

## **Graduate Division of Religion**

### **Fall 2021 Course Atlas**

**(Please check back for changes and updates - last update 4.29.2021)**

#### **RLR 700 Gender in the Bible & Beyond**

**Tuesday, 1:00-3:45**

**Susan Hulen**

*\*This seminar will fulfill one of the required Theories and Methods seminars*

This course explores gender in biblical texts and the ways those texts are used in modern contexts. We will begin with a discussion of method, but questions of method will stay with us through every week of the course. Throughout much of the 20th century, interpreters considered “men” and “women” to be fixed categories that endured over time. Our approach will instead draw on the insights of recent feminist and queer theory to understand what gender is and the various social factors that contribute to the construction of gender. This framework will help us develop a sense of what kinds of evidence are necessary to understand and describe ancient gender. In light of that discussion, we will explore aspects of gender in Hebrew Bible and New Testament texts and cultures. We will consider evidence from legal, economic, and archaeological sources as well as literary ones. Students will select topics regarding the use of the Bible in recent debates on aspects of gender and will help to build the common syllabus around those interests. We will attend to the ways that assumptions about gender undergird and to some extent predetermine contemporary views. Students from any graduate course of study are welcome. Biblical languages will be in use but are not required of every student. Students will develop a specific focus that is relevant to their course of study and write an article appropriate for a peer reviewed journal in their field.

#### **RLR 700 / ICIVS 715 Islamic Mystical Theology**

**Tuesday, 2:30-5:30**

**Vincent J. Cornell**

The purpose of this seminar is to introduce graduate students in Islamic Civilizations Studies, Religion, Philosophy, and related fields to the major theologies of Islamic mysticism, concentrating in particular on metaphysics and epistemology. Although Sufism is a major focus of this course, it is not only a course on Sufism. We will also cover the theology of Islamic Hermetism and will be open to other types of Islamic mystical philosophy as well, such as Ibn Sīnā’s al-ḥikma al-mashriqiyya and Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī’s ḥikmat al-ishrāq. Students are especially encouraged to explore the boundaries of Islamic mysticism.

#### **RLR 700 - Recent Virtue Ethics**

**Thursday, 9:00-12:00**

**Pam Hall**

What does ethics gain when it draws upon the language of the virtues? We will explore together significant work within the recent revival of “virtue ethics” in considering this question. Thinkers in this revival have reflected upon the need for the virtues and their connections to human flourishing; how communities shape, or mis-shape, people in relation to the good; how the language of the virtues helps us to name important features of human emotional and ethical life.

Speech about the virtues in recent ethics has fostered attention to the human good and the human soul, of emotion and of embodiment. We will explore our readings in recent virtue ethics as resources for reflection on these themes and questions. Our class will use readings from recent virtue ethicists, as well as works of literature and film, to feed our discussions.

Texts:

- Crisp and Slote, editors, *Virtue Ethics* - anthology
- Simone Weil, *Waiting for God*
- Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good and Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*
- Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue and Dependent Rational Animals*
- Martha Nussbaum, *Love’s Knowledge*
- Jonathan Lear, *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation*
- Essays by Thomas Nagel, Bernard Williams, Lisa Tessman, Flannery O’Connor, Alice Walker, Melanie Harris: on electronic reserve through Woodruff Library’s course reserves website.

### **RLR 700/ICIVS 712/WGS 730R -Islamic Modernism: Progressive and Feminist Islam**

**Wednesday, 2:30-5:30**

**Scott Kugle**

Contemporary Progressive Islam and its related Feminist Islam grew out of “Islamic Modernism.” During colonial times, Muslim scholars sought Islamic reformation, insisting that the Islam is adaptable to modern social, technical and political life. This seminar will focus on two regions (Egypt-Sudan and India-Pakistan). Into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the goal shifted from “reform to become modern” toward “liberation to acquire rights, freedom and dignity.” One essential theme was that democracy is integral to Islam, despite the monarchical and patriarchal social structure that shaped Islam and gave it dominance in pre-modern periods. As the seminar ends with a deep read of key scholars in Islamic Feminism (like amina wadud, Asma Barlas, Ziba Mir-Hosseini, Fatima Mernissi and Sadiyya Shaikh) the geographical scope of the seminar widens because Islamic feminists form a transnational and global network.

