



**WOMENSST 397:
Feminism, Science, and Religion: A Comparative Analysis**

Spring 2013

Wed: 3:35- 6:05 pm, Bartlett 202

*Office Hours: Wed, 2:30- 3:30 & by appointment, Bartlett 231
email: banu@wost.umass.edu*

Course Description:

Science and religion represent two powerful institutions, their histories intertwined and inextricably interconnected. Patriarchal institutions, often hostile to women and gender, feminists have challenged both with great vigor. This course examines these contestations using a comparative analysis of the United States and India. The founders of the United States imagined secularism as a separation of church and state – religion being relegated to the private, and to non-state actors. In contrast, the founders of India imagined secularism as pluralism – the state actively supporting all religions. Despite these contrasting visions, there are animated challenges to secularism in both countries today. The “religious right” in the U. S. invokes its Judeo Christian origins to insist on the centrality of Christianity. Similarly, religious nationalists in India insist on privileging the dominant religion, Hinduism. The course will examine the complexities of the histories of science and religion, and our gendered visions of tradition and modernity. It will emphasize the defining role of gender, race, class and sexuality in the histories of science and religion in both contexts, and how these categories of difference continue to shape the gendered landscapes of religion and science India and the U. S. The course will include discussion on the new reproductive technologies, debates on evolution and the definitions of life, and our ecological futures.

Readings and Course Material:

There are no texts for this course. All readings are available on MOODLE. They are organized by week.

This course is organized as a seminar, and meets once each week. It is imperative that everyone has done the readings, analyzed them and is prepared to discuss them during the weekly class meetings. To use our weekly class discussion times well, I am organizing a discussion board on MOODLE. Each of you will sign up to be a discussant once during the semester. For that week, you will post your essay reflecting on the readings by Sunday 5 p. m the week before. Your essay will end with a set of questions that you recommend as key issues for the week’s readings. The rest of the class will post their responses to the readings and your essay by 9 a. m on the day of the class. It is my hope that this will help us have a more engaged and deeper conversation on the materials for the week.

Course Requirements and Grades:

This is a reading intensive seminar organized around weekly discussions. Each week, you should have done the readings assigned and come prepared to discuss the materials. Most of the course is organized around the weekly discussions. Your engaged participation in the discussion counts for about half the course grade. The other half will be organized around a mid- semester analytic essay and a final project.

Discussant Essay and Presentation (10%): Each of you will serve as discussant once during the semester, and help lead the class discussion that week. For the week you have chosen, you will write a 3 page reflection on the week's reading. You will end with a set of questions that will help organize the class discussion. The essay must be posted on MOODLE by 5 p. m on the Sunday before the discussion. Since there will be more than one person each week, you should collectively meet with me to plan the class session.

Journal (20%): Since this is a long class each week, we will do some in class writing each class. The goal of the writing is for you to make note of your growing knowledge, and reflect on the interconnections between feminism, religion and science. If you would like to, you are welcome to add or edit your journal out of class. Three times during the semester (Feb 20, April 3, May 1) you will submit your journal for comments.

Attendance and Class & Moodle Discussion Participation (20%): Everyone will post weekly reflections on the discussant's summary and questions each week. Your post is due by 9 a. m on the day of the class. Each post should be at least 200 words. You are allowed two absences in your postings. Attendance and arriving on time is critical for a good class and discussion. More than two class absences will negatively affect your final grade. Please see me if there are any problems.

MidTerm Essays (20%): One mid term is due on March 6. The questions will be presented to you one week before. It will be a take home assignment due at the start of class. Coming late to class or turning it at the end of the class will count as a "late" paper, i.e., please do not miss class to finish your essays.

Final Project (20%): There will be one final project. You can do this individually or in groups. The format is also open. If you choose to write an essay, it should be about 10-12 pages long. I encourage you to be creative in the content and format. A final project proposal (title and abstract) is due March 27. Final Project is due April 17. Please think of what you would like to work on early in the semester. You are welcome to work in pairs or groups and choose formats other than an essay. You will present your project to the class at the end of the semester.

