Sample Course Syllabus

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WS 599: Feminist Spirituality
Web Course
Instructor: Janet Lockhart
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Course Texts

Reading packet, available at the bookstore.
She Who Changes, available at the bookstore.
The Secret Life of Bees, by Sue Monk Kidd (available in the general books section, or through an online bookseller)

Course Description

This course focuses on the intersections of feminism and spirituality and examines the experiences of women in a variety of spiritual traditions. It explores several aspects of spirituality and the mundane, including language, ritual, creativity, and body; and invites students to create a personal relationship with their chosen spiritualities.

Course Objectives

As a result of having taken this course, students should be able to:

• Formulate a definition of “feminist spirituality”
• Identify ways in which women have resisted oppression within religious traditions
• Explore the influence of symbols and language on women’s spiritual experiences
• Explore the relationships between spirituality and other phenomena such as symbolism and body image
• Engage with feminists of various spiritual and religious backgrounds
• Begin to develop an empowering personal spiritual framework

Course Assignments/Requirements

Assignments

Online discussion: 150 points

Although an online course has relatively few opportunities for face-to-face interactions among class members, sharing your responses, ideas, and stories is an important part of building community within the class. You will do this by participating in weekly discussions with your classmates about the course topics. For each weekly topic, I will post a discussion question (related to the lecture, readings, and/or learning activities). You must post at least two messages each week, one your own thoughts and reactions to the question posted, and one a response to
another class member’s posting. To keep the discussion moving, post your original message by midnight Tuesday, and your response to another class member’s posting by midnight Thursday of each week. To earn credit, you must post messages during the week the topic is assigned. Make a thoughtful, substantive response beyond agreeing or disagreeing: Read and engage, pose questions, give examples or provide resources, elaborate on your classmates’ responses, and the like. The goal of this requirement is for you to create meaningful discussions about the course topics and help each student benefit from the wisdom and experiences of the others. This is the “collaborative” aspect of the course.

Responses to reading questions: 250 points
In addition to your online conversations with peers, you will absorb course content primarily through the assigned readings in the textbooks and online articles, supplemented by my online postings and lectures. For each reading, I will post a number of discussion questions. You must answer each of these, following the formatting guidelines for assignments, below. Make your responses thoughtful and substantive (generally, several sentences to a paragraph for each): show an understanding of underlying principles and theories of feminism that relate to each reading, connect the ideas presented in one reading with ideas in other readings, and show relationships between the readings and problems faced by feminists in your own spiritual community or in others you know about. Spend most of your weekly time on this activity. This is the “intellectual” aspect of the course.

Activity/reports: 200 points
For each weekly topic, you will complete an experiential learning activity. These will give you a chance to use the information you are learning to analyze issues and events related to women’s spiritual experiences, to interact face-to-face with people in your community, or to develop your own spiritual ideas and practices. Some of the activities will be written exercises; for the others, you will report on the activity after you have completed it. These will usually run from two paragraphs to a page. Your reports will give you a chance to process your experiences with the activity as you synthesize new knowledge. Let yourself be reflective and introspective in these (although, since I do read them, don’t force yourself to reveal anything you feel uncomfortable revealing). This is the “personal” aspect of the course.

Fiction Book Review and Analysis: 200 points
This is the first of the three papers you will write for the course. One aspect of feminist spiritual growth is sharing the stories and interpretations of others. Read the chosen novel for this term (see above), and write a 1500-1750 word response and analysis, using the form provided in the Course Documents section. Submit your book analysis, following the format requirements for assignments, by the end of week 4. This is the “external” aspect of your spiritual exploration.

Note: The listed novels are not part of the required WS 399 readings carried by the bookstore (however, they may be available through the general books section). You will need to obtain your chosen book yourself, from your local library, bookstore, or online book seller such as alibris.com, amazon.com, or barnesandnoble.com.

She Who Changes Book Analysis: 200 points
This is the second of the three papers you will write for the course. Another aspect of feminist spiritual growth is understanding the dominant forces shaping current religious and spiritual institutions, and some of the feminist challenges to them. You will read a scholarly work on one aspect of feminist spirituality, and write a 1500-1750 word analysis, using the form provided in
the Course Documents section. Submit your analysis, following the format requirements for assignments, by the end of week 6.

**Personal spiritual exploration/paper: 200 points**

This is the third of the three papers you will write for the course. The most important aspect of feminist spiritual growth as far as this course is concerned is for each student to make the spiritual personal. Choose an issue relevant to your own personal spiritual exploration, either from the suggestions in the lectures, an idea you got from the readings or discussion, or from your own experience and desire. Participate in or create a spiritual development or exploration activity that requires a minimum of six hours of involvement (beyond any reading you do). This can be either a solitary or a group activity. I will post ideas for spiritual exploration on the web page for each weekly topic, I will suggest others as they occur to me, and you are welcome to come up with your own ideas, or swap ideas with each other, as well. Submit a proposal (plan), about one paragraph to a page, for your spiritual exploration project no later than the end of week 7. Include the following information:

1) A description of what you will do, including whether you will work within a more traditional religious structure or within a new structure
2) Why you are choosing this particular experience
3) How it relates to one or more of the topics we will cover in class (if we haven’t covered your topic of interest yet, make your best guess).