### **RLR 700 - Moral Agency Under Constraint**

**Friday 9:30-12:30**

**Ellen Ott Marshall**

*\*This seminar will fulfill one of the required Theories and Methods seminars*

This course takes as its starting point Katie Cannon’s observation that the dominant tradition of western philosophical ethics assumes a moral agent with freedom and a wide range of choices. Cannon turns to the literature of African American women to study female protagonists who demonstrate moral agency

under constraint. The first part of “Moral Agency under Constraint” employs this womanist methodology of drawing on protagonists in novels and films in order to re-consider assumptions about moral agency. The second part turns to ethnographic examples that describe constraints and perceive moral agency. The third part of the seminar focuses on students’ research projects and the contexts and models of agency they pursue.

**RLR 700 / HIST 562R - *Themes & Approaches in Latin American History: Body & Society in Latin America***

**Thursday, 2:30-5:30**

**Javier Villa-Flores and Yanna Yannakakis**

This course, offered annually, addresses a broad scope of Latin American history, historiography, and historical method through a focused theme. This year’s theme – Body and Society in Latin America – asks how scholars of Latin American history have addressed the challenge posed in the 1990’s by historians Caroline Bynum, Roy Porter, and others to move beyond the mind-body duality embedded in Western epistemology to focus on “the body that eats, that works, that dies, that is afraid” (Bynum, 1995). At the same time, the course emphasizes that the human body “has not timelessly existed as an unproblematic natural object with universal needs and wants” (Porter, 1991). Rather, we highlight how bodily experience, the meaning of the body, and bodily metaphors varied across the vast space and time of Latin American history. How have historians of Latin America used the body as a lens to address projects of colonial domination, national formation, state building, and modernization? How has a focus on the body served to illuminate foundational aspects of identity, such as sex, gender, and sexuality; race and racialization; fitness, disability and normalcy; and class and status? What can a focus on the body tell us about core experiences in Latin America that run the gamut from trauma to ecstasy, such as Christian conversion, conquest, enslavement, reproduction, incarceration, torture, fashion, and sports? In what ways were these experiences lodged in individual bodies and the body politic, and how were those processes connected?

A tentative reading list includes: Molly H. Bassett, *The Fate of Earthly Things: Aztec Gods and God-Bodies* (U TX Press, 2015); Gabriela Ramos, *Death and Conversion in the Andes: Lima and Cuzco, 1532-1670* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2010); Rebecca Earle, *The Body of the Conquistador: Food, Race, and the Colonial Experience in Latin America, 1492-1700* (Cambridge University Press, 2012); Tamara Walker, *Exquisite Slaves: Race, Status, and Clothing in Colonial Lima* (Cambridge University Press, 2017); Nora Jaffary, *Reproduction and Its Discontents in Mexico: Childbirth and Contraception from 1750-1905* (University of North Carolina Press, 2016); Peter Beattie, *Punishment in Paradise: Race, Slavery, Human Rights, and a Nineteenth-Century Brazilian Penal Colony* (Duke University Press, 2015); Alejandra Bronfman, *Measures of Equality: Social Science, Citizenship, and Race in Cuba, 1902-1940* (University of North Carolina Press, 2005); Susan Antebi, *Embodied Archive: Disability in Post-Revolutionary Mexican Cultural Production* (University of Michigan Press, 2021); Brenda Elsey, *Futbolera: A History of Women and Sports in Latin America* (University of Texas Press, 2019); Diane Nelson, *A Finger in the Wound: Body Politics in Quincentennial Guatemala* (University of California Press, 1999).