Final Project Evaluation (10%): For the final, you will evaluate someone else's final paper/project. Your evaluation (about 3-4 pages) will be due on Wednesday, April 24. Details on the final project and evaluation will be on MOODLE and discussed in class.

Academic Honesty:

Academic dishonesty, in any form, will not be tolerated and you are responsible for educating yourself about the University's official policy on academic honesty. Following is a summary - you can read it in full at http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/rights/acad_honest.htm

Accommodation Policy Statement:

The University is committed to providing an equal educational opportunity for all students. If you have a documented physical, psychological, or learning disability on file with Disability Services (DS), Learning Disabilities Support Services (LDSS), or Psychological Disabilities Services (PDS), please notify me within the first two weeks of the semester so that we may make appropriate arrangements:

<http://www.umass.edu/disability/procedures.pdf>

Weekly Schedule:

January 23 – Science, Rationality and Skepticism

- Introductions & Course Overview
- Ethan Bronner and Isabel Kershner, “Israelis Facing a Seismic Rift Over Role of Women, NYT, January 14, 2012.
- Amanda Holpuch, “Evangelical Christian group helps sue California school over yoga classes,” *The Guardian*, Jan 10, 2013.
- Daniel Dennett, “Faith in the Truth”: <http://ase.tufts.edu/cogstud/papers/faithint.htm>

January 30 – Science and its origins

- David Noble, *A World Without Women: The Christian Clerical Culture of Western Science*, Chapters 8 & 10
- Dick Teresi, “A History of Science Rediscovered,” In *Lost Discoveries: Ancient Roots of Modern Science – From the Babylonians to the Mayans*. Simon & Schuster 2002
- John M. Hobson, “Discovering the Oriental West,” In *The Postcolonial STS Reader*, Sandra Harding ed. Duke University Press, 2011.
- Irfan Habib, Q&A, “Islamic science is a creation of Euro American universities’ interview with Irfan Habib,” *Tehelka*, Vol 9, Issue 41, October 2012.
- **For In-Class Debate:** Sandra Harding, “Is Science Multicultural: Challenges, Resources, Opportunities, Uncertainties,” *Configurations* 2.2 (1994) – Come prepared to debate the issues.

February 6 - A Quick Overview of India and South Asia (Guest: Priyanka Srivastava)

- Akash Kapur, “How India Became America,” NYT, March 9, 2012.
- Edward Luce, *In Spite of the Gods: The Strange Rise of Modern India*. Doubleday 2007. Excerpts - Introduction, Chapter 1 & Chapter 8
- Srirupa Roy, “Indian Darkness: Science, development and the Needs Discourse of the Nation State,” & “Conclusion: After Midnight,” In *Beyond Belief: India and the Politics of Postcolonial Nationalism*, Duke University Press 2007.
- Irfan Habib, “Viability of Islamic Science: Some Insights from 19th Century India, *EPW* 39, 23, 2004.



February 13 – Case Study – Definitions of Life (Guest: Laura Briggs)

- Elizabeth Roberts, "Extra Embryos: Ethics of Cryopreservation in Ecuador," *American Ethnologist*, 34:1, 2007: 181-199.
- Dorothy Roberts, *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction and the Meaning of Liberty*, Vintage, 1998. Introduction and Chapter 1
- Denise Grady, "Medical Nuances Drive "No" Vote in Mississippi," *New York Times*, Nov 14, 2011.
- Catherine Walby and Melinda Cooper, "From reproductive work to regenerative labour: The female body and the stem cell industries," *Feminist Theory* 11: 3, 2010.

