Course Description
Gender differences and human sexual expression have been perceived as significant in almost all religious systems. However, the meanings assigned to gender and sexuality have differed greatly from one religion to another. In the contemporary world, doctrines concerned with gender and sexuality are being challenged and debated in unprecedented ways. Furthermore, sexual and gender rebels are critiquing old religions and creating their own religions. Gender and sexuality have assumed an unprecedented prominence in the academic study of religion as well.

One of the ways we will explore gender-sex-religion is through the lens of theatre. Through theatre exercises and reading dramatic literature, we will encounter new levels of ourselves through somatic learning.

Catalog Description:
Women’s roles and gendered categories within diverse religions. Feminist critiques, reforms, and creations of religious institutions. The political and feminist dimensions of women’s religious experience. Understanding the roles of sexuality in religion.

Learning Objectives:
1. to be familiar with the historical, social and psychological impact of gender and sex in religious traditions
2. to learn the history of sexism, racism and homophobia in world religions
3. to understand the connectivity among religion, sexism, racism and homophobia
4. to experience somatic learning through theatre exercises applied to class material

Method of Instruction:
Most of the course will be in the form of lectures, with discussions and some group work. This class requires considerable work and consistent, intensive, critical reading; these are balanced by principles of flexibility and student choices. Because this is an advanced elective, it will run somewhat like a seminar: the professor will
assume that you have prepared for each session by doing the assigned reading and that you will be able to participate in discussion.

**Books and Materials:**

All readings will be found on CANVAS for this course or are a download from the library.

**Course Evaluations:**

15 points—Participation in class discussions, improvisations, enactments, dialogs
15 points—Interview, memorization, enactment, paper
30 points—Midterm
40 points—Final Paper [proposal for final paper=5 pts.]
100 points

**Grading:**

A=100-94; A-=93-90; B+=89-88; B=87-81; B-=80-77; C+=76-75; C= 74-72; C-=71-70; D+=69-65; D=64-60; D-= 59-58

**Makeup Exams**

If students have a written medical excuse for missing an exam, a makeup exam will be given within a week of the missed exam or, at the discretion of the instructor, during the final makeup period. If students do not have a written medical excuse, the student will receive a zero for the missed exam.

**Absences:**

Your participation in this class is important to your grade and to the collective nature of this class. Class participation is 20% of your grade!

**Academic Integrity Statement (from Office of Judicial Affairs):**

"Your own commitment to learning, as evidenced by your enrollment at San José State University, and the University's Academic Integrity Policy requires you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the Office of Judicial Affairs. The policy on academic integrity can be found at [http://sa.sjsu.edu/judicial_affairs/index.html](http://sa.sjsu.edu/judicial_affairs/index.html)

**Campus Policy in Compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act:**

"If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. Presidential Directive 97-03 requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with DRC to establish a record of their disability."
* You are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures about add/drops, academic renewal, withdrawal, etc.
* Expectations about classroom behavior; see Academic Senate Policy S90-5 on Student Rights and Responsibilities.
* A definition of plagiarism, such as that found on Judicial Affairs website at http://sa.sjsu.edu/judicial_affairs/index.html
* If you would like to include in your paper any material you have submitted, or plan to submit, for another class, please note that SJSU’s Academic Integrity policy S04-12 requires approval by instructors.

**Syllabus**

**Monday, January 26**
Introduction and background
An Overview of the Abrahamic Religious Traditions

**Handout:** “French Fries” in *Talking With* by Jane Martin

**THEME: STARTING FROM EXPERIENCE**

**Monday, Feb. 2**
Gender and Religion
Discussion of your findings from the *Encyclopedia of Women and World Religion*

**Reading Due:** [unless otherwise stated, all readings are PDF’s on CANVAS]

1. “Because I’m Worth It: Religion and Women’s Changing Lives in the West” Chapter 8, in *Women and Religion in the West: Challenging Secularization*, CANVAS

2. “Being Seen By Many Eyes: Muslim Immigrant Women in the U.S.” Chapter 12 in *Women and Religion in the West: Challenging Secularization*, CANVAS

3. “Challah for the Queen of Heaven” Ryiah Lilith in *Women’s Studies in Religion*, CANVAS

**Assignment Due: Reading and Writing**
Go to the library and read two articles of your choosing from the *Encyclopedia of Women and World Religion* (reference shelf: BL458 .E53 1999). Familiarize yourself with the articles, and find a few that are of interest. Write a brief summary of what you read [1.5 pages, double spaced],
including one new fact that surprised you, and one new perspective that unsettled and/or galvanized you (don't ask me what those terms mean: look them up!).

