

Bergen Community College  
Division of Arts & Humanities  
Department of Philosophy & Religion

**Course Syllabus**

**PHR-122 Women and Religion**

**Basic Information about Course and Instructor**

Semester and year:  
Section Number:  
Meeting Times and Locations:  
  
Instructor:  
Office Location:  
Phone:  
Departmental Secretary: [optional]  
Office Hours:  
Email Address:

**Course Description**

**PHR-122 Women and Religion** analyzes the relationship of women to the major religious traditions of the world, including Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and others. The course will examine such issues as religious statements about the nature of women, religious codes of behavior for women, and the extent and nature of women's religious participation within the various traditions.

3 lectures, 3 credits

General Education Course – Humanities Elective

**Student Learning Objectives:** As a result of meeting the requirements in this course, students will be able to

1. analyze, evaluate, and explain women's relationships to major religious traditions;
2. assess statements about women's nature made by major religious traditions;
3. assess religious codes of behavior addressed specifically to women;
4. evaluate the level of women's participation in various religious traditions;
5. describe and explain the interplay between societal norms and religious expressions of those norms;
6. locate, evaluate, and use effectively information from a variety of relevant sources;
7. state and support in clear, logical, and concise writing their own views on philosophical issues; and
8. participate actively in discussions of philosophical ideas and issues (re: SLOs 1-5).

In pursuit of these objectives, students will be required to read and discuss both primary and secondary sources. There will also be substantial critical and analytical writing projects.

### Learning Assessment

The Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) in this course are intended to be aligned with as many of the college's General Education Goals as possible. They are also correlated with the overall Learning Goals of the Philosophy Program. In addition, student progress in reaching the course's SLOs is to be assessed through various means of assessment, such as the "Suggested Means of Assessment" listed below.

Student Learning Objective	Suggested Means of Assessment
1. analyze, evaluate, and explain women's relationships to major religious traditions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Essay examinations</li> <li>• Quizzes and objective tests</li> <li>• Writing assignments</li> </ul>
2. assess statements about women's nature made by major religious traditions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Essay examinations</li> <li>• Quizzes and objective tests</li> <li>• Writing assignments</li> <li>• Graded class presentations</li> </ul>
3. assess religious codes of behavior addressed specifically to women.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Essay examinations</li> <li>• Quizzes and objective tests</li> <li>• Writing assignments</li> <li>• Graded class presentations</li> </ul>
4. evaluate the level of women's participation in various religious traditions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Essay examinations</li> <li>• Quizzes and objective tests</li> <li>• Writing assignments</li> <li>• Graded class presentations</li> </ul>
5. describe and explain the interplay between societal norms and religious expressions of those norms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Essay examinations</li> <li>• Quizzes and objective tests</li> <li>• Writing assignments</li> <li>• Graded class presentations</li> </ul>
6. locate, evaluate, and use effectively information from a variety of relevant sources;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing assignments*</li> <li>• Graded class presentations</li> </ul>
7. state and support in clear, logical, and concise writing their own views on issues covered in the course; and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Essay examinations</li> <li>• Writing assignments</li> </ul>
8. participate actively in discussions of ideas and issues covered in the course (re: SLOs 1-5).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Graded class discussions</li> </ul>

\*Writing assignments for the purpose of assessing student success on SLO 5 will include research and writing projects, possibly including term papers, in which a student identifies an information need, accesses and evaluates appropriate resources, and uses the information effectively and ethically for a specific purpose.

### Course Content

This course analyzes the lives and contributions of women in the major religious traditions of the world, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and indigenous, ancient and native religions. It examines religious views about the nature of women, religious codes of behavior involving women, feminine images and expressions of the divine, and women's religious participation and roles within the various traditions, including the analysis of religion's impact on women by female scholars.

**Special Features of the Course** (if any) [to be designated by the instructor]

E.g., the use of learning technologies in the course (Internet, PowerPoint, web enhancement via a parallel course website, etc.); the inclusion of technological literacy learning in the course; etc.

**Course Texts and/or Other Study Materials**

**Recommended Texts:**

There is no single textbook that addresses all the aspects of this course, although there are several very good books that examine women's relationship to individual religions. As these works, however, often presuppose a background knowledge of the religions that students may not have, it is probably wiser to use anthologies such as those recommended here.

Christ, Carol, and Judith Plaskow, eds. *Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion*. San Francisco: Harper, 1992.

Sharma, Arvind, and Katherine K. Young, eds. *Feminism and World Religions*. Albany: SUNY, 1999.