I will review the proposal and provide comment with approval or suggestions to modify it. After you complete your spiritual exploration experience, you will write a 1500-1750 word response and analysis of your experience, drawing on the readings, lectures, and discussion from class as well as your own experiences, impressions, feelings, and observations. Include the following information:

1) What you did and why, including whether you decided to work within a more traditional religious structure or within a new structure.
2) How the experience affected or changed you.
3) How the experience relates to one or more of the topics we covered in this class. Be sure to bring in relevant readings from the various weekly themes and to give specific examples.
4) How you feel this has contributed to your spiritual development.
5) a) Whether this experience delivered what you expected, and why or why not, and b) Whether you will continue this practice or experience, modify it, or try something new.

This is the “internal” aspect of your spiritual experience. I encourage you to take this chance to speak in the personal mode; however, remember to relate your experiences to the theories and examples we have examined in class. (See below for citation requirements.) Submit your paper, following the format requirements for assignments, by the end of week 10 (Dead Week).

**Note:** Don’t procrastinate deciding about your personal spiritual exploration experience. This is going to be an introspective, thought-provoking experience, and it may take you some time to arrange the experience, carry through with it, and reflect on it enough to make a considered analysis and response. I’d like you to have fun with this! Give yourself plenty of time to do a thoughtful job.
**Grading**
I grade on the following scale: 90% = A, 80% = B, 70% = C, 60% = D, 59% and less = F. I give Incomplete (I) grades only in emergency cases (usually only for a death in the family, major illness or injury, or birth of your child), and if the student has turned in 80% of the points possible (in other words, usually everything but the final paper). If you are having any difficulty that might prevent you completing the coursework, please don’t wait until the end of the term; let me know right away.

**Assignment Due Dates**
All assignments are due by 5:00 p.m. Friday of the week they are due. Deadline for submission of final assignments is 5:00 p.m. on **Friday of week 10 (Dead Week).**

**Format Requirements for Assignments**
All assignments must be formatted as follows: MS Word, double-spaced, 12-pt Times New Roman typeface (okay to use larger for headings and subheadings), one-inch margins all around. Please remember to include your name and the assignment name/number on the assignment!

**Note:** If you are having problems with any of these requirements, let me know right away so we can find an acceptable solution for you. If you don’t have access to MS Word, use the “save as” option on your word processing program and choose either .rtf (Rich Text Format) or .txt (text). I can open either of these. As a last resort, if you can’t attach files, type or paste the text of your assignments into an email and send it to me that way.

Your book analysis must include relevant in-text citations (references) and a Works Cited or References page (citations are optional for the fiction book review and the personal spiritual exploration paper). I prefer MLA format but you may use either MLA or APA style as long as you use your chosen format correctly and consistently. Make sure you know when and how to cite sources from which you quote material (look up the **MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers** at the library if you need to).

**Academic Honesty Statement**
Students are expected to be honest and ethical in their academic work. Academic dishonesty is defined as an intentional act of deception in one of the following areas:

**Cheating:** Use or attempted use of unauthorized materials, information, or study aids.
**Fabrication:** Falsification or invention of any information.
**Assisting:** Helping another commit an act of academic dishonesty.
**Tampering:** Altering or interfering with evaluation instruments or documents.
**Plagiarism:** Representing the words or ideas of another person as one’s own.

For more information about academic integrity and the University’s policies and procedures in this area, please refer to the Student Conduct web site at: [http://www.orst.edu/admin/stucon/achon.htm](http://www.orst.edu/admin/stucon/achon.htm) and the section on Academic Regulations in the OSU Schedule of Classes.

This course is offered through Oregon State University Extended Campus. For more information, contact:
Web: ecampus.oregonstate.edu Email: ecampus@oregonstate.edu Tel: 800-667-1465
**Disability Statement**

Students with documented disabilities who may need accommodations or who have any emergency medical information the instructor should be aware of, should make an appointment with the instructor as early as possible, and no later than the end of the first week of the term (if you are a true distance student, this “meeting” may be online). Class materials will be made available in accessible format upon request.

**Equality Statement**

The instructor is dedicated to establishing a learning environment that welcomes the diversity of students’ race, culture, gender, sexual orientation, and physical ability. If you notice discriminatory behavior toward another, or feel discriminated against in this class, please bring it to the instructor’s attention.

**Course evaluation**

We encourage you to engage in the course evaluation process each term – online, of course. The evaluation form will be available toward the end of each term, and you will be sent instructions by Ecampus. You will login to “Student Online Services” to respond to the online questionnaire. The results on the form are anonymous and are not tabulated until after grades are posted.