**Monday, February 9**
The Experience of Religion
Bringing it home

**Readings Due:**

--Anna Deavere Smith, TED talk, on the subject of interviewing and enacting the interview: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KR8SwPmCFd4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KR8SwPmCFd4)

**Assignment Due:**
Interview of a person who practices a specific faith: such as Judaism, or Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, etc.

We will not have time for everyone to present, but everyone must be prepared.

**Interview**
Each student will conduct one interview

--Your interview may take 20-30 minutes, but you will edit down the interview to approximately 3--4 minutes for your presentation

--Questions for the interview:

   As a person who is Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Hindu, etc:

1. Describe a moment/ an experience, you've had that made you aware of your gender identity in your tradition?
2. How is your sexuality part of your religious experience? Describe a moment when you experienced this.
3. When you imagine “God” what image do you see? [only to be asked to those who believe in a “God.”]

What you will turn in: [edited interview & 2 pg analysis]
--You will write down what the person said—exactly
--You will edit the interview to 2-3 min, memorize the edited interview word for word, (including pauses, silences, and “ah” and “um”---- and how they said it (physicality)—exactly.
--You will become the person you interviewed in front of the class
--Hand in a copy of your edited interview
---Analysis
[2 pages: your analysis of the interviewee’s perspectives ---- include issues of religion, race, gender, sex, sexuality and class]

THEME: OUR BODIES / OURSELVES

Monday, February 16
Women’s Bodies: Blood and Breasts

Readings Due
1. “Menstruation” Scientific American

[Judaism and Christianity]
2. A. Thurston-Suffering Women

https://books.google.com/books?id=bzXzWgVajnQC&pg=PA27&lpg=PA27&dq=islamic+views+menstruation&source=bl&ots=ArpQSwwkzt&sig=wlvbhN_mWsuajYzXXRwTIVIHk&hl=en&sa=X&ei=PmTAVN7YK47joAT7xYL4DA&ved=0CFcQ6AEwCQ#v=onepage&q=islamic%20views%20menstruation&f=false

Extra Credit: Please write a one page response

Monday, February 23
Sex and Sexuality and Religion

**Readings Due:**
1. “Loving Outside Simple Lines” Sonya Bolus, in *Sex, Gender and Sexuality*, 2009
2. “Dueling Dualisms” Anne Fausto-Sterling in *Sex, Gender, and Sexuality*, 2009
   **[the above article is on Canvas and also has on it the Plaskow article below]**
4. “Dismantling the Gender Binary within Judaism”-- Judith Plaskow [in *Heterosexism in Contemporary World Religion*]
5. The Safra Project: Women's Sexuality and Islam
   [http://www.safraprotect.org/sgi-womenssexualtiyinislam.htm](http://www.safraprotect.org/sgi-womenssexualtiyinislam.htm)
   Safra Project: Sexuality, Gender, and Islam
   [http://www.safraprotect.org/sgi-intro.htm](http://www.safraprotect.org/sgi-intro.htm)
6. “Global LGBT Recap” in *Religion Dispatches*:

**THEME : VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

**Monday, March 2**

History of Violence

**Reading Due:**
--*Disgraced*, a play by Ayad Akhtar
--*Vinegar Tom*, a play by Caryl Churchill
--Jamie Manson-The Catholic Church's complicity in Glyzelle Palomar's suffering-contraception.pdf

**Extra Credit Reading:** [Please write a one page response to each chapter].
Holland: *Misogyny: The World’s Oldest Prejudice*
Chapter 3 “Divine Intervention” from *Misogyny*
Chapter 4: “From Queen of Heaven to Devil Woman” from *Misogyny*
THEME: CONFRONTING TRADITION

Monday, March 9
Confronting tradition: Women in Islam

Excerpts of the Film: “Rights and Wrongs: The Story of Women in Islam"

Reading Due:

1. “The Issue of Woman-Man Equality in the Islamic Tradition” Riffat Hassan in Women's Studies in Religion [2 articles are on this pdf; you are only responsible for the first one]

2. “Feminist Readings of Qur’an-Social, Political and Religious Implications” Ndeye Adujar from Muslima theology: the voices of Muslim women theologians / Ednan Aslan, Marcia Hermansen, Elif Medeni (eds

