Sexuality is an area widely understood to be controversial in Church teachings and traditional theology. In fact, the Women's Movement has identified the Church as one of the central structures in the oppression of women.

Sexuality is, however, a crucial dimension in our lives as women, and sexual victimization is thus a key aspect of our overall oppression. The Women's Movement has developed a significant practice, education and theory around sexual violence, analysing issues like rape, pornography, wife battering and incest, and taking action to stop these abuses.

For its part, feminist theology has critically examined Christian teachings about sexuality and related matters: male-female roles, the family and reproduction, birth control and abortion. However, it may be said that feminist theology has remained distant from the grass roots experiences of women, especially women who are victims/survivors of sexual violence. Feminist theology stays within the boundaries of traditional theology, and does not go far enough in challenging the oppressive structures and rituals of the traditional Church.

This course, therefore, will begin with the experience of women who are survivors of sexual violence. Many written testimonies have been published; some of us will know that experience personally. We will move then to examine feminist theory about sexuality and sexual violence, hoping to use theory to clarify and conceptualize the experiential dimension.

From this base, we will look at feminist theology, to see how adequate is its critique of the Church's traditional teachings. We will move to develop a "feminist spirituality" that emerges from women's experiences of sexuality and sexual victimization. Drawing upon feminist theory and feminist theology we will move beyond the critique of tradition to build new positions and new visions.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Butler, Sandra, Conspiracy of Silence, (Volcano Press)
Griffin, Susan, Pornography and Silence, (Harper & Row)
Reuther, Rosemary, Sexism and God-Talk, (Beacon Press)
*A reading package will also be available at cost.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Term paper (20 pp) - 50%
Short papers (3) on theoretical material (5 pp each) - 40%
Tutorial participation - 10%

Prerequisites: 60 credit hours