

Women and Religion

Theo 178/ WOST 278 Sect. 025

Prof. Moorman

Jan. 31, 2007

Paper #1: Paper Topic Choices: Choose Either CHOICE 1 or CHOICE 2

This is a five page paper assignment. If you would like to extend your analysis, I will read and accept a 7 page paper – but I will only read 7 pages.

Correct use of grammar and spelling counts towards clarity of your argument, and will be factored into your grade.

Papers are due **Friday, Feb. 23 at 9:20am.**

Late papers: Papers turned in Feb. 23 after 9:20am will be graded no higher than an A-.
Papers turned in Feb. 24 will receive a grade no higher than a B+.
Papers turned in Feb. 25 will receive a grade no higher than a B.
Papers turned in Feb. 26 will receive a grade no higher than a B-.
No papers will be accepted after Feb. 26th without consulting Prof. Moorman. Please let me know if there is an emergency or illness so we can make arrangements.
Rewrites, if offered, will not be available to students who turn in late papers.

CHOICE 1: Exegesis of a text:

Purpose: The purpose in writing this paper is to learn and to use a feminist exegetical method to gain insight into a scripture passage.

Directions: This assignment requires two choices. You must choose a methodology **AND** you must choose a scripture passage. Then, using the method you select, carefully read the scripture passage, engage in an exegesis of the scripture you select, and answer each of the questions listed below(see **Here's the Questions**).

Pick One Method:

- 1--Judith Plaskow's Jewish Feminist method
- 2--Elisabeth Schussler-Fiorenza's Christian Feminist method
- 3 --Method developed in Delores Williams' Womanist Theology
- 4--Method developed in Maria Isasi-Diaz' *Mujerista* theology
- 5--Amina Wadud's method for interpreting the Qur'an from a woman's perspective

AND

Pick One Passage: See p. 4

Here's the Questions

1. Where is this passage located? (Two or three sentences. This is located in _ written in _____. The primary purpose of this book _____. It is addressed to _____.)
2. What is the plain meaning of this passage? (Tell the story of the passage. USE Citations!! You might cite short passages and then explain the meaning.) (No more than one to three paragraphs.)
3. Using the method you selected, what can we learn about this passage from a feminist perspective? Questions that might be important for your method depending on which method you choose. This list is not exhaustive of the possible questions:
 - a. How should particular words be interpreted?
 - b. What does a hermeneutic of suspicion tell us about this text?
 - c. What does a hermeneutic of remembrance tell us about this text?
 - d. What role does the community play in interpreting the meaning of this text? How does the community reading the text determine the meaning of the text?
 - e. Why is it important to read this text in context of the whole Torah/ Qur'an/ Bible or by itself?
 - f. What is your social location? How might this influence your interpretation of the text?

(One possible approach to question 3 is to state a step in the method, describe what that means, and then apply the step to the scripture passage.)

4. What is the significance of this story from a feminist perspective? For example, what does Wadud want us to know about the creation story? What does Plaskow want us to know about Hannah?
5. What is problematic in this passage for women? From your method's perspective? From YOUR OWN perspective?

(You might consider theological questions we have asked in class: What does this say about women's agency? What does this say about women's relationship to God? What does this say about women's bodies? What does this say about women's power to speak?)

6. What is affirming or empowering in this passage for women? From your method's perspective? From YOUR OWN perspective?
7. What is a possible application/ use for this passage that is affirming for women? Example: How can this story empower women's leadership? What might be some ritual use for this scripture? What actions might this story dictate or inspire?

There is a possibility that not all of the questions will be relevant to the passage you select.

CHOICE 2: Write a Midrash

Purpose: The purpose in writing this paper is to engage the text, identify the major themes and development of the text, and to creatively re-orient the reader's perspective on the text by writing a midrash. The purpose of the midrash is to gain insight into a scripture passage and to help the reader to see in a new way.

Directions:

1. Select a scripture passage from the list provided. (See p. 4) YOU may not choose DINAH for this paper.
2. Write a midrash of your own from the point of view of a character within the scripture story. The midrash should be no longer than 2 ½ pages.
3. Why is this story significant for women? Is it significant? For all women?
4. What is problematic in this scripture/ midrash for women?
5. What is affirming or empowering in this midrash/ scripture for women?
6. Why is this story significant for women?
7. Identify a current application for this story from a feminist perspective. Example: How can this story empower women's leadership? What might be some ritual uses for this story/ scripture? What actions might this story dictate or inspire?

For an outstanding paper (CHOICE 1 or CHOICE 2):

Use at least two direct quotations from the class readings or book that you are using for methodology to demonstrate how you are reading and integrating the material. The quotations will not simply be "inserts" but will add insight into the discussion you develop.

Use direct quotations from the scripture you select.

CHOICE 1: Address all parts of the exegetical process you select. Identify clearly which methodology you will use in analyzing the passage you select. (Wadud, Plaskow, Schussler-Fiorenza, Williams, Isasi-Diaz)

CHOICE 2: Use detailed descriptions to make your midrash real and multi-dimensional. Consider emotions, physical space, color, etc.

Demonstrate excellent writing skills: mix of sentence structure, correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, excellent verb choice and agreement, paragraph development, use of citations.

Make "claims" about the text and offer "constructive" ideas in relation to the meanings you discover.

Follow the directions given in the assignment.

Scripture Passages:

Qur'an Passages:

The Events in the Garden passages from the Qur'an (See Wadud)

The creation of Humankind in the Qur'an (See Wadud)

Mary, Mother of Jesus in the Qur'an

Hebrew Bible:

Sarai and Ha'gar – Genesis 12:10-20; 16-18:15

Marion – Moses' sister

Dinah—Genesis 34:1-31

Hannah –1 Samuel 1-2:10

Tamar – 2 Samuel 13:1-22

Rape and Dismemberment of an Anonymous Concubine – Judges 19:1-30

Jephthah's Daughter – Judges 11:29-40

New Testament:

Samaritan Woman at the Well – John 4:1-42

Magdalene at the Tomb –John 20:1-18

The Woman Who Anointed Jesus – Matthew 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; Luke 7:36-50; John 12:1-8

The Woman Suffering from Hemorrhages – Mark 5:21-34; Matthew 9:18-26; Luke 8:40-56

The Syrophenician Woman – Mark 7:24-30; Matthew 15:21-28

The Annunciation to Mary: Luke 1:26-38

Mary's visits Elizabeth: 1:39-56