Religion 387/2 GODDESSES AND RELIGIOUS IMAGES OF WOMEN
Tues 13:15-16:00 Concordia University, fall 2016

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COURSE INFORMATION

Description -- A survey of female divinity and feminine imagery in various religious traditions. Among the issues to be explored are: the imaging of goddesses as mothers; the conception of forces like fertility, energy, materiality, and knowledge as feminine; the correspondences and relations between goddesses and women; and the contemporary feminist recovery of the Goddess.

The format of this course combines lecture-discussion sessions with work in smaller groups. For most of the class meetings, you will be expected to come to class prepared to participate in discussion, having done the required readings as listed in the course outline below. In some classes, you will meet together with others in your group. There are five groups, each of which will focus on goddesses/ divine female figures in a particular regional/ historical context: (1) Ancient Near-east and Egypt, (2) Greek/Roman/Hellenistic cultures, (3) Indigenous traditions, (4) India, (5) Christianity. You will become part of a group in the first week of the term.

On September 13, you will meet with other members of your group and each of you will choose a goddess or form/ aspect of female divinity belonging to your particular context – in connection with an article or book chapter that concerns this goddess (bibliography for each of the five contexts will be provided at the beginning of the term). On September 27, you will hand in a book report (guidelines will be provided with the bibliographies), which will be the basis for your presentation to the others in your group on that day. The group will thus be able to take advantage of the individual efforts of each group member, and pool their information about the goddess traditions in each regional/ historical context. The September 27 group meeting will take up at least half of the class time, while group meetings on other days will be briefer; on September 27, group members may wish to begin discussion about the issues to be considered in the class meetings and group presentations to the class in November (see below).

Following this, you will do further research on "my goddess" in order to prepare an essay (due November 1). Depending on which group you belong to, your essay on "my goddess" will be focussed around a particular issue:

- members of groups #1 and #3 focus on the issue - goddesses, goddess worship, and women's lives (group presentation Nov 8)
- members of groups #4 and #5 focus on the issue singularity, multiplicity, variability – the goddess(es) as female/ "the feminine"? (group presentation Nov 15)
- members of group #2 focus on the issue the goddess in history – eclipse (?) and "recovery" of the goddess (group presentation Nov 22)

On November 1, you will hand in your issue essays, and will also meet with other members of your group to discuss your issue-focussed group presentations (November 8, 15, and 22), which will draw on the work you have individually done for your issue essays. The final "my goddess" assignment is due the last day of class, and is a reflection paper. Guidelines for all "my goddess" assignments will be distributed early in the term.

Required readings -- A bound collection of photocopies of all required readings is available for purchase at the Concordia University book store (in the library building).

Course requirements and evaluation -- You must attend the weekly class meetings, coming to class prepared to participate, having done the readings as they are assigned in the course outline below.

Your final mark will be calculated as follows:

Participation ----------5%
"my goddess" book report (due September 27) ---------- 20%
"my goddess" issue essay (due November 1) ---------- 30%
"my goddess" reflection paper (due November 29) ---------- 15%
take-home exam (due December 13) ---------- 30%

regular attendance in class is a course requirement,
and it is essential that you be present on September 13, September 27, November 1, and the class meeting in November when your group makes a presentation

OUTLINE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

readings should be done in advance of the class for which they are assigned.

September 6: INTRODUCTION

Sept 13: The Concept of the Goddess/ Prehistoric Goddesses
GROUP MEETING FOR GODDESS/ BOOK REPORT ASSIGNMENTS

- Wood, Juliette, "The Concept of the Goddess," pp. 8-25 in The Concept of the Goddess, ed. Billington and Green (xiv + 192pp; London: Routledge, 1996)
- Reuther, Rosemary Radford, "Gender and the Problem of Prehistory," pp.13-40 & 311-316, in her Goddesses and the Divine Feminine: A Western Religious History (ix + 381pp; Berkeley: Univ of California Press, 2005
- Gimbutas, Marija, "Women and Culture in Goddess-Oriented Old Europe," pp. 63-71 in Weaving the Visions, ed. Plaskow & Christ (vii + 359pp; San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989)

Sept 20: Goddesses of Mesopotamia and Egypt

- Ochshorn, J."Ishtar and her Cult," pp. 16-27 in The Book of the Goddess, ed. C. Olson (x + 261pp; NY: Crossroad, 1983)
- Hollis, S. "Goddesses and Sovereignty in Ancient Egypt" chap 13 (pp. 215-232) in Goddesses who Rule, ed. E. Benard & B. Moon (xii + 259pp; Oxford University Press, 2000)

Sept 27: Goddesses in the ancient neareast and in early Judaism
"MY GODDESS" BOOK REPORT DUE/ GROUP MEETING
Frymer-Kensky, T. In the Wake of the Goddesses: chap. 13 "Asherah and Abundance" (pp. 153-161 & 264-266) (xi + 292pp; NY: The Free Press, 1992)
"Eve" pp. 79-83 in Women in Scripture, ed. Carol Meyers (xv + 592pp; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000)

October 4: Goddesses in Ancient Greece and the Hellenistic world
The Homeric Hymn to Demeter, trans. Helene P. Foley, and "The Eleusinian Mysteries and Women's Rites" (16pp. & pp. 65-77) in her The Homeric Hymn to Demeter (xvi + 297pp; Princeton Univ Press, 1994).
Cole, S. "Demeter in the Ancient Greek City and its Countryside" pp. 133-154 in Oxford Readings in Greek Religion, ed. R. Buxton (ix+372pp; Oxford University Press).
Stehle, Eva, "Thesmophoria and Eleusinian Mysteries: The Fascination of Women's Secret Ritual" pp. 165-185 in Finding Persephone: Women's Rituals in the Ancient Mediterranean, ed. M. Parca & A. Tzanetou (xiv+327pp; Bloomington: Indiana Univ Press, 2007).
Egan, R."Isis: Goddess of the *Oikoumene*" pp. 123-142 in Goddesses in Religions and Modern Debate, ed. L. Hurtado (viii + 227pp; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990)

