

Las Positas College
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Course Outline for RELS 3
INTRO TO WOMEN'S SPIRITUALITY
Effective: Fall 2008

I. CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

RELS 3 — INTRO TO WOMEN'S SPIRITUALITY — 3.00 units

An interdisciplinary and cross-cultural examination of women's spirituality with particular reference to women's contributions and influence in redefining feminine aspects of the divine. Examines the use of feminine experience as a primary construct for understanding the connection between women's spirituality and the sacred. This course will also explore how issues of gender, culture, and identity influence women's religious experiences. Explores religious texts, rituals, music, poetry and film.

3.00 Units Lecture

Grading Methods:

Letter Grade

Discipline:

	MIN
Lecture Hours:	54.00
Total Hours:	54.00

II. NUMBER OF TIMES COURSE MAY BE TAKEN FOR CREDIT:

III. PREREQUISITE AND/OR ADVISORY SKILLS:

IV. MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES:

Upon completion of this course, the student should be able to:

1. demonstrate familiarity with western and cross cultural religious traditions and women's roles;
2. explain the importance of language, speech and references in reconstructing feminist religious identity;
3. identify the historical and patriarchal influences from which a feminist theological discourse emerged and its impact in shaping women's spiritual identity;
4. examine the spiritual content in contemporary women's writing, poetry and art.
5. express self recognition of one's own spiritual identity through revising cultural myths and reclaiming feminine authority;
6. describe the characteristics of eco-spirituality and its relevance for contemporary feminist spirituality.

V. CONTENT:

A. Feminine Spiritual Awakening

1. Western Religious Traditions and Women's Roles
 - a. Women's roles in religion and society pre-1950
 - b. Changing social, religious and cultural paradigms post-1950.
2. Cross Cultural Mirrors of Ancient Womanhood
 - a. Chinese feminist images: Tien Hou, Tao, Gum Lin, Loy Yi Lung
 - b. African goddess: Songi, Mella, Mboze and Bunzi
 - c. Indian folklore and mythology: Shakti, Devi, Kali, the Goddess of Assam.

B. Reclaiming the Mystery of the Sacred in Feminist Theological Discourse

1. Language, speech and references in religious texts.
 - a. Hebrew Bible, New Testament, Koran
 - b. Tao Te Ching, Upanishads, Baghavad Gita, Buddhist Sutras
 - c. References to masculine and feminine aspects of the divine
2. Early feminine religious images and motifs
 - a. Simon Weil, Julian of Norwich, Evelyn Underwood,
 - b. Celtic Goddess Ceridwen, Black Madonna, Eastern Sacred Wisdom, Lillith, Artemis

C. Spirituality as Process

1. Dante's Divine Comedy as model for examining spiritual journey
2. Sacred rooted in experience, connection to what is present
3. Feminine mystery of the unknown

D. Creating a Feminine Spirituality

1. Contemplation
 - a. Meditation and mystical experiences of the divine
2. Engagement and Eco-Spirituality
 - a. Establishing metaphors from the natural world
 1. Cycles of life and death, birth

2. Circles of life, water, earth, seed, moon
3. The physical body, pregnancy, birth and mothering
3. Shaping and form giving
 - a. Reimagining traditional religious stories and cultural mythology
 - b. Creative Expression
 - c. Cosmos as Sacrament
 - d. Release individual identify for communal association
- E. Women writers, poets, artist on Spiritual Quest
 1. Authors: Kate Chopin, Margaret Atwood, Adrienne Rich, Ntozake Shange
 2. Poets: Alice Walker, Anne Sexton, Marge Piercy, Eudora Welty, Mary Oliver
 3. Artists: Jane Evershed, Meinrad Craighead
- F. Voices of Wisdom
 1. Emerging paradigms for Women's Spiritual Experience
 2. Redefining one's own religious experience

VI. METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:

- A. **Lecture** -
- B. **Field Trips** -
- C. Small Group Discussion and presentation
- D. **Student Presentations** -
- E. **Audio-visual Activity** -
- F. **Guest Lecturers** -
- G. Instructor Guided discussion of readings

VII. TYPICAL ASSIGNMENTS:

- A. Reading
 1. Select a reading from, Cries of the Spirit, and be prepared to discuss how the author uses women's spiritual experience to explore various images of the divine.
- B. Essay
 1. Choose a specific religious tradition to explore from a feminist perspective. Reconstruct that tradition through identifying specific stories of women as religious leaders, teachers, or prophets.
- C. Small Group/ Collaborative Learning
 1. Be prepared to discuss how contemporary feminist writings are exploring the topic of women's authority and authentic power. How do these terms contrast between feminine and masculine constructs.
 2. Interview either a religious female leader or choose a woman who you consider spiritual and examine with her aspects of her own spirituality. Compare and contrast how these are similar or different from your own.

VIII. EVALUATION:

- A. **Methods**
 1. Papers
 2. Oral Presentation
 3. Group Projects
 4. Class Participation
- B. **Frequency**
 1. Weekly journals
 2. Written Reflections throughout the semester
 3. Group Presentation
 4. Final Individual Presentation

IX. TYPICAL TEXTS:

1. Christ, Carol. She Who Changes: Re-imagining the Divine in the World. New York: Palgrave, 2003
2. Sewell, Marilyn. Cries of the Spirit: A Celebration of Women's Spirituality. Boston: Beacon Press, 2000.
3. Johnson, Elizabeth. She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse. Brentwood, TN: Faithworks, 2002.
4. Eaton, Heather. Ecofeminism and Globalization: Exploring Culture, Context, and Religion. Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003.
5. Gayles, Gloria Wade. My Soul is a Witness: African American Women's Spirituality. Boston: Beacon Press, 2002.

X. OTHER MATERIALS REQUIRED OF STUDENTS: