



**HI 332: Saints, Sinners, and Sisters:
Women and Religion in American History
Professor Anna M. Lawrence
CNS 11
Wed. 2-4:30**

Office Hours: Tues/Thurs 12:30-2:30 and by appointment
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Course Context & Rationale

Fairfield University is a private Jesuit institution, located in Southern Connecticut. The current enrollment is approximately 3500 undergraduate students and 1500 graduate students. The students are academically well-prepared, coming from public and private schools in the Northeast. They are also not terribly diverse. Nearly 100% come from the Northeast; upwards of 80% identify as Catholic. As a Jesuit institution, there is a strong emphasis on the “core”. This has the effect of compelling students to take a variety of classes, but they occasionally express resentment at this forced distribution. Teaching religion at this kind of institution can be challenging. The Religious Studies core requirement classes may be all the religious studies many students desire, and they may not find yet another course about religion compelling.

This class will be taught within the Department of History at Fairfield. All Fairfield students are required to take one History core course, which covers a very broad period of world history, 1500-1900. Aside from that core requirement, History majors need to take five intermediate courses and four advanced courses; this course would fall into the latter category. The advanced 300-level courses should be engaged in exploring the tools of historical research. The major is designed for students to have a broad sampling of different periods and areas of history. This means that they may not have any preparation for U.S. History or a concentration in any particular time period. Thus, I’ve designed the course to both “cover” the broad outlines of religious history in the U.S., while leaving time at the end of the course to focus on research.

A research course at this level calls for an egalitarian seminar-style design. These courses are capped at 15 students, but frequently run with 8-10 students. All the participants will be advanced History majors. This course asks them to do a sophisticated analysis of historiography by completing book reviews, and to engage in lengthy online discussion postings in response to the readings. There are no comprehensive exams, which I feel is appropriate to this upper-level class. The final research paper is the central assignment for this class. As they are advanced students, my goal is to invest them with a fair amount of self-direction and choice. This component of choice is elemental in the final research project, but they will also be making choices about other assignments in the earlier portion of the course.

Course Description and Goals

Why have women been the majority of religious congregations? What sorts of gender structures are central to religious groups in America? How has women's relationship to religious institutions changed over time? This course will help foster students' ability to think, read, and write about American religious history and women's history from an informed and critical perspective.

This course will span the time period from the colonial era to the twentieth century. However, instead of seeking to be complete in its coverage (since this would be impossible), this course will focus on key periods in the formation of American women's relationship to religious ideas and institutions. Topics include: Native American women and Colonialism, Puritan Women, Quakerism, Witchcraft Accusations, Evangelicalism, American Catholic Life, Black Churches in America, Social Movements, Spiritualism, the L.D.S. Church, Jewish Women in America, Fundamentalism, Muslim Women, Modern Witchcraft, Goddess Movements, and Buddhism. A final paper at the end of the term will allow students to examine an area of particular interest to them, choosing from among several religious movements that can be examined from a historical perspective.

Participation:

Attendance will be taken each class, and your presence is mandatory. If you must miss a class because of a funeral, sports participation, or serious illness, you should provide the appropriate documentation to the instructor. Unexcused absences will have a serious effect on your participation grade. You are responsible for all material presented in classes you miss (whether excused or not), and you will have to rely on your fellow classmates (not the professor) to make up the material.

You are expected to contribute regularly to class discussion. One of the main goals of this course is for you to develop the ability to think and write about historical arguments, and an important step in this process is class discussion. Students are expected to read closely and carefully, and to come prepared to discuss the selected readings. Bring the readings to class with you, as well as your weekly responses and any notes. This class must be a comfortable place to share ideas; respect for your fellow classmates is essential. If you feel uncomfortable or find yourself struggling with the work, please talk to me in my office or on email as soon as possible.

Assignments:

Discussion Board:

Each week students will participate in the Blackboard Discussion Board. You will be given one or two questions to think about and answer as you do the readings. They should be complex answers, totaling approximately 1 page of single-spaced text. Your answers should demonstrate a careful reading of the

text, and include specific examples and quotations from the readings. Check Blackboard for the weekly questions. **Due each week by Tuesday at 8 p.m.**

Book Review Readings and Essay Deadlines:

Choose 2 books to review and discuss in class. You have a choice of topics, but you have to choose one from each category (BR 1/ BR 2). You will submit a 3-4 page review essay on your chosen books, and those guidelines will be posted on Blackboard. The aim of each paper will be to analyze readings and provide an interpretation of the central themes for this period. *No outside readings or websites are allowed as sources.* Please look ahead in the syllabus and see which topics are the most desirable for you. **No late papers will be accepted.**

-- BR I [Essay Due 10/07]

- Juster, Susan. *Disorderly Women: Sexual Politics & Evangelicalism in Revolutionary New England*. Cornell, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994.
- Brekus, Catherine. *Strangers and Pilgrims: Female Preaching in America, 1740-1845*. Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1998.

-- BR 2 [Essay Due 10/28]

- Foster, Lawrence. *Women, Family, and Utopia: Communal Experiments of the Shakers, the Oneida Community, and the Mormons*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1991.
- Braude, Ann. *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women's Rights in Nineteenth-Century America*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1989.

-- Teaching the Book:

In addition, the Reviewers will be taking responsibility for teaching the book to a fellow classmate, one who read the other book. Arrive to class prepared with summaries of the key historical events and ideas found in the book. Devise a plan on how to best teach these ideas to someone who doesn't know them. You are not allowed to collaborate or copy summaries of the book. You will turn in your summaries at the end of the class session. The summaries and your in-class activity will be evaluated as part of your participation grade.

Final Project:

Each student will work on a research project over the course of this term. Your research will examine an American religious movement or phenomenon, analyzing women's roles and the gender structures within that movement. You have to examine this movement from a historical perspective, incorporating material from the course as well as independent research. You will produce a **research prospectus, due 11/6**. The prospectus will include a paragraph outlining your topic and approach to the material, annotated bibliography and a list of questions or sub-topics. The final paper will be **15-20 pages in length, due 12/8**. In addition, you will do an in-class **presentation** in the final three weeks of the class, outlining your work-in-progress. Each presenter will prepare a handout for the class including: excerpts of key primary source material used in the presentation; bullet points of important selected secondary sources; and one graph/image that helps us understand the topic. You may select one or two sources for each topic, depending on your chosen research focus. You can choose to focus on one person and the history of their movement, selecting only one source from the list. Alternately, you could choose do a comparative topic, selecting two sources in the same topical heading or across two different topics. In-class research sessions will address how to approach primary sources differently, depending on the text. The following list includes letters, autobiographical writings, public speeches, novels and spiritual guides – your research and writing will require different approaches and preparations for each topic.

Possible research topics and primary sources:

Catholic activism:

- Day, Dorothy. *The Long Loneliness*. New York: Harper & Row, 1952.

Religion and antislavery:

- Ceplair, Larry, Editor. *The Public Years of Sarah and Angelina Grimké: Selected Writings 1835 - 1839*. Columbia University Press, New York, 1989.
- Palmer, Beverly Wilson, Editor. *Selected Letters of Lucretia Coffin Mott*. Urbana, Ill. : University of Illinois Press, 2002.
- Gilbert, Olive, Editor. *The Narrative of Sojourner Truth*. Boston: J.B. Yerrinton and Son, 1850.

Buddhist women:

- Imamura, Jane Michiko. *Kaikyo: Opening the Dharma: Memoirs of a Buddhist Priest's Wife in America*. Honolulu: Buddhist Study Center Press, 1998.
- Willis, Jan. *Dreaming Me: From Baptist to Buddhist, One Woman's Spiritual Journey*. New York: Riverhead Books, 2001.

Early American women preachers:

- Samuel Hopkins, Editor. *Memoirs of the life of Mrs. Sarah Osborn*. Catskill, NY: N. Elliot, 1814.

Wicca women:

- Starhawk. *The Spiral Dance: A Ritual of the Great Goddess*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979.

Early 20th c. evangelicalism:

- Semple McPherson, Aimee. *This is That*. Los Angeles: Bridal Call Publishing House, 1919.

Muslim American women:

- Kahf, Mohja. *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf: A Novel*. New York: Caroll & Graf, 2006.

Christian Science movement:

- Eddy, Mary Baker. *Science and Health With Key to the Scriptures*. 1875-1910.

19th c. Mormon women:

- Smart, Donna, Editor. *Mormon Midwife: The 1846-1888 Diaries of Patty Bartlett Sessions*. Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 1999.
- Beecher, Maureen, Editor. *Exposé of Polygamy: A Lady's Life Among the Mormons*. Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 1999.