October 11: Goddesses in indigenous traditions
Talamantez, Ines, "The Presence of Isanaklesh: The Apache Female Deity and the Path of Pollen," pp. 290-300 in Unspoken Worlds: Women's Religious Lives, ed. Falk & Gross (xviii + 310pp; Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2001)
Kroger, J. & Patrizia Granziera, pp. 13-25 and 169-220 ("Aztec Goddess Images") in Aztec Goddesses and Christian Madonnas: Images of the Divine Feminine in Mexico (xviii + 327pp; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012)

October 18: Goddesses and Christianity
Kinsley, D. "Mary: Virgin, Mother, and Queen,"chap. 10 (pp. 215-260) in The Goddesses' Mirror (xx + 320pp; Albany: SUNY Press, 1989)
Christian, William, "Mary of the Cross in Castile," pp. 57-93 (part of chapter 1) and 228-232 (notes) in his Apparitions in Late Medieval and Renaissance Spain (x + 349pp; Princeton Univ Press, 1981).
The Story of Guadalupe: Luis Laso de la Vega's *Huci tlamahuicoltica* of 1649, ed. and trans. by L. Sousa, et al, pp. 1-7, 49, and 61-93 (xi + 151pp; Stanford Univ Press, 1998).

October 21: Goddesses of India
Dehejia, Vidya, "Encountering Devi," pp. 13-35 in Devi: The Great Goddess (408pp; Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institute, 1999)
Menon, Usha, "Mahadevi as Mother: The Oriya Hindu Vision of Reality," pp. 37-54 in Seeking Mahadevi: Constructing the Identities of the Hindu Great Goddess, ed. T. Pintchman (xiii + 254pp; Albany: SUNY, 2001)
Harman, W. chap 2 (pp. 33-50) in Goddesses who Rule, ed. E. Benard & B. Moon (xii + 259pp; Oxford University Press, 2000)

November 1: Goddesses in Buddhism and East Asia
"MY GODDESS" ISSUE ESSAY DUE/ GROUP MEETING

Merz, Brigitte, "Wild Goddess and Mother of Us All: Some Preliminary Remarks on the Cult of the Goddess Harati in Nepal" pp. 343-354 in Wild goddesses in India and Nepal, ed. A.Michaels, et.al. (574pp; Bern/ New York : P. Lang, 1996)

Reed, Barbara, "The Gender Symbolism of Kuan-yin Bodhisattva" pp. 159-180 in Buddhism, Sexuality and Gender, ed. J.I. Cabezon (xix + 241pp; Albany: SUNY Press, 1992)

Nakamura, Kyoko Motomochi, "The Significance of Amaterasu in Japanese Religious History" pp. 176-189 in The Book of the Goddess, ed. C. Olson (x + 261pp; NY: Crossroad, 1983)

Nov 8: Issue: goddesses, goddess worship, and women's lives
ISSUE PRESENTATIONS BY ANCIENT NEAREAST/ EGYPT AND INDIGENOUS TRADITIONS GROUPS
CLASS READINGS:

Pomeroy, Sarah, "The Role of Women in the Religion of the Romans," chapter 10 (pp. 205-236 & 248-259) in her Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity (xiii + 265pp; NY: Schocken, 1975)

Mohanty, B. "Lakshmi and Alakshmi: The Kojagari Lakshmi Vrata Katha of Bengal," pp. 185-202 in The Constant and Changing Faces of the Goddess: Goddess Traditions of Asia, ed. D. Shimkhada & P. Herman. (xi + 294pp; Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008)

Nov 15: Issue: singularity, multiplicity, variability – the goddess(es) as female/ "the feminine"?
ISSUE PRESENTATIONS BY INDIA AND CHRISTIANITY GROUPS
CLASS READINGS:

Cabezon, Jose, chapter 8 (pp. 181-199) in Buddhism, Sexuality and Gender, ed. J.I. Cabezon (xix + 241pp; Albany: SUNY Press, 1992)

Hackett, J. "Can A Sexist Model Liberate Us?" Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion 5 (1989) 65-76.

Nov 22: Issue: the goddess in history – eclipse (?) and "recovery" of the goddess
ISSUE PRESENTATION BY CLASSICAL/HELLENISTIC GROUP
CLASS READINGS:

Christ, Carol, "Why Women Need the Goddess," pp. 273-287 in Womanspirit Rising, ed. Christ and Plaskow (287pp; San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979)

Pintchman, Tracy, "Is the Hindu Goddess Tradition a Good Resource…" pp. 187-202 in Is the Goddess a Feminist? The Politics of South Asian Goddesses, ed. Hiltebeitel & Erndl (287pp; NY: NYU Press, 2000)

Nov 29: Voices of contemporary thealogians and concluding reflections
"MY GODDESS" REFLECTION PAPER DUE / TAKE-HOME EXAM DISTRIBUTED

"In Search of a Prepatriarchal Vision": Charlene Spretnak's "The Myth of Demeter and Persephone," pp. 103-113 in The Long Journey Home: Revisioning the Myth of Demeter and Persephone for Our Time, ed. Christine Downing (xii + 301pp; Boston: Shambala,

1994)
Starhawk, "Witchcraft as Goddess Religion, pp. 49-56 in The Politics of Women's Spirituality, ed. C. Spretnak (xxx + 590pp; NY: Anchor, 1982)