

Course Syllabus

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REL 4146 Feminist Theology and Ethics

Spring 2022

Professor Grisel d'Elena

Office hours: By appointment only

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About the Professor

Grisel d'Elena is an Adjunct Professor for Religious Studies and Women's and Gender Studies at FIU. She is currently pursuing her PhD in International Relations at FIU's School of International and Public Affairs. For the last 5 years, Professor d'Elena has also served as the Academic Advisor for FIU's Honors College and Pre-Law Advising. She is also on the Board of Directors for U.N. Women | USA | Miami and a mentor for National Voices for Equality, Education and Enlightenment (NVEEE). She has performed fieldwork abroad with U.N. officials, refugee coalition members and ethnic minorities, specifically in Southeast Asia, where she began to investigate the minority women and ethnic Rohingya Muslims 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 and minority women in Myanmar. Prof. d'Elena 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 led to several conferences and publications to raise awareness to the issues the Rohingya face in Myanmar and Bangladesh. Her work has been shared in both national and international academic conferences, colleges, non-profits, and local outreach programs for the youth about issues related to race, class, religion, violence, and politics.

Course Description and Purpose

This course surveys major feminists and womanists on revelation, sexuality and body, liturgy, religious community and other topics across a variety of religious traditions.

REL 4146 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 beneficial to the burgeoning 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 NetiquetteLinks to an external site.](#) 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 ConductLinks to an external site.](#)

Technical Requirements and Skills

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

Please visit our [Technical RequirementsLinks to an external site.](#) 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 CenterLinks to an external site.](#)

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](#)[Links to an external site.](#) as well as [student resources](#)[Links to an external site.](#) 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](#)[Links to an external site.](#)

[Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#)[Links to an external site.](#) 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 course readings posted online (free excerpts posted on canvas) from:

- *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theology*, Mary McClintock Fulkerson and Sheila Briggs, Eds.
- *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*, Kristof and WuDunn
- *Sexism and God Talk, ch. 1-2 (on method in feminist theology)* Rosemary Radford Ruether
- *Introducing Feminist Theology*, African American Womanist perspective, South Korean Woman’s perspective and Hispanic Woman’s perspective by Anne Clifford

- *Unspoken Worlds*: Chapter 8 Hindu Women's Family and Household Rites in a North Indian Village
- *Good Sex: Feminist Perspectives from the World's Religions* eds. Jung, Hunt and Balakrishnan:
 - "Buddhism on Sexuality and Enlightenment" by Suwanna Satha-Anand
 - *Sanctifying Women's Pleasure*
- *Feminism is For Everybody* Chapter 18 Feminist Spirituality by bell hooks
- *Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power* by Audre Lorde
- *Women Who Run with The Wolves Finding One's Pack Belonging as Blessing* by Clarissa Pinkola Estes

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.

Assignments:

There will be weekly discussion posts, and final paper.

- 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 February 15th, and the final paper by April 24th. 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.

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](#)Links to an external site..

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.

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!

200 word minimum per initial post / 150 word response post / 2 posts / 1 initial post, 1 response post

Grading:

Discussions / Participation 40% of final grade

Essay 60% 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:

Letter grade	Percentage
A	93–100%
A–	90–92%
B+	87–89%
B	83–86%

B-	80–82%
C+	77–79%
C	70–76%
D	65–69%
F	0 – 64%

Weekly Schedule:

Week 1 Jan 10-16	In Class Lecture: I will be introducing you to the course materials and canvas navigation.	<p>At Home due Sunday at 11:59PM: Introduce yourself in the discussion board (DB).</p> <p>Read: Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theology (OHFT) Chapters 1 and 3 I uploaded.</p>
		<p>At Home due Sunday at 11:59PM: Post on DB!</p>
	In Class Lecture: Full discussion of Week 1 readings and topics discussed.	Read: <i>Half the Sky: Turning Oppression Into Opportunity Worldwide</i> by Kristof and WuDunn:
Week 2 Jan 17-23	Topic: What is Feminist Theology and what role does it play in the global imagination?	<p>Introduction and pp. 1-16 (Global situation of women)</p> <p>pp.109-122 (Why women die in childbirth)</p> <p>146-148 (Is Islam misogynistic?)</p>

Week 3 Jan 24-30

In Class: class lecture and watch videos.