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is a serious offense and will not be tolerated in this class. Any evidence of plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the class, and a mark of academic irregularity on your transcript. Plagiarism includes failing to properly cite any material, language or ideas from a source (i.e. lectures, textbooks, internet sources, etc.), as well as copying a fellow student's paper or a paper posted on the web. Guidelines for proper citations will be given in the paper assignments. See the Fairfield University Honor Code for further information on the penalties for plagiarism.

Grading:

Participation:	20%
Discussion Board:	20%
Book Reviews:	20%

Presentation: 10%
Final Paper: 30%

Required Books:

Catherine A. Brekus, *The Religious History of American Women: Reimagining the Past* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2007).

Allan Greer, *Mohawk Saint: Catherine Tekakwitha and the Jesuits* (New York: Oxford, 2006).

Anna M. Lawrence, *One Family Under God: Love, Belonging, and Authority in Early Transatlantic Methodism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

Pamela S. Nadell and Jonathan D. Sarna, eds., *Women and American Judaism: Historical Perspectives* (Hanover, NH: Brandeis Univ. Press, 2001).

****Additional required articles and chapters in the Course Reader are noted below.****

Schedule of Topics and Readings

CR = Course Reader

RH = Brekus, *The Religious History of American Women*

Week 1: Introduction to Studying Women and Religion

Reading: Catherine Brekus, "Introduction: Searching for Women in the Narratives of American Religious History" [RH].
DB 1

Week 2: Native American Women and Colonialism

Reading: Allan Greer, *Mohawk Saint*
DB 2
In class: Choose Final Research topics & Book reviews

Week 3: Colonial Religions & Witchcraft Accusations

Reading: Marilyn J. Westerkamp, "Puritan Women, Spiritual Power and the Question of Sexuality"; Elizabeth Reis, "Revelation, Witchcraft, and the Danger of Knowing God's Secrets"; Emily Clark, "Hail Mary Down by the Riverside: Black and White Catholic Women in Early America" [RH].
Mary Rowlandson's narrative, selections [CR].
DB 3

Week 4: Gender and Revivalism

Reading: Anna Lawrence, *One Family Under God*
DB 4
In class: Researching primary sources & organizing research questions

Week 5: Religion and the Early Republic

Book Review #1 Due:

- Susan Juster, *Disorderly Women*
- Catherine Brekus, *Strangers and Pilgrims*

Week 6: Gender, Race & Piety in Nineteenth-century America

Reading: Jarena Lee, *The Life and Experience of Jarena Lee* (1848), selections [CR].

Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," *American Quarterly* 18: 2 (Summer, 1966), 151-174 [CR]; Ann Braude, "Women's History *Is* American Religious History" in Thomas Tweed, ed., *Retelling U.S. Religious History* (Berkeley, CA: Berkeley University Press, 1997), 87-107 [CR].

DB 5

In class: Research workshop

Week 7: Social Movements and Spiritualism

Book Review # 2 Due:

- Lawrence Foster, *Women, Family, and Utopia*
- Ann Braude, *Radical Spirits*

Week 8: Women, Immigration and Migration

Reading: Ann Taves, *The Household of Faith: Roman Catholic Devotions in Mid-Nineteenth Century America* (Notre Dame, 1986), selection [CR].

Peggy Pascoe, "Gender Systems in Conflict: The Marriages of Mission-Educated Chinese American Women, 1874-1939," *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (Summer, 1989), 631-652 [CR].

DB 6

Week 9: Jewish Women in America

Reading: Pamela S. Nadell and Jonathan D. Sarna, eds., *Women and American Judaism: Historical Perspectives* (Hanover, NH: Brandeis Univ. Press, 2001), selections.

DB 7

Week 10: Fundamentalism in American Culture

Research Prospectus Due 11/6

Week 11: Faith, Race and Social Change in the Twentieth Century

Reading: Ann Braude, "Faith, Feminism, and History"; Amy Koehlinger, "Are You the White Sisters or the Black Sisters?: Women Confounding Categories of Race and Gender"; Kristy Nabhan-Warren; "Little Slices of Heaven and Mary's Candy Kisses: Mexican American Women Redefining Feminism and Catholicism" [RH].

Susan Moon, "Activist Women in America Buddhism," in *Engaged Buddhism in the West*.

Christopher S. Queen, ed. (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2000), 247-268 [CR].

DB 8

Week 12: Presentations & Discussions

Week 13: Presentations & Discussions

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Week 14: Presentations & Discussions

Final Research Papers Due 12/8 by 2 p.m. (No late papers will be accepted)