REL 4146 Feminist Theology and Ethics

Fall 2020

Professor Grisel d’Elena

Office hours: DM 224, By appointment only

Contact: gdelena@fiu.edu

About the Professor

Grisel d’Elena is currently pursuing her PhD in International Relations at FIU’s School of International and Public Affairs and for three years has served as the Academic Advisor for FIU’s Honors College and Pre-Law Advising. She has performed fieldwork abroad with U.N. officials, refugee coalition members and ethnic minorities, specifically Southeast Asia, where she began to investigate the Rohingya Muslim ethnic group in Myanmar. As victims of systematic, state-sponsored persecution, she began to question why they faced such discrimination. This question led to the Buddhist 969 Movement in Myanmar, which contributes to the isolation and oppression of the Rohingya. Grisel was able to interview Time Magazine’s “Buddhist Terror” U Ashin Wirathu and provide feedback directly from the source of the violence for her ethnographic work. This became the focus of her Master’s thesis, “The Gender Problem of Buddhist Nationalism in Myanmar: The 969 Movement and Theravada Nuns.” This work has been shared nationally in academic conferences, colleges and local outreach programs for the youth about global awareness.

Course Description and Purpose

This course explores the questions surrounding Women and Theology. Are Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam as traditionally practiced, conducive to the full flourishing of women? Are they inclusive of women of color, trans women, or working women in general? Can these theological texts be interpreted as conducive to the flourishing of women in modern society? We will address these questions in the context of assigned readings focused on issues such as feminist reconstruction of Christianity, more inclusive ways of naming and imaging the Divine, and women’s personal accounts about their own spiritual journeys.
**Course Objectives**

1. Students will acquire, assimilate, and apply knowledge relating to several religious traditions and feminist theology.
2. Students will respond to the complexities of the enduring problems of gender bias in religion by using the resources of feminist critical analysis.
3. Students will read and analyze thought-provoking texts, communicate effectively and listen actively as we discuss said texts, and write discussions and an essay explaining their comprehension and interpretation of those texts.
4. Students will learn about the ways spiritual well-being may contribute to a balanced life by learning how some followers of traditional religions have reinterpreted their faith through feminist insight.

**Policies**

Please review the [FIU's Policies and Netiquette](#) webpage. The policies webpage contains essential information regarding guidelines relevant to all courses at FIU, as well as additional information about acceptable netiquette for online courses.

As a member of the FIU community you are expected to be knowledgeable about the behavioral expectations set forth in the [FIU Student Code of Conduct](#).

**Technical Requirements and Skills**

Please go to the "[What's Required](#)") web page to find out more information on this subject.

Please visit our [Technical Requirements](#) webpage for additional information.

**Accessibility and Accommodation**

The Disability Resource Center collaborates with students, faculty, staff, and community members to create diverse learning environments that are usable, equitable, inclusive and sustainable. The DRC provides FIU students with disabilities the necessary support to successfully complete their education and participate in activities available to all students. If you have a diagnosed disability and plan to utilize academic accommodations, please contact the Center at 305-348-3532 or visit them at the Graham Center GC 190.

For additional assistance please contact FIU's [Disability Resource Center](#).
Academic Misconduct Statement

Florida International University is a community dedicated to generating and imparting knowledge through excellent teaching and research, the rigorous and respectful exchange of ideas and community service. All students should respect the right of others to have an equitable opportunity to learn and honestly to demonstrate the quality of their learning. Therefore, all students are expected to adhere to a standard of academic conduct, which demonstrates respect for themselves, their fellow students, and the educational mission of the University. All students are deemed by the University to understand that if they are found responsible for academic misconduct, they will be subject to the Academic Misconduct procedures and sanctions, as outlined in the Student Handbook.

Academic Misconduct includes: **Cheating** – The unauthorized use of books, notes, aids, electronic sources; or assistance from another person with respect to examinations, course assignments, field service reports, class recitations; or the unauthorized possession of examination papers or course materials, whether originally authorized or not. **Plagiarism** – The use and appropriation of another’s work without any indication of the source and the representation of such work as the student’s own. Any student who fails to give credit for ideas, expressions or materials taken from another source, including internet sources, is responsible for plagiarism.

Learn more about the [academic integrity policies and procedures](#) as well as [student resources](#) that can help you prepare for a successful semester.

**Panthers Care & Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)**

If you are looking for help for yourself or a fellow classmate, Panthers Care encourages you to express any concerns you may come across as it relates to any personal behavior concerns or worries you have, for the classmate’s well-being or yours; you are encouraged to share your concerns with [FIU’s Panthers Care website](#).

**Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)** offers free and confidential help for anxiety, depression, stress, and other concerns that life brings. Professional counselors are available for same-day appointments. Don’t wait to call 305-348-2277 to set up a time to talk or visit the online self-help portal.

