. 54-57. KRAEMER & D'ANGELO, c. 5, Mary Rose D'Angelo, "Reconstructing 'Real' Women in Gospel Literature: The Case of Mary Magdalene," pp.105-128; c.6, *ibid.*, "(Re)Presentations of Women in the Gospels: John and Mark" pp.129-149. In reading both these chapters, use the New Testament as appropriate. *OPTIONAL: Harlots of the Desert.*

October 5 Women in Q, and Women's Gospels. *Readings for Oct 5* KRAEMER & D'ANGELO, c 7, Amy-Jill Levine, "Women in the Q Communit(ies) and Traditions," pp.159-170; c.8, Mary Rose D'Angelo, "(Re)Presentations of Women in the Gospel of Matthew and Luke-Acts," pp.171-195. In reading both these chapters, use the New Testament as appropriate. READER: "Gospels Under the Names of Holy Women," in E. Hennecke *New Testament Apocrypha*: vol. 1 ed. Schneemelcher: *Gospels and Related Writings*, English trans. ed by R. M. Wilson, (Britain: SCM, 1973), pp.338-345.

October 12 Women and Paul. *Readings for Oct.12:* KRAEMER & D'ANGELO, c.9, Margaret Y. MacDonald, "Reading Real Women Through the Undisputed Letters of Paul;"c.10, Elizabeth A. Castillo, "Paul on Women and Gender;" c.11, Margaret Y. MacDonald, "Rereading Paul: Early Interpreters of Paul on Women and Gender." Read these chapters with your New Testament in hand. READER Daniel Baran, "Body Politic among the Brides of Christ: Paul and the Origins of Christian Sexual Renunciation," in Vincent L. Wimbush and Richard Valantasis, eds. *Asceticism*, 1995, pp.459-478.

October 19 Women in Three Gnostic Texts. *Readings for Oct.19:* KRAEMER &

D'ANGELO, c.12, Anne McGuire, "Women, Gender, and Gnosis in Gnostic Texts and Traditions," pp.257-299. READER: "Hypostasis of the Archons," pp.161-69; "Gospel of Thomas," pp.124-138; "Thunder, Perfect Mind," pp.295-303. All in James M. Robinson, gen.ed, *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, 1988.

FALL BREAK Oct 23-27

November 2 Women, Ministry, and Church Order. *Readings for Nov. 2:* KRAEMER & D'ANGELO, c.13, Francine Cardman, "Women, Ministry, and Church Order in Early Christianity," pp.300-329. READER: Roger Gryson, *The Ministry of Women in the Early Church* trans. Jean Laporte & Mary Louise Hall, chapter 2 through conclusion.

November 9 Women Martyrs. *Readings for Nov. 9:* KRAEMER & D'ANGELO c.14, Gail Corrington Streete, "Women as Sources of Redemption and Knowledge in Early Christian Traditions." READER: "Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas;" "Martyrdom of Saints Agape, Irene, and Chione at Salonike." Apply Schottroff's method to each of these. Is there any sense in which Douglas's grid (via Kraemer) is helpful? "Thinking with Virgins: Engendering Judeo-Christian Difference," from Daniel Baran, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* pp.67-92.

November 16 A Woman Teacher. *Readings for Nov.16* READER: Elizabeth A.Castelli, trans. & intro., "The Life and Activity of the Holy and Blessed Teacher Syncletica," in *Ascetic Behavior in Greco-Roman Antiquity: A Sourcebook*, pp. 265-311. Gillian Clark, "Women's Health," in *ibid.*, *Women in Late Antiquity*, 63-93. Kallistos Ware, "The Way of the Ascetics: Negative or Affirmative?" in Vincent L. Wimbush and Richard Valantasis, eds. *Asceticism*, pp.3-15.

Thanksgiving is November 23.

November 30 A Foundress and Teacher. *Readings for Nov.30* READER Joan M. Petersen, trans. & ed. *A Letter from Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa, on the Life of Saint Macrina*, in *Handmaids of the Lord*, pp.41-86. Gillian Clark, "Women and Asceticism in Late Antiquity: The Refusal of Status and Gender," in Wimbush and Valantasis, pp.33-48.

December 7 Matrons. *Readings for Dec 7* READER *Life of Melania the Elder and Life of Melania the Younger.* From Petersen, with introduction, pp.283-361.

December 14 About Marriage. *Readings for Dec. 14* READER Augustine *On the Good of Marriage.* In Roy J. Deferrari ed., *Saint Augustine: Treatises on Marriage and Other Subjects*, pp.9-51. Gedaliahu G. Stroumsa, "Caro salutis cardo: Shaping the Person in Early Christian Thought," *History of Religions* 30 (1990), pp.25-50. Gillian Clark, "Being Female," in *ibid.*, *Women in Late Antiquity*, pp.119-141.