February 20 – Religion, State and Secularism (Guest: Susan Shapiro)

- Janet Jakobsen and Ann Pellegrini, *Secularisms*, Introduction
- Anuradha Dingwaney Needham and Rajeswari Sunder Rajan, *The crisis of Secularism in India*, Permanent Black 2007, Introduction
- Salman Rushdie, "The Trouble with Religion" *NYT*, April 10, 2005.
- Philip Kitcher, "Science, Religion and Democracy," *Episteme* 2008.
- **Writing Journal Due**

February 27 - Science, Secularism and Religion

- Banu Subramaniam, "Archaic Modernities: Science, Secularism, and Religion in Modern India." *Social Text* 18.3 (2000) 67-86
- Ashis Nandy, "Science as a Reason of State," In *Science, Hegemony and Violence: A Requiem for Modernity*, Ashis Nandy ed. Oxford University Press 1988.
- Meera Nanda, "Breaking the Spell of Dharma: The case for Indian Enlightenment: *EPW*, July 7, 2001: <http://www.sacw.net/DC/CommunalismCollection/ArticlesArchive/MeeraNandaJuly2001.html>

March 6 – Case Study:- Evolution

- Edward J. Larson, *The Creation-Evolution debate: Historical Perspectives*, Chapters 2 & 3.
- Michael Rose, "The Spectre Haunting" In *Darwin's Spectre: Evolutionary Biology in the Modern World*, Princeton University Press, 1998.
- Richard Dawkins, "What is wrong with Religion?" In *The God Delusion*, Houghton Mifflin, 2006.
- Sarah Boxer, "But is there Intelligent Spaghetti out there? *NYT* 29 August, 2005.
- Robert Baird, "Late Secularism" *Social Text* 64, Fall 2000, 124-136.
- Amy Harmon, "A Teacher on the Front Line as Faith and Science Clash," *NYT*, Aug 23, 2008: <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/24/education/24evolution.html>
- Michelle Goldberg, "The New Monkey Trial," *Salon*, January 10, 2005, <http://www.salon.com/news/feature/2005/01/10/evolution/>
- Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster: <http://www.venganza.org/>
- Sam Harris, "Science Must Destroy Religion": http://www.huffingtonpost.com/sam-harris/science-must-destroy-reli_b_13153.html
- **Mid Term Essays Due**



March 13 - Case Study- Ecology and the Environment - Ecological Futures

- Tomalin, Emma. 2004. "Bio-Divinity and Bio-diversity: Perspectives on Religion and Environmental Conservation in India," *Numen* Vol 51, No 3, 265-295.
- Greta Gaard, "Reproductive Technology or Reproductive Justice: An Ecofeminist, Environmental Justice Perspective on the Rhetoric of Choice," *Ethics and the Environment* 15(2), 2010.
- Vandana Shiva, "Earth Democracy" <http://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/what-would-democracy-look-like/earth-democracy-an-interview-with-vandana-shiva>
- Seth Cline, "[Sea Level Bill Would Allow North Carolina to Stick its Head in the Sand,](#)" USA News, June 1, 2012. William Yardley, "Pastors in Northwest Find Focus in "Green," *NYT*, Jan 15, 2010: <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/16/us/16church.html>
- Betsy Hartmann, "The Great Distraction: 'Overpopulation' is Back in Town, *Common Dreams*, Aug 30, 2011: <http://www.commondreams.org/view/2011/08/30-1>
- Taylor, Bron. 2008. "The Tributaries of Radical Environmentalism," *Journal for the Study of Radicalism*," Volume 2, No 1: 27-61.

March 20 – Spring Break – No Class

March 27 – Case Study: Politics of Gender and "Purity"



- Gail Collins, "The Sexual Spirit of '76," *NYT*, August 22, 2012.
- Mark Oppenheimer, "Purity Balls Get Attention but Might not be all they Claim," *NYT*, July 20, 2012.
- Sarah Morice-Brubaker, "Let it Be Unto Me: Akin, Rape, and the Early Church," *Religion Dispatches*, August 22, 2012.
- Jennifer Tucker, "The Medieval Roots of Todd Akin's Theories," *NYT*, August 23, 2012.
- Amrita Basu, "Feminism Inverted: The Gendered Imagery and Real Women of Hindu Nationalism," In *Women and Right Wing Movements: Indian Experiences*," eds. Tanika Sarkar and Urvashi Butalia, Zed Books 1995.
- Rajani Bhatia, "Constructing Gender from the Inside Out: Sex-Selection Practices in the United States," *Feminist Studies* 36, no. 2, Summer 2010.
- **Final Project Title and Abstract Due**

