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.

Feminist analyses criticize men's domination of religious 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 only - rather than from women who experience additional oppression based on class, race, ethnicity and/or sexual orientation. Also, criticisms developed of Christianity have been assumed to apply to other religions as well. So it has become important to enquire: are these analyses relevant and appropriate in other contexts: Are they relevant 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, in context of 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 and analyses are not complete or representative. They are simply particular moments - key moments of transition or development - seen through the eyes of particular women. Students who have personal knowledge of a religious tradition will be encouraged to research and reflect on it as well.

REQUIRED READING:


RECOMMENDED READING ON RESERVE:
Douglas, Mary. *Purity and Danger.*
Hawley, John Stratton. *Fundamentalism and Gender.*
Plaskow, Judith. *Standing Again at Sinai.*
Sanday, Peggy Reeves. *Female Power and Male Dominance.*
Thistlethwaite, Susan. *Sex, Race and God: Christian Feminism in Black and White.*
Tucker, Judith E. *Arab Women: Old Boundaries, New Frontiers.*

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

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

**DESIGNATED CREDIT:**

W.S. 304-3 can be counted as Humanities credit at the upper level for the humanities minor, extended minor, joint majors or post baccalaureate diploma programs in the 95-3 semester only. Students must apply to the humanities program for permission.