

Women in Early Christianity
Course 650A
Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary
Course Syllabus: January 2021

Instructor:

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Course Description:

This course traces the history of women in early Christianity with attention to women's lives and roles, definitions and descriptions of women, and depictions of women in early Christian literature and art.

Purpose of the Course:

The purpose of this course is to explore what can be known about women in the earliest centuries of the Christian movement focusing on four questions: how can we access and understand women's lives and roles?, what were the cultural and theological understandings of women at the time?, what did early Christianity offer women, or do for them?, what did women do for, or contribute to early Christianity? The sources for our study will be primary texts written by and about women; secondary sources such as books and articles, and evidence from material culture: archaeology, art, and artifacts.

Course Learning Objectives:

1. To understand the methods and sources available for the study of women in early Christianity, as well as the limits of these methods and sources.
2. To read primary texts from the early church, employing both a "hermeneutic of generosity" toward ancient, pre-modern authors, as well as a "hermeneutic of suspicion" regarding their rhetorical strategies.
3. To assess the evidence at hand and emerge with understandings of women's lives, roles, contributions and experiences in the early centuries of the Christian church.
4. To further skills in critical reading, thinking, writing, and discussion.

Course Requirements:

Online Access: This course requires the following technological capabilities:

- Access to the Moodle course management system
- Ability to download or link to material within the class Moodle site, including pdfs and other documents. *Microsoft Power Point software, Adobe Flash Player and Adobe Acrobat PDF reader will be needed. If you do not have these on the computer you are using for class you will need to download up-to-date versions of each.*
- Ability to submit writing assignments through the class Moodle site in MS Word format
- An active email account and the ability to send and receive email
- Ability to use the Zoom platform for class meetings and discussions

Course Accessibility:

Garrett-Evangelical is committed to providing a quality theological education and will provide reasonable accommodations for documented conditions. Students requiring specific assistance such as classroom changes, alternative ways of notetaking, different classroom procedures, or alternative testing formats are urged to request the appropriate accommodations from the director of academic studies/registrar. The director of academic studies/registrar can advise students on other support services and resources, for example, diagnostic testing. Students must complete a request for accommodations using the form available from the director of academic studies/registrar or through MyGETS documenting their condition(s) through appropriate verification methods.

Attendance and Participation: Attendance is expected at all synchronous class meetings on Zoom. Participation is expected in discussions and discussion forums. Attendance and participation count for 30% of the course grade.

Reading: At best, read ahead or at least, read concurrently with the course content.

Writing:

There are two writing assignments for this course. You will submit each writing assignment in MS Word format via Moodle. *All MS Word files submitted must be named with your first initial/last name/title of assignment!*

Reading log: All students will keep a reading log or journal as they read material for the course. The purpose of the reading log is to note insights, questions, surprises, challenges, and points to bring up in discussion.

Format: The citations to readings may be informal (Author name, page numbers). The reading log should be kept in MS Word format, single spaced, Times New Roman or Calibri 12 pt. font. Pages should be numbered; a title page is not necessary. Include your

name in the header or on the first page. You can have as many entries as you like, but the total for the journal should be approximately 20 pages of reflection.

The reading log is due in two sections at the end of the first and second week of classes.

Section I due Sunday January 17, 6:00pm CST via Moodle

Section II due Friday January 22, 6:00pm CST via Moodle

The reading log is worth 30% of the course grade.

Final Paper or Project: The final paper or project is a longer research or creative project. The topic should be drawn from one of the daily course topics. The paper or project allows an opportunity to go deeper into a particular figure, topic, or piece of literature or art. The project can be a formal research paper, or a course curriculum for an adult study or retreat you might teach in the parish.

Format: Paper or project to be submitted to Moodle in MS Word format, single spaced Times New Roman or Calibri 12-point font. Formal (Turabian) citations and a bibliography are required. Number each page and include your name in a header or on the first page. A cover page is not necessary. It should run 12-15pp. in length (20-25 pp. for PhD students).

Final Paper or Project is due Friday February 19, 6:00 pm CST via Moodle

The Final Paper or Project is worth 30% of the course grade.

Writing and Citations

Expectations for the format of the final paper/project and use of citations is consistent with the protocols and instructions outlined in the GETS *Formatting, Style, and Citation Guide* found on the course Moodle Page and on the GETS website.

Grading: This course follows Garrett-Evangelical's grading scale as described in the Academic Handbook, page 26:

C range grades on written work indicate a partial engagement with the material; lack of accuracy in describing names, dates and terms; sloppiness in grammar, spelling and punctuation; incorrect use of citations and lack of coherence in chronology and expression of ideas. C range grades in discussion indicate little engagement with the readings, few insights or questions that indicate the student is thinking critically about the material, and/or focus on material or content not relevant to the subject matter of the course.

B range grades on written work indicate an adequate engagement with the material; general accuracy in describing names, dates, and terms; general competency in grammar spelling and punctuation; correct use of citations; and basic coherence in chronology and expression of ideas. B range grades in discussion indicate adequate engagement with the readings, basic insights or

questions, and the ability to stay on subject and to reflect upon what others are saying and contributing.

A range grades on written work indicate a *thorough* engagement with the material; *complete accuracy* in describing names, dates, and terms; *precision* in grammar, spelling and punctuation; flawless use of citations **and** a sophistication, elegance and clarity of expression such that the writing shows comprehension and creative engagement with ideas. A range grades in discussion indicate substantial engagement with the readings, critical thinking, generous listening, and engaging questions.

There is no A+ on the GETS grading scale.

