WOMEN'S STUDIES PROGRAM

SUMMER 1989

W.S. 303-3

WOMEN AND RELIGION

Sex Power and God: A Feminist Examination of Equality
and Gender Difference in Christian Theology

Feminist theology asserts that in its earliest beginnings Christianity
was a radically egalitarian movement, that Jesus was a woman-
identified man. Moving beyond the early community, Christian
institutions rapidly became patriarchal, setting up a hierarchy of
male and female, validating the earthly hierarchy with a heavenly
model. And throughout Christian history, gender difference, the
distinctiveness of man and woman, has been an important tenet of
Christian teaching.

Gender, gender difference, and gender inequality, are important topics
in contemporary feminist research and theory. How "real" is gender,
what are its origins, how is it perpetuated, what are its costs and
payoffs in psychological and economic terms? Is gender properly
analyzed as a difference, or as a hierarchy? What is "equality;" can
it coexist with "difference?" How do we remedy the costs of gender
difference?

This course will explore feminist questions and understandings about
gender, difference, and equality. We will then review key texts in
the Christian tradition, to test out their egalitarian or hierarchical
stance, and their view of gender. These will include the Creation of
Man and Woman (Genesis), Jesus' egalitarian ethic (the Gospels),
Oneness in Christ and Mutual Submission (St. Paul), various sources in
the Church Fathers and the theological tradition regarding the gender
hierarchy, concluding with the recent statement about women issued by
John Paul II, Mulieris Dignitatem.

We will conclude with a study of emerging feminist spiritualities,
some of which retain gender difference but valorize female over male,
others of which articulate a vision of "mutual autonomy" rather than
complementarity and mutual submission.

REQUIRED READING

Epstein, Cynthia F., Deceptive Distinctions, New Haven, Yale

MacKinnon, Catharine A., Feminism Unmodified, Cambridge, Harvard

"Mulieris Dignitatem" - Apostolic letter written by Pope John Paul II,

ASSIGNMENTS

20% Class presentation (oral)
30% 3 short papers (3 - 5 pages each)
50% Term paper (15 - 20 pages)

Prerequisites: 60 credit hours