WOMEN'S STUDIES PROGRAM

SUMMER 1990

BARBARA BLAKELY
Lec. Tue. 9:30-11:20
Tut. Tue. 11:30-12:20
W.S. 304-3

WOMEN AND RELIGION

Sex Power and God: A Feminist Examination of Gender,
Difference and Desire 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 the links between gender and sexual
desire, 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;"
Does sexual desire require gender as difference and as a hierarchy?

This course will explore feminist questions and understandings about
gender, difference, and desire. We will then review key teachings in
the early Christian tradition, looking for their understandings of
gender, the body, sexual desire, and male-female relationship.
Teachings of the emerging Church will be compared and contrasted with
those of Jesus and Paul, to test out the hypothesis that the radical
origins of Christianity were subverted by the later institution.

We will conclude with a study of contemporary "women's
spiritualities," testing their views of gender, difference and desire,
and evaluating them in light of feminist research.

REQUIRED READING

Epstein, Cynthia F., Deceptive Distinctions, New Haven, Yale
MacKinnon, Catharine A., Feminism Unmodified, Cambridge, Harvard
Brown, Peter, The Body and Society, New York, Columbia University

ASSIGNMENTS

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

Prerequisites: 60 credit hours

THIS COURSE MAY BE DESIGNATED AS 3 UPPER DIVISION CREDITS IN SOCIOLOGY.