3. “Who are We to Judge?: Why the Veil is more Complicated than We Think” Macleans, 2012
http://www2.macleans.ca/2012/01/17/who-are-we-to-judge/

4. “Irshad Manji head to head with Mehdi Hassan”
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_tNRtyYFf24

5. YouTube link for Irshad Manji:
http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/video/2012/mar/12/irshad-manji-muslim-video

6. Irshad Manji on the veil:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DFETapc1cZc

Other Resources:
“When Islam+Feminism Converge”—Fatima Seedat, in The Muslim World

Handout: Guidelines for the mid-term

Monday, March 16
Confronting Tradition: Women and leadership in Judaism
Confronting Tradition: Women and leadership in Christianity
Confronting Tradition: Women and leadership in Islam
**Reading Due:**
2. “The Coming of Lilith” Judith Plaskow, in *Women’s Studies in Religion*
3. “The Challenge of Women’s Leadership in Orthodox Women’s Communities”
4. “Can a Woman be an Imam? Debating Form and Function in Muslim Women’s Leadership” by Ingrid Mattson
   Download the radio program: *On Being: Interview of Ingrid Mattson* [53 minutes]
   and/or read Mattson’s article on the same webpage
   Ingrid Mattson is professor of Islamic Studies and the president of the Islamic Society of North America.
5. please view these websites:
   [http://www.romancatholicwomenpriests.org](http://www.romancatholicwomenpriests.org)
   [http://www.womensordination.org](http://www.womensordination.org)
   [http://www.sophiaintrinity.org](http://www.sophiaintrinity.org)
6. Dr. Rue on TEDx: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=xuerEyKJdkk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xuerEyKJdkk)

**Other Sources:**
*When Faith Groups Started Ordaining Women:*
   “Women’s Ordination: Problems and Possibilities”
   [http://www.womensordination.org/content/view/32/117/](http://www.womensordination.org/content/view/32/117/)
   “Ordination as Equals” by Dr. Rue, Tricycle Magazine 2009

**in class Film Excerpts:** “Pink Smoke over the Vatican,” 2010

**Monday, March 24---28:** Spring Break

**Monday, March 30:**
An in class rehearsal for the mid-term

**Monday, April 6:**

MIDTERM [In class]
+ Handout: guidelines for the final paper

THEME: INTERRELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE OF GENDER, SEX, RELIGION

Monday, April 13
DUE: Proposal for Final Paper [guidelines on Canvas]

Reading Due
1. “Toward the One,” Mirabai Starr
2. Inter-religious panel with Dr. Sarah Sayeed:
   http://irdialogue.org/articles/panel-discussion-interview-with-dr-sarah-sayeed/
3. Read the 4 additional interviews on the same web page

Film excerpts: “Pluralism in America” Diana Eck and the Pluralism Project

Monday, April 20
Women and Buddhism: A Public Event + Class Lecture with Guest Speakers:
Sandy Boucher http://www.sandyboucher.net/
and Martha Boesing http://www.marthaboesing.com/
On the publication of
She Appears: Encounters with Kwan Yin, Goddess of Compassion by Sandy Boucher [published January 15, 2015]

Readings/ Video:
--Pema Chodron : On Faith and Reason with Bill Moyers
Part One
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/video/flv/generic.html?s=moyi06sf19q36d
Part Two
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/video/flv/generic.html?s=moyi06sf1aq608
--"Bringing Our Full Selves to the Cushion: A Conversation Among Women Teachers of Buddhism" from The Inquiring Mind, spring ’15

Other Resources:
Buddhism after patriarchy [electronic resource]: a feminist history, analysis, and reconstruction of Buddhism / Rita M. Gross, sjsulbrary/ebook

THEME: EMBODYING OUR HOPE
Monday, April 27
Alternatives for Women
Women Elders

Reading Due
1. “The Anima of the Sacred: Empowering Women’s Spirituality” PGAllen
2. “The Woman I Love is a Planet; The Planet I Love is a Tree”
both readings from Reservation: Reflections on Boundary-Busting, Border-Crossing, Paula Gunn Allen
[on CANVAS look for PGAllen, there are two articles by her there]
3. “Grandmother Earth”, Nicola Graydon, Ecologist Magazine
4. “Grandmothers Counsel the World,” Carol Schaