

# CH 3XW3/6XW6 WOMEN IN CHRISTIAN HISTORY

## McMaster Divinity College

Winter Semester 2016

Tuesday

10:30am-12:20pm

Instructor: Gordon L. Heath

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*Specializations: Church and Culture, Christian Thought and History,  
Christian Worldview, Pastoral Studies*

### COURSE DESCRIPTION:

A survey and analysis of the roles and impact of women in the history of Christianity from the earliest churches to the modern period of global Christianity.

### COURSE OBJECTIVES:

#### *Knowing*

- to provide students with an understanding of how women have participated in, and contributed to, the life of the church over the centuries
- to help students place the contemporary debate over gender roles in the church in the larger historical context

#### *Being*

- to explore - and ultimately appreciate - the diverse ways that women have served in the church
- to create an awareness of the breadth and diversity of the Church, and provide a sense of “place” within the many church traditions

#### *Doing*

- to develop, in each student, an ability to assess documents and situations from an historical perspective – and in particular, to be able to assess critically the various claims made about women in leadership throughout the church’s history

### REQUIRED TEXTS:

- Ruth A. Tucker & Walter L. Liefeld. *Daughters of the Church: Women and Ministry from New Testament Times to the Present*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987.
- Mary T. Malone. *Women and Christianity: The First Thousand Years*. Mary Knoll, Orbis Books, 2001.
- Karen Jo Torjesen. *When Women Were Priests: Women’s Leadership in the Early Church & the Scandal of their Subordination in the Rise of Christianity*. San Francisco: Harper, 1995.
- Gordon L. Heath. *Doing Church History: A User-friendly Introduction to Researching the History of Christianity*. Toronto: Clements Publishing, 2008.
- There may also be the occasional journal article to be read (distributed by the professor in class).

## ASSIGNMENTS:

Along with completing the weekly readings, and participating in class discussions and debates, each student will be required to complete the following:

- Position Paper: Each student is required to write a three-page position paper.
- Research Paper: Each student is required to write a ten-page research paper related to their specialization.
- Biographical Presentation: Each student is required to present a class presentation on a particular woman in the church's history.
- Book Review: Students will be required to write a four-five page review of *When Women were Priests*.

*Advanced degree students are expected to fulfill all assignments at an advanced degree level. They will also be required to prepare an annotated bibliography of ten books and ten articles in the area of their research paper, as well as write an additional 7500 words for the research paper.*

## GRADING:

- Position Paper: 15%
- Research Paper: 40%
- Biographical Presentation: 25%
- Book Review: 15%
- Participation: 5%

## GENERAL COMMENTS:

- Textbook Purchase  
All required textbooks for this class are available from the College's book service, READ On Bookstore, Room 145, McMaster Divinity College. Texts may be purchased on the first day of class. For advance purchase, you may contact READ On Bookstore, 304 The East Mall, Suite 100, Etobicoke, ON M9C 5K1: phone 416.620.2934; fax 416.622.2308; email [books@readon.ca](mailto:books@readon.ca). Other book services may also carry the texts.
- Academic Honesty  
Academic dishonesty is a serious offence that may take any number of forms, including plagiarism, the submission of work that is not one's own or for which previous credit has been obtained, and/or unauthorized collaboration with other students. Academic dishonesty can result in severe consequences, e.g., failure of the assignment, failure of the course, a notation on one's academic transcript, and/or suspension or expulsion from the College. Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty ~ <http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/rules-regulations>
- Gender Inclusive Language  
McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all of its publications. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected. The NRSV and TNIV are examples of the use of inclusive language for human beings. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments.
- Style  
All stylistic considerations (including but not limited to questions of formatting, footnotes, and bibliographic references) must conform to the McMaster Divinity College Style

## Guidelines for Essays and Theses

<http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/sites/default/files/documents/mdcstyleguide.pdf>

Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.

- **Disclaimer**  
This syllabus is the property of the instructor and is prepared with currently available information. The instructor reserves the right to make changes and revisions up to and including the first day of class.
- **Due Dates**  
Essays must be handed in at the beginning of the class on the day they are due. All other essays will be considered to be late. Students may be exempted from the late penalty of 3% per day (not including weekends) if they attach to their essay a letter explaining the genuine emergency that delayed them. Late assignments (even ones with an extension) will *not* receive comments and constructive criticism from the professor.
- **Other**  
Please turn off your cell phone and/or pager before the class begins. Please do not attend class if you are ill and contagious (e.g. the flu). Respectful dialogue and disagreement is expected.

## COMMENTS ON ASSIGNMENTS

All assignments are due at the beginning of the class – anything else is considered to be late.

- **Position Paper (Due 12 January, in class)**

This assignment is a brief statement on one's own view of women in ministry, as well as one's view of the church's treatment of women in its history. More details will be provided in class.

- **Book Review (Due 19 January, in class)**

This four-five page review should answer questions such as: what is the author's thesis? How did she go about arguing her thesis (structure, sources, methodology, etc.)? What are the weaknesses and strengths of the book? What is the value of reading the book? See *Doing Church History* for further instructions. A part of your analysis of the book should be an interaction between your specialization and the book.

- **Research Paper (Due 15 March, in class)**

This ten page research paper provides an opportunity for students to pursue an area of research that intrigues them. The topic for the paper should relate to the student's specialization. Results of research will be shared with the class at the end of the semester.

- ***Church and Culture Specialization***

The primary focus of this research should be on a theological analysis of a past culture or our contemporary culture in regards to Christian attitudes and actions towards women. The focus should be relatively specific, rather than scattered (eg. "the idealization of virginity in antiquity" rather than "how the church viewed women in antiquity"). The interplay between Christian theology and culture should be a critical part of this analysis.

- ***Christian Thought and History Specialization***

The research for this specialization should focus on developing critical knowledge of a key movement in Christian history, or a deeper awareness of Christian theology related to women and the church (eg. ordination, monasticism, sexuality).

- ***Christian Worldview Specialization***

Research for this specialization should focus on a construction of one's theological position in regards to an issue related to women and ministry (eg. women's ordination, women and the family, mothering, celibacy).

- ***Pastoral Studies Specialization***

Research for this specialization can go in one of two directions. First, it can focus on a theological construction of one's theological position in regards to an issue related to women and

ministry (eg. women's ordination, women and the family, mothering, celibacy). Second, it can deal with developing a strategy for dealing with issues related to women and ministry in the local church.

- **Biographical Presentation (TBD)**

This class presentation is concerned with trying to gain an understanding of a woman's life and contribution to the church and society. In order to do this, you must not only study primary sources, but also secondary sources. As you study the relevant secondary sources you will come to realize that different authors may have opposing interpretations. These differences are important to note and understand. See *Doing Church History* for further instructions. Please distribute to the class a handout that provides a basic outline of your presentation and a bibliography for "further reading." (The professor will make photocopies if you provide the handout 24 hours in advance of the class.)

### **CLASS SCHEDULE:**

- Jan 5 Introduction to the Class  
Reading: *Doing Church History* (all)
- Jan 12 Women in the Early Church I  
Reading: *Daughters of the Church* (chs.1-3), *Women and Christianity* (chs.1-4)  
\*Position Paper Due\*
- Jan 19 Women in the Early Church II  
Reading: *Women and Christianity* (chs.5-7)  
\*Book Review Due\*
- Jan 26 Medieval Female Monastic Orders  
Reading: *Daughters of the Church* (ch.4), *Women and Christianity* (chs.8-10)
- Feb 2 Medieval Women: Sainthood and Motherhood
- Feb 9 Women as Reformers in the Reformation  
Reading: *Daughters of the Church* (ch.5)
- Feb 16 *Reading Week* (NO CLASS)
- Feb 23 Evangelicalism, Missions, and Women  
Reading: *Daughters of the Church* (chs.6-8)
- Mar 1 Women in the Modern West  
Reading: *Daughters of the Church* (chs.10-11)
- Mar 8 Women in the Global Church  
Reading: *Daughters of the Church* (ch.9)
- Mar 15 Research Paper Presentations  
\*Research Paper Due\*
- Mar 22 Research Paper Presentations
- Mar 29 Research Paper Presentations
- Apr 5 Exam Week (if needed)