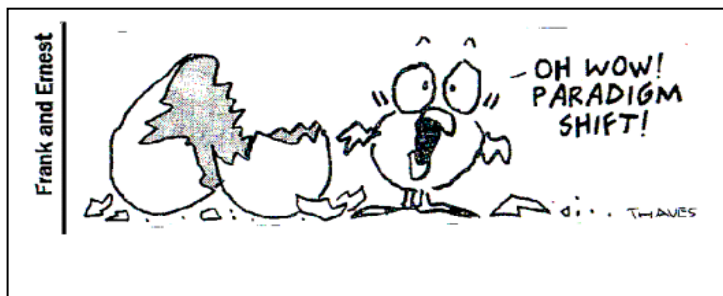
April 3 – Case Study: Reproductive Justice

- Jael Silliman, Marlene Gerber Fried, Loretta Ross, Elena Gutierrez, *Women of Color Organize for Reproductive Justice*, Chapter 1.
- Marlene Fried, Top 10 reasons to rethink reproductive "Choice." *Different Takes*, fall 2008.
- Loretta Ross, What is Reproductive Justice? <http://www.protectchoice.org/section.php?id=28>
- Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice: <http://reproductivejustice.org/what-is-reproductive-justice>
- David Nather, "The Plan B Call: Politics vs. science," *Politico*, Dec 8, 2011.
- Diana Dukhanova, "The Junk Science of Abortion-Breast Cancer Syndrome"
- Response to Dukhanova by Joel Brind and to the study by Jillian Henderson
- Mary Wisniewski, "Fetal Pain anti-abortion laws spur fierce debate" Reuters, April 2011: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/04/06/us-abortion-pain-idUSTRE73572820110406>
- Ruth Padawer, "The Two Minus One Pregnancy," *NYT*, August 10, 2011: <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/14/magazine/the-two-minus-one-pregnancy.html?scp=5&sq=surrogacy&st=cse>
- **Writing Journal Due**

April 10 – – Case Study: Reproductive Politics – Surrogacy (Guest: N. Sarojini, SAMA)

- Dorothy Roberts, “Race, Gender, and Genetic Technologies: A New Reproductive Dystopia?” *34 Signs* 783-804 (2009).
- Alex Kuczynski, “Her Body, My Baby,” *NYT*, Nov 28, 2008: <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/30/magazine/30Surrogate-t.html?pagewanted=all>
- Anupama Katakam, “Wombs for Rent,” *Frontline*, Volume 28, September 2011: <http://www.frontlineonnet.com/stories/20110909281809000.htm>
- Amrita Pande, “Commercial Surrogacy in India; Manufacturing a Perfect Mother-Worker,” *Signs* v. 35, no. 4, 2010.
- Nilanjana S. Roy, “Protecting the Rights of Surrogate Mothers in India,” *NYT*, Oct 4, 2011.

April 17 -- Monday Schedule



April 24 – Alternate Sciences

- V. Sujatha, “Innovation within and between Traditions Dilemma of Traditional Medicine in Contemporary India,” *Science, Technology & Society* 16, 2011: 191-213.
- Ashis Nandy, “The Other Science of Srinivasa Ramanujan: An Essay on the Public and Private Cultures of Knowledge,” *In Alternative Sciences: Creativity and Authenticity in Two Indian Scientists*. Oxford University Press 1995.
- Sandra Harding, “Postcolonial Science and Technology Studies: Are there Multiple Sciences? In *Sciences From Below: Feminism, Postcolonialities, and Modernities*, Duke Univ. Press, 2008.
- **Final Projects Due**

May 1 – Class Presentations

- **Writing Journal Due**
- **Project Evaluation Due**