Academic Ethics and Plagiarism: All work for this course must conform to the Seminary's standards of academic ethics, including, but not limited to the understanding that cheating and plagiarism are unacceptable. Under the GETS plagiarism policy, the following constitute improper use of sources:

- Failure to put direct citations (word-for-word quotes) in "quotation marks."
- Failure to provide complete citations (this course follows the Turabian protocol, see more below).
- Paraphrasing or borrowing the author's main ideas but changing a few words in a sentence
- Borrowing the structure and main ideas of an author's sentence while rearranging or substituting words
- Cutting and pasting from uncited sources and passing the work off as the student's own

See the complete Plagiarism Policy in the *Academic Handbook* and familiarize yourself with it before the beginning of the term.

Papers with improper use of sources, insufficient citation, or plagiarized material will automatically result in an F on the assignment in question and a report of a first incidence of plagiarism to the Registrar's Office. If the Registrar verifies that there is a second incident, the assignment will result in an F and be referred to the Academic Dean, which could result in failure of the course or expulsion from the seminary.

Policies:

- Late assignments cannot be accepted without discussion with the Instructor. The instructor is reluctant to accept late assignments because this usually consigns students to falling further behind in coursework.
- All assignments must be completed to receive a passing grade for the course.
- The instructor does not grant extensions on course work except in cases of illness or crises documented by the Dean of Students Office.
- If you use GETS editing assistance, you must plan your work so that your papers in this class are still submitted by the due dates.

Required Books (prices reflect Amazon.com paperbacks):

Cohick, Lynn and Amy Brown Hughes, *Christian Women in the Patristic World: Their Influence, Authority, and Legacy in the Second through Fifth Centuries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing House, 2017) ISBN: 978-0801039553 \$23.79

Madigan, Kevin and Carolyn Osiek, *Ordained Women in the Early Church: A Documentary History* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005)
ISBN: 0-801879329 \$30.00

Miller, Patricia Cox, ed., *Women in Early Christianity: Translations from Greek Texts* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005)
ISBN: 978-0813214177 \$34.95

Swan, Laura, *The Forgotten Desert Mothers: Sayings, Lives, and Stories of Early Christian Women* (New York: Paulist Press, 2001) ISBN: 0-809140160 \$16.00

White, Carolinne, ed., *Lives of Roman Christian Women* (New York: Penguin Books, 2010) ISBN: 978-0141441931 \$19.00

Supplemental (Recommended for MTS/PhD students):

Berger, Teresa, *Gender Differences and the Making of Liturgical History* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2011) ISBN: 978-1409426981 \$51.87

Cohick, Lynn, *Women in the World of the Earliest Christians: Illuminating Ancient Ways of Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing House, 2009) ISBN: 978-0801031724 \$25.39

Eisen, Ute, *Women Officeholders in Early Christianity: Epigraphical and Literary Studies* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2000) ISBN: 0-814659500 \$42.10

MacDonald, Margaret Y. and Carolyn Osiek, *A Woman's Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006) ISBN: 0-80063771 \$20.21

Course Schedule and Reading, Writing, and Discussion Assignments

Monday January 11

Course Introduction

Course meeting on Zoom, 9:30-11:30am

Introductions

Review of Syllabus

Slides and lecture:

Maps and Timeline

Methods and Sources for studying women in early Christianity

Cultural and Theological Understandings of women and womanhood

Read for class meeting:

Cohick & Hughes, timeline page xvii; Introduction pp. xix-xxxviii, Illustrations (use guide on pp. ix-x)

Cox Miller, timelines pp. 325-326; Introduction pp. 1-14

White, *Lives of Roman Christian Women*, Timeline pp. vii-viii, Introduction pp. ix-xxxv; Map pp. 256-7

Monday January 11 afternoon- Tuesday January 12

Women's Roles & Offices

Asynchronous Learning

Content posted on Moodle

Read:

Cox Miller, Section I (pp. 15-70 except pp. 40-46)

Madigan & Osiek, read as much as possible

Wednesday January 13

Female Martyrs

Course meeting on Zoom, 9:30-11:30am

Read for class meeting:

Cohick & Hughes, Chapter 2

Cox Miller, pp. 40-46

White, pp. 4-17

Wednesday January 13 afternoon- Thursday January 14

Virginity & Monasticism

Asynchronous Learning

Content posted on Moodle

Read:

Cohick & Hughes, Chapters 1, 4

Cox Miller, Sections II & III

White, 19-48, 109-148

Friday January 15

The Desert Mothers

Course meeting on Zoom, 9: 30-11:30am

Read:

Swan, *The Forgotten Desert Mothers*

Friday January 15 afternoon-Sunday January 17

Read ahead if possible

Work on reading log

Reading Log Part I due Sunday January 17 6:00pm CST via Moodle

Monday January 18 (no class meeting, MLK Jr. Holiday)

Women Pilgrims

Read for Tuesday January 19:

Cohick & Hughes, Chapters 6 & 8

White, pp. 49-56, 71-108; 165-177

Tuesday January 19

Course meeting on Zoom, 9:30-11:30am

Tuesday January 19-afternoon

Images of Women in Literature and Art

Read for Wednesday:

Cohick & Hughes, Chapter 3

Cox Miller, Section V

Wednesday January 20

Course meeting on Zoom, 9:30-11:30am

Wednesday January 20 afternoon -Thursday January 21

Empresses and Patrons

Read for Thursday:

Cohick & Hughes, Chapters 8 & 9

White, pp. 49-56, 179-234

Thursday January 21

Asynchronous learning

Content posted on Moodle

Thursday January 21 afternoon & evening:

Read Judith Lieu, "What did Women do for the Early Church? The Recent History of a Question" (pdf article on Moodle)

Friday January 22

What did women do for early Christianity?

Final Discussion

Course meeting on Zoom, 9:30-11:30am

Reading Log Part II due Friday January 22 6:00pm CST via Moodle

****Final Paper or Project due Friday February 19 6:00pm CST via Moodle*