

San Jose State University  
WGSS 189 (#26890) Spring 2024  
MW 1:30 – 2:45pm DMH 231  
#sjsuwgss

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Drop-in Hours: Wed 9-10am, 3-4pm  
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### Feminist Perspectives on Religion & Gender

This interdisciplinary course looks at women’s religious experiences as members of racialized minority groups who actively negotiate competing discourses of faith across sacred and secular arenas. Responding in part to social science work that suggests the compromised agency of religious women, we will explore how African American, Mexican American and Jewish women, and LGBTQ people

We will read, discuss, and write about the religious experiences/struggles /traditions of people who negotiate complicated identities as persons of faith within their own religious traditions within the American context. We will draw on an intersectional and transnational feminist perspective that analyzes issues of race, gender, class, sexuality, ability, among others as they interact with ideas of gender in these religious institutions.

This is *not* a “religious” course and if we do this right, pretty much everybody should feel their own personal religious and/or nonreligious beliefs challenged at some point. As an upper division seminar focused on WGSS majors and minors, regular attendance is required to substantially participate in discussion and occasional films. We assume a basic understanding of intersectional and transnational feminisms and basic writing skills.

#### Required Texts:

There is one required text for this class, Ana Castillo’s novel *So Far From God*; there are a few copies in the SJSU bookstore, one on reserve at the library, two available from the public library, and many inexpensive copies online. Please purchase this text as soon as possible.

All other texts are available on SJSU’s learning management system Canvas. **I highly recommend that you print out each reading** and keep it in a notebook or folder thazt you can bring to class for discussion.

#### Course Format

<b>Assignments and Evaluation</b>	Grades are assigned on the following scale
<b>30%</b> Seven biweekly braindumps	98-100 A+    93-97 A    90-92 A-
<b>20%</b> Participation – including team discussion	88-89 B+    83-87 B    80-82 B-
<b>25%</b> Midterm essay (released 3/20 due 3/29)	78-79 C+    73-77 C    70-72 C-
<b>25%</b> Annotated Bibliography (4 sources, initial biblio due Apr 12, due May 6, class presentation)	68-69 D+    63-67 D    60-62 D-
	59- F

## Course Requirements & Assignments

We design SJSU classes with the expectation that students will spend a minimum of forty-five hours for each unit of credit (**normally three hours per unit per week**), including preparing for class, participating in course activities, completing assignments, and so on. In this class, that means...

- **Braindumps** refer to completely informal writing on the module reading, one page single-spaced. At the end of the first week's module, when you've finished the reading, I want you to sit in front of the computer and just write about the readings. It should be narrative (not just bullet points) of your thoughts about the reading, questioning the reading, comparing ideas, criticizing—whatever works for you. Grammar/punctuation/formality do not matter here—I just want to see what you're getting out of the reading. Braindumps are graded 20 for Excellent/Good, 15 for Average or 0.
- **Midterm essay** - are takehome essay assignments that draw on the semester's readings thus far. Due March 29.
- **Annotated bibliography** is the final project/exam based on minimum four sources. Initial bibliography will be due on April 12 (Friday after spring break), papers will be due May 6, followed by a presentation in class the next week.

## Classroom Protocol

- **LATE WORK** - All assigned work is due at the time indicated on Canvas. **LATE work will be documented on Canvas and downgraded 10% the first day it is late, and 5% every day thereafter.** I would rather you do the work late than not do it all, so I will almost always accept late work for partial credit. If you have some sort of unavoidable conflict, come see me *before* the deadline.
- **Grade checks** – If you require a midterm grade check of any kind (athletic, EOP, fraternity/sorority, etc., personal), please complete the form linked at the top of the Modules page of Canvas *at least a week before* your deadline, and I will either email you the form or send it to the appropriate party.
- **Drop-in hours** – I will always be available for drop-in hours at my office on **Wednesday mornings from 9-10 am and afternoons 3-4 pm. You do not need to make an appointment** to come by to chat or ask a question or just check in. You can also just call me during office hours by phone or we can set up a zoom by request.
- **Pronoun Use:** How we refer to each other is a basic sign of respect, both names and pronouns. Students in this class will be referred to by the name and pronoun they prefer, and with the proper pronunciation, by faculty and other students. Please advise me as soon as possible if your name and pronoun differ from my course list (mysjsu) so that I and the class may address you properly.