Topic: Feminist Theology and Islam, Women, Religion and Childbirth.

At Home due Sunday at 11:59PM: Post on the DB!

Read: OHFT Chapter 26 and Article Feminist Theology and the New Imperialism

Week 4 Jan 31- Feb 6

In Class: class lecture and watch videos.

Topic: Globalization and Feminist Theology

At Home due Sunday at 11:59PM: Post on DB!

Read: Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God Talk*, Chs. 1-2

Week 5 Feb 7-13

In Class: Class lecture.

Topic: Feminism on Christianity

At Home due Sunday at 11:59PM: Post on DB!

Read: “Sanctifying Women’s Pleasure” from *Good Sex: Feminist Perspectives From World Religions*

Audre Lorde, *Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power*

		At Home due Sunday at 11:59PM: Post on DB!
Week 6 Feb 14- 20	<p>In Class Lecture: Full Discussion of Week 5 readings and topics discussed.</p> <p>Topic: Sexuality in Feminism</p>	<p>Read: 3 videos, one link and an article posted from <i>Introducing Feminist Theology</i>: African American Womanist perspective</p>
	<p>In Class: Class lecture and watch videos provided.</p> <p>Topic: African Feminist Perspectives</p>	<p>At Home due Sunday at 11:59PM: Post on DB!</p> <p>Read: OHFT Chs. 13, 14</p>
Week 7 Feb 21-27		<p>Due: Paper Proposals (Outline and tentative bibliography) due in Canvas Sunday at 11:59PM</p>
	<p>In Class: Class lecture.</p> <p>Topic: Indigenous Feminist Issues and Perspectives</p>	<p>At Home due Sunday at 11:59PM: Post on DB!</p> <p>Read: OHFT Chs. 6, 7, and 22.</p>
Week 8 Mar 7-13		

	<p>In Class Lecture: Full Discussion of Week 8 readings and topics discussed.</p>	<p>At Home due Sunday at 11:59PM: Post on DB!</p> <p>Go to: https://www.hrc.org/resources/faith-positionsLinks to an external site.</p>
<p>Week 9 Mar 14-20</p>	<p>Topic: Latin American Feminist Perspectives</p>	<p>Choose 3 traditions and read on their views toward the LGBT community. Post your analysis of three faiths and their views on the discussion board. Each analysis must be 200 words minimum, so total 600 words. Respond to one peer in no less than 200 words. Feel free to do your own research from credible sources to add to your discussion. If so, cite!</p>
<p>Week 10 Mar 21- 27</p>	<p>In Class: Lecture and watch videos provided.</p> <p>Topic: Trans Womxn Feminist Perspectives</p>	<p>At Home Post on DB!</p> <p>Reading and video are in discussion post.</p>

In Class Lecture: Full Discussion of Week 10 readings and topics discussed.

At Home due Sunday at 11:59PM: Post on DB!

Week 11 Mar 28 – Apr 3

Topic: Muslim Feminism

Read: Suwanna Satha-Anand, “Buddhism on Sexuality and Enlightenment” and *Unspoken Worlds*: Chapter 8 Hindu Women’s Family and Household Rites in a North Indian Village

In Class Lecture: Lecture on Women in Buddhism.

At home: No DB’s this week, focus on papers.

Week 12 Apr 4-10

Topic: Buddhist Feminism in Myanmar

In Class: Class lecture watch videos provided.

At Home: Final DB!

Rohingya women.

Week 13 Apr 11-17

Read: Clarissa Pinkola Estes *Women Who Run with The Wolves Finding One's Pack Belonging as Blessing* and *Feminism is For Everybody* Chapter 18 *Feminist Spirituality* by bell hooks

In Class Lecture: Spirituality and Womanhood

At home:

Week 14 Apr 18-24

Topic: Religious Subjectivity, De-Traditioning and Spirituality as empowerment for all womxn.

Final paper due Sunday Apr 24 11:59PM!!