Very good, but more specialized, are the following:

Reuther, Rosemary Radford. *Women and Redemption: A Theological History*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998 (Christianity)

Gross, Rita M. *Buddhism after Patriarchy*. Albany: SUNY, 1993

Toubia, Nahid, ed. *Women of the Arab World: The Coming Challenge*. London: Zed, 1988

Sahab, Fatma. *Women in the Muslim Unconscious*. New York: Pergamon, 1984

Mitter, Sara. *Dharma's Daughters: Contemporary Indian Women and Hindu Culture*. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1991

Plaskow, Judith. *Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism from a Feminist Perspective*. San Francisco: Harper, 1991.

**Writing and Critical Thinking Requirement(s)**

Because PHR-122 is a General Education course, it requires students to complete a variety of critical thinking and writing assignments. These assignments may include class discussions and debates requiring the application of critical thinking skills, short in-class essays, out-of-class writing projects (journals, research papers, argument-analysis papers, book reviews, etc.), tests and examinations containing essay components, and so forth. Instructors will respond to and comment on students' writing in detail.

**Grading Policy**

A student's final grade for the course is based primarily on his or her performance on the required work for the course (writing assignments, examinations, class presentations, etc.) and on his or her overall mastery of the material covered in the course. A student's class participation may also be evaluated, and the grade thereon may be used as a factor in determining the student's final grade for the course; but a class participation grade will count for no more than twenty percent (20%) of the final grade. A student's research and writing work will count at least fifty percent (50%) of the final grade.

### **Attendance Policy**

#### **BCC Attendance Policy:**

All students are expected to attend punctually every scheduled meeting of each course in which they are registered. Attendance and lateness policies and sanctions are to be determined by the instructor for each section of each course. These will be established in writing on the individual course outline. Attendance will be kept by the instructor for administrative and counseling purposes.

#### **Philosophy and Religion Departmental Attendance Policy:**

Students are expected to attend class regularly and punctually. Attendance will be taken at each class session. It is expected that class will be conducted such that students will benefit in their written work by the lectures and class discussion. If students occasionally arrive late, they should be encouraged to enter quietly, not disturbing the class. If students miss class, they should be encouraged to use the course calendar to stay abreast of material. It is probably a good idea for students to find study partners and to exchange telephone numbers. Make-ups for examinations should be allowed by the instructor if, in the instructor's judgment, the student has presented a good excuse for missing the work. Instructors may penalize work which is late; however, the instructor's policies for make-ups and late work must be clearly specified on the student guide.

#### **Attendance Policy in this Course:**

[To be designated by the instructor]

### **Other College, Divisional, and/or Departmental Policy Statements [optional but recommended]**

<p><u>Examples:</u> Statement on plagiarism and/or academic dishonesty. ADA statement. Sexual Harassment statement. Statement on acceptable use of BCC technology. Statement on the purpose and value of faculty office hours.</p>
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### **Student and Faculty Support Services [optional but recommended]**

List support services, e.g., the Writing Center, the Math Lab, the Tutorial Center, Online Writing Lab (OWL), Office of Specialized Services, etc. Include information on the BCC Library.

Example:

### Student and Faculty Support Services

The Distance Learning Office – for any problems you may have accessing your online courses	Room C-334	201-612-5581 <a href="mailto:psimms@bergen.edu">psimms@bergen.edu</a>
Smarthinking Tutorial Service	On Line at:	<a href="http://www.bergen.edu/pages1/Pages/4787.aspx">http://www.bergen.edu/pages1/Pages/4787.aspx</a>
The Tutoring Center	Room L-125	201-447-7908 <a href="http://www.bergen.edu/pages1/pages/2192.aspx">http://www.bergen.edu/pages1/pages/2192.aspx</a>
The Writing Center	Room L-125	201-447-7908 <a href="http://www.bergen.edu/pages1/Pages/1795.aspx">http://www.bergen.edu/pages1/Pages/1795.aspx</a>
The Office of Specialized Services (for Students with Disabilities)	Room S-131	201-612-5270 <a href="http://www.bergen.edu/oss">http://www.bergen.edu/oss</a>
BCC Library – Reference Desk	Room L-226	201-447-7436

### Special Note on the Tutoring Center

The Henry and Edith Cerullo Learning Assistance Center encompasses the Tutoring Center, the English Language Resource Center, and the Writing Center. The website of the Learning Assistance Center is located at [www.bergen.edu/pages/2192.asp](http://www.bergen.edu/pages/2192.asp). Tutoring services are available for this course in the Tutoring Center. I strongly recommend that you make use of those services as we progress through the course. As listed above, the Tutoring Center is located in Room L-125, and its phone number is 201-447-7908.