**Required Text:**

Mary McClintock Fulkerson and Sheila Briggs, Eds. The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theology

**Other required course readings posted online (free excerpts posted on canvas) from:**

Rosemary Radford Ruether, Sexism and God Talk, ch 1-2 (on method in feminist theology) ch 5-6 (on
Christology and Mariology)

Introducing Feminist Theology: African American Womanist perspective, South Korean Woman’s perspective and Hispanic Woman’s perspective ch. 3

Unspoken Worlds: Chapter 8 Hindu Women’s Family and Household Rites in a North Indian Village

In Jung, Hunt and Balakrishnan, Eds, Good Sex: Feminist Perspectives from the World’s Religions:

Suwanna Satha-Anand, “Buddhism on Sexuality and Enlightenment”

Rita M. Gross, Buddhism After Patriarchy Chapter 10

The Veil and the Male Elite Part 1 Sacred Text as Political Weapon

bell hooks, Feminism is For Everybody Chapter 18 Feminist Spirituality

Audre Lorde, “Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power”

Ziba Mir Hosseini, "The Construction of Gender in Islamic Legal Thought"

Clarissa Pinkola Estes Women Who Run with The Wolves Finding One’s Pack Belonging as Blessing

Expectations of This Course

- All students must submit the course paper within the Canvas REL 4146 course, participate in weekly discussions and take the final exam online.
- Students are expected to attend class regularly. Absences will be taken from your participation grade after the first freebie.
- Students will treat other students, and the instructor, with respect. Disruptive comments or behavior will result in removal from the class. This may get controversial at times. You need not agree with instructor or students, but disagreements must be reasoned, and should not be repeated in ways that prevent discussion from continuing. Some of the course material may be disturbing for some. If you have problems, see me, but do not attempt to use the class as group therapy.
- Students are expected to come to class prepared, having read the assigned readings and ready to contribute to class discussions.
- There is no extra credit work in this class.

Assignments:

There will be weekly discussion posts, a paper and a final exam.

- The final will have two parts, an objective and an essay part, and will be taken online, on Canvas. Class will not meet for the final.
• There will be one writing assignment 7-8 pages, not including notes. Students should submit a topic and preliminary outline with at least five prospective sources by October 15, and the final paper by Nov 30. The topic must be based on an issue that is raised in the course readings, and must make an original argument. It should not simply describe what others have said, but use the data to create an argument of your own. It might help if you begin by asking a real question that exists within the issue chosen, and then set out to answer the question.

Students are expected to:

• Review the “how to get started” information located in the course content
• Introduce yourself to the class during the first week by posting a self-introduction in the appropriate discussion forum
• Take the practice quiz to ensure that your computer is compatible with Canvas.
• Participate fully on the Discussion Board
• Review and follow the course calendar
• Read/watch all the assigned materials
• Complete all assignments

Course Communication

Clear communication is vital to your courses.

Contacting me: Contact me by email at gdelena@fiu.edu. Canvas messages work too, but email is the best way to contact me. If you want an answer to your question or have a problem, this is the way to get me. DO NOT try to communicate with me about course housekeeping or problems through the Discussion Board! If you do not email me at that address, I cannot guarantee I will receive your message.

Please notify me via email if you believe you have encountered a quiz or test question that has been mis-graded or for which there is no clear answer listed.

Technical Problems: Generally, I cannot solve technical problems with the content or settings of the course and have to refer them to FIU Online. Your best bet is to contact them first. If you can’t resolve the problem, email me and I will get it fixed. Be patient!

For more information on professional writing and technical communication click here.
**Discussion Forums**

Keep in mind that your discussion forum postings will likely be seen by other members of the course. Care should be taken when determining what to post.

You are expected to read and view all assigned material and be prepared to discuss it intelligently in the discussion forum, the main mode of interaction for the course. Anyone may begin a discussion at any time on the topic assigned for the week or from preceding lectures or notes. Often, I will post a question for consideration, with the expectation that everyone will respond one or more times to the question and to other respondents.

You should post a minimum of twice per week, beginning with Week 1, to demonstrate your comprehension of the course readings and lecture materials. At least one posting per week should be original (some question or observation based on the week's materials), and at least one other should respond to other postings by me or your fellow students.

Original postings should be completed by Friday at 11:59pm and response postings must be completed by Sunday at 11:59pm. This ensures that there are enough original postings for other students to respond to during the week.

Postings should actually say something. Postings of "I liked X" or "I was surprised by Y", while welcomed, are not what I'm looking for or will grade on. I would rather you went out on a limb to say what you really think or to introduce some of your thoughts than that you say "safe" things about the material. Do you disagree with what was in the lesson? Why? This is a course full of controversial material. What do think about it? There's room for argument on all sides. Just always be respectful!

Each discussion week will be graded separately. Lateness will definitely cause a drop in your grade for that week, as will superficial responses. This is a major portion of your grade!

**Grading:**

Discussions / Participation 35% of final grade

Final Exam 35%

Essay 30% The outline and sources assignment will account for one third of this, and the paper itself for 2/3.

In grading the both paper and outline/bibliography, one third of the grade will be on the quality of the research, one third on the quality of the argument presented with special attention to clarity, completeness and originality, and one third on grammar, spelling, punctuation and compliance with an accepted academic style (MLA, Chicago or APA are all acceptable, as well as various social science styles).
Grading Scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93–100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A–</td>
<td>90–92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87–89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83–86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B–</td>
<td>80–82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77–79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70–76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>65–69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0 – 64%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>