WOMEN'S STUDIES 302-3

WOMEN, RELIGION AND POLITICS

Fall Semester/1982

Instructor: B. Blakley

What is a woman?

Religions have told stories to define women, and political/economic systems have determined women's material existence. Can women discover an authentic identity apart from these stories and structures? Does religion have any "good news" for women?

We will begin by asking "what is religion" - how does it work, how does it give us a "real world" to live in, how does it bind us as individuals into corporate political institutions? Then we will look at representative texts from two religious traditions, the Judeo-Christian and the Hindu. The first separates sexuality from spirituality and oppresses women across that dualism. The second views sexuality as a revelation of spirituality and oppresses women within that unity.

We will then examine these two traditions to understand why they see women the way they do. We will look at views of sexuality, motherhood, power, wealth, the state, to locate the story they tell about women and the reasons for it.

Finally, what is the future for women and religion? Can women tell stories about ourselves as sacred and thereby contribute to our liberation? Or is religion always a part of our oppression?

Readings will be available in a xeroxed packet provided by the instructor.

Assignments

1. Term paper, worth 50% of grade.
2. Tutorial presentation, worth 25% of grade.
3. a) writing a "creed" or other personal religious statement or
   b) keeping a journal worth 25% of grade