### Include the following statement on Logos – The BCC Philosophy & Religion Club

#### Logos – The BCC Philosophy & Religion Club

Logos usually meets on Tuesdays during the Activities Period, 12:30-1:25 PM, but sometimes also on different days and at different times. I encourage you to join the club. Since you are interested in the study of philosophy, you should find the meetings and other activities of the Philosophy & Religion club very interesting. For further information, check the Philosophy & Religion bulletin board adjacent to Room L-325A or contact LOGOS Advisor, Professor Jennifer Lyden (L-326, 201-493-3540, [jlyden@bergen.edu](mailto:jlyden@bergen.edu)). (LOGOS does not hold regular meetings during the summer.)

### Include a Course Outline and Calendar [can be combined in a single syllabus section]

The Course Outline and Calendar must include all of the following elements:

- A daily or (at least) weekly schedule of topics to be covered.
- Dates for exams, quizzes, or other means of assessment. (This does not mean that all evaluation of students must be in groups and at the same time. Exams and other means of assessment can be listed as "to be scheduled individually.")
- Due dates for major assignments – e.g., when is a paper due; if the topic has to be approved, when; if an outline or draft is an interim step, when it is due.
- Any required special events must be included in the outline/calendar, e.g., a lecture by a visiting speaker, a dramatic or musical performance, a field trip.
- Designation of Student Learning Objectives – by number – for each topic (see sample below).
- A note to students stating that the course outline and calendar is tentative and subject to change, depending upon the progress of the class.

**Sample Format for Course Outline and Calendar**

**Note to Students:** The following Course Outline and Calendar is tentative and subject to change, depending upon the progress of the class.

Week(s)	Date(s)	Topic/Activity	Learning Objectives	Assignments/Events
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				
15				

**SAMPLE COURSE OUTLINE**

**Note:** This section of the departmental syllabus is under revision in order to bring it into conformity with the BCC policy on the layout and content of syllabi for general education courses.

**Required Texts:** Christ, Carol, and Judith Plaskow, eds. *Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion*. San Francisco: Harper, 1992.  
 Sharma, Arvind, and Katherine K. Young, eds. *Feminism and World Religions*. Albany: SUNY, 1999.

**Course Requirements:**

1. Students must complete all reading assignments by the date specified on the Calendar of Assignments.
2. Students must participate fully in class discussions of the assigned readings.
3. Students must write two short research papers (4-5 typed pages) drawn from topics listed on the Supplemental Assignment sheet. Papers must conform to MLA style of documentation.
4. There will be a midterm and a final examination.
5. Students are expected to attend all scheduled classes. Excessive absences will seriously affect a student's final grade.

Evaluation: 20% each paper; 20% midterm; 20% final exam; 20% class participation.

**Calendar of Assignments**

Week 1 Introduction to course; theoretical principles. Sharma and Young, pp. 18-21.

Week 2 God Language.  
 Mary Daly in Christ and Plaskow, pp. 53-2; Rita Gross in Christ and Plaskow, pp. 167-73.

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1/31/05; revised, 5/7/14, 5/8/14

- Week 3     Judaism.  
            Phyllis Trible in Christ and Plaskow, pp. 74-83; Judith Plaskow in Christ and Plaskow, pp. 179-84.
- Week 4     Judaism, cont'd.  
            Ellen Umansky in Sharma and Young, pp. 179-213.
- Week 5     Christianity.  
            Rosemary Reuther in Christ and Plaskow, pp. 43-52; Elisabeth Fiorenza in Christ and Plaskow, pp. 84-92.  
            **FIRST PAPER DUE**
- Week 6     Christianity, cont'd.  
            Eleanor McGlaughlin in Christ and Plaskow, pp. 93-106; Elisabeth Fiorenza in Christ and Plaskow, pp. 136-148.
- Week 7     **MIDTERM EXAM**
- Week 8     Islam.  
            Riffat Hassan in Sharma and Young, pp. 248-78.
- Week 9     Islam, cont'd.  
            Handouts.
- Week 10    Hinduism.  
            Vasudha Narayanan in Sharma and Young, pp. 25-77.
- Week 11    Buddhism.  
            Rita Gross in Sharma and Young, pp. 78-109.
- Week 12    African Religions.  
            Handouts.  
            **SECOND PAPER DUE**
- Week 13    Native American Religions.  
            Handouts.
- Week 14    Woman-centered alternatives.  
            Starhawk in Christ and Plaskow, pp. 259-68; Christ in Christ and Plaskow, pp. 273-287.
- Week 15    **FINAL EXAM** and course wrap-up