

BI259 Women in Early Christianity

Instructor: Ritva Williams

Elective

Open to all

1 Credit; letter grade or credit/no credit

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this seminar we will consider questions related to women's leadership in church (and society), such as why do some churches permit women's leadership, but many don't? How do the New Testament scriptures, early Christian practices and/or prejudices, ecclesiastical traditions, ancient and contemporary theological and cultural values factor into decisions made about women's leadership? Students will reflect on their own personal experiences of women's leadership in the church, as they delve into the history of women's leadership in the early church. Students will explore the meaning of relevant New Testament passages often used to prohibit or affirm women's leadership in the church today, thus gaining practice in historical and contextual exegesis and interpretation.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. To discover the roles that women played in the earliest Christian churches (*Practice of Curiosity*).
2. To practice their skills in historical and contextual biblical exegesis and interpretation (*Practice of Biblical and Theological Wisdom*).
3. To demonstrate an understanding how individual and communal positions on women's leadership are rooted in a nexus of historical, social, cultural, and theological perspectives. (*Practice of Complex Analysis, Practice of Engagement with Cross-Cultural and Global Dimensions*)
4. To reflect on the challenges of women's leadership in congregations where it is still not wholly affirmed, and in a world where women's leadership is still controversial (*Practice of Personal Faith and Integrity*).

PROCEDURE

The one weekly meeting time will feature plenary teaching and discussion in person and/or by Zoom. Asynchronous distance students will engage through video recordings of the class session, and asynchronous online interactions. Thus, students in all three programs (residential, distance, collaborative) can engage in learning together as a unified class.

EVALUATION

Evaluation will be based on weekly participation and assignments, and a final integrative paper (8-10 pages).

REQUIRED TEXTS

Carolyn Osiek, Margaret Y. MacDonald, Janet H. Tulloch, *A Woman's Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity*, Augsburg Fortress, 2006. ISBN: 0-8006-3777-1

April D. DeConick, *Holy Misogyny: Why the Sex and Gender Conflicts in the Early Church Still Matter*, The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011. ISBN: 978-1-4411-9602-