## Communication

- Please read this syllabus carefully! This is our contract for the semester and it contains all the information you need to be successful in this class. I will do everything I can to support your learning, so please please keep in touch with me. **If you are having problems keeping it together, let me know early so we can strategize together how you can make the best use of your time and get you through the semester.**

- If you are going to email me, please remember that I have several classes and a lot of students. **Please put your course number or title in the subject heading** so I will know what you're talking about. Allow a minimum of 48 hours for the return of emails that will be sent primarily during business hours (Mon – Fri between 9 am – 5 pm).

WGSS 189 is an elective course designed for the WGSS major and/or minor. Our **WGSS Program Learning Outcomes** state that upon graduation, Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies students will be able to:

1. Identify and analyze the intersections of gender, sexuality, race, class, and nation social and institutional contexts.
2. Identify and describe major theories and political movements central to Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, placing contemporary developments in cultural, historical, environmental, and embodied contexts.
3. Describe the global span of feminist movements and the connection among gender and sexual minorities around the world.
4. Demonstrate critical thinking and research skills through written, oral and creative means.

*The WGSS Minor requires only 15 units and is a terrific critical-thinking complement to majors in Science, Business, or the Social Sciences. Ask me about it! 😊*

## Plagiarism & AI

From my perspective, there is *nothing* worse you can do in this class than plagiarism. Plagiarism is the academic dishonesty of presenting someone else's work as your own, and it will not be tolerated. For better or worse, *do your own work*. Cheating on exams or plagiarism (presenting the work of another as your own, or the use of another person's ideas without giving proper credit) will result in a failing grade and sanctions by the University. If you are unclear about this, please see the library Plagiarism tutorial linked in our top Canvas module.

You *may* use artificial intelligence (AI) programs, e.g., ChatGPT, to help generate ideas and brainstorm. However, you should note that the material generated by these programs may be inaccurate, incomplete, or otherwise problematic. Beware that use may also stifle your own independent thinking and creativity.

You may *not* submit any work generated by an AI program as your own. If you include material generated by an AI program, it should be cited like any other reference material (with due consideration for the quality of the reference, which may be poor).

## University Policy & Resources

There are lots of resources at this public university if you need assistance!

Per University Policy S16-9 (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services are listed on Syllabus Information web page. (<http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo>) hosted by the Office of Undergraduate Education. Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

### Spring 2024 WGSS 189 Course Schedule

All readings on Canvas unless stated otherwise. Subject to change at instructor's discretion or in event of another pandemic, earthquake, flood or apocalypse.

\*Please see Canvas for course sched / blue star = student discussion leaders

Wk	Date	M	T	W	Th	F	S
0	1/24			Intro			
1	1/29	Introductions		Wilcox, Stories			
2	2/5	Creation stories. Genesis 1-3, multi commentaries					
3	2/12	Popol Vuh		Transgender Teach-In <i>Student Union Film 2B</i>			
4	2/19	Women, religion, gender: American contexts			★		
5	2/26	<i>Righteous discontent: Women &amp; African American religious traditions</i>			★		
6	3/4	<i>Between Sundays</i>			★		
7	3/11	Trans & Queer Spiritualities			★		
8	3/18	Native American feminist ritual <i>Midterm released 3/20</i>			★		
9	3/25					Midterm due 5pm	
* SPRING BREAK *							
10	4/8	<i>So Far From God: Chicana Catholic spiritualities</i>			★	Prelim biblio due	
11	4/15	Chicana Catholic resistance			★		
12	4/22	Women in Islam: Contested Authorities			★		
13	4/29						
14	5/6	Annot. Biblios due / Class presentations begin		Presentations			
15	5/13	Last Day					

## Course Bibliography

Aaseng, Johnson & Arrindell, dirs., *Manifest Destiny Jesus*, 2021 (41 min)

“A letter to transgender Christians” (sermon) at <https://www.queertheology.com/transgender/>

Beth Allison Barr, *The Making of Biblical Womanhood* (Brazos Press, 2021), selections

Azza Basarudin, *Humanizing the Sacred: Sisters in Islam and the Struggle for Gender Justice in Malaysia* (UWashington Press, 2016), Intro & ch. 5

Ann Braude, “Women’s History Is American Religious History” in *Retelling U.S. Religious History*, ed. Tweed (Berkeley, 1997).

Anthea Butler, “Church” (ch. 13) in Hannah-Jones et al., eds, *The 1619 Project : A New Origin Story* (Random House, 2021), 335-355.

Call to Action, “When I walk into the clinic, I see God,” <https://www.cta-usa.org/perspectives/catholicabortiondoula>

Ana Castillo, *So Far From God* (Plume, 1994)

Facio, Elisa., and Irene. Lara. *Fleshing the Spirit : Spirituality and Activism in Chicana, Latina, and Indigenous Women’s Lives* (U Arizona Press, 2014), selections

Leila Fadel, “A Mosque for LGBTQ Muslims,” National Public Radio, 4/15/18 at <https://www.npr.org/2018/04/15/602605271/a-mosque-for-lgbtq-muslims>

Marla Faye Frederick, *Between Sundays Black Women and Everyday Struggles of Faith*. UC Press, 2003), (Intro, ch. 5)

Susana L. Gallardo, “‘It’s Not a Natural Order’: Religion and the Emergence of Chicana Feminism in the Cursillo Movement in San Jose.” *Chicana Movidas* (UTexas Press, 2021), 91–109,

Genesis, ch. 1-3

Sandra Itäinen, dir. *Coming Around* (Good Docs, 2023).

Kang, et al, “Intersectionality,” in *Introduction to WGSS* (U Mass Amherst, 2020) at <https://openbooks.library.umass.edu/introwgss/chapter/intersectionality/>

Keating, A. L. (2008). “‘I’m a citizen of the universe:’ Gloria Anzaldúa’s Spiritual Activism as Catalyst for Social Change.” *Feminist Studies*, 34(1/2), 53–69.

Kvam, Schearing & Ziegler, *Eve & Adam: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Readings on Genesis and Gender* (Indiana UP, 1999). Historical selections: Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*; Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *Woman’s Bible; Malleus Malleficarum*; Qur’an

Jarena Lee, “Life and Religious Experience of Jarena Lee” (1839) from Andrews et al. *Sisters of the Spirit : Three Black Women’s Autobiographies of the Nineteenth Century*. Indiana University Press, 1986.

Quispe Lopez, “At These Powwows, Two-Spirit People Are Always Revered,” *them*, 11/21/22 at <https://www.them.us/story/two-spirit-powwows-trans-indigenous>

Fatima Mernissi, “Preface,” in *The Veil and the Male Elite: a Feminist Interpretation of Women’s Rights in Islam* (Perseus Books, 1991).

Virginia R. Mollenkott, *Omnigender : A Trans-Religious Approach*. Pilgrim Press, 2001.

Cutcha Risling Baldy, “Menstrual Beliefs and the Politics of Taboo” (ch.4) and “Revitalization of Hupa Women’s Coming-of-Age Ceremony” (Ch. 5) in *We are dancing for you* (U Wash, 2018).

Ken Stone, “The Garden of Eden and the Heterosexual Contract” in Shore-Goss & West, *Take Back the Word : a queer reading of the Bible* (Pilgrim Press, 2000).

Lev Taylor, “Adam, Eve and the binary gender” (sermon) at <https://simlev.blog/2018/10/07/adam-eve-and-binary-gender/>

Tedlock, Dennis, trans. *Popol Vuh : The Definitive Edition of the Mayan Book of the Dawn of Life and the Glories of Gods and Kings* (Simon and Schuster, 1985), selections

Trevor Project, “Religion and Spirituality among GLBTQ youth,”  
<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/research-briefs/religion-and-spirituality-among-lgbtq-youth-dec-2022/>

Union Theological Seminary, “Queer Faith” at <https://utsnyc.edu/queer-faith/>

Melissa Wilcox, *Queer Religiosities*, Introduction & Ch. 1 “Stories” (Rowman & Littlefield, 2021)

Reuben Zellman, “No Longer Strangers” (sermon) at  
[http://transtorah.org/PDFs/No\\_Longer\\_Strangers.pdf](http://transtorah.org/PDFs/No_Longer_Strangers.pdf)