Feminists in the Christian West have developed analyses and criticisms both of patriarchy and of patriarchal religions. They have articulated theories about the nature of women's oppression in religious traditions, and views about its resolution.

These analyses criticize men's domination of these communities and beliefs. Specifically, they often focus on teachings regarding the body and sexuality, teachings which are regarded as repressive and demeaning to women.

The most visible and influential of these critiques have emerged from a particular context: from women whose central experience of oppression has been on grounds of gender, rather than from women who experience additional oppressions based on class, race, ethnicity and/or sexual orientation. And, further criticisms developed from the Christian tradition have been assumed to apply to other religious traditions as well. So it has become important to enquire: are these analyses relevant and appropriate in other contexts: for non-white women in the Christian community, and for women in non-Christian religious traditions?

This course will attempt such an enquiry by looking at three particular texts/contexts:
(1) Christianity, through the eyes of a white Christian woman responding to challenges brought by black feminists; (2) Judaism, through the eyes of a Jewish woman exploring the emergence of Jewish monotheism against the gendered pantheon of the Ancient Near East; (3) Islam, through the eyes of a Muslim woman struggling with the contradictions between a progressive sacred text and a male supremacist culture.

These texts cannot be seen to be complete or representative, but simply as particular moments, key moments of transition or development, seen through the eyes of particular women. In addition, speakers will be invited to speak to the class, to enlarge our understanding of these traditions beyond that provided by the texts. Students who have personal knowledge of a religious tradition will be encouraged to research and reflect on it as well.

ASSIGNMENTS:

Tutorial Presentation and Participation 25%
Short Paper (5 - 7 pages) 25%
Research Paper (15 - 20 pages) 50%
REQUIRED READING:


RECOMMENDED READING (ON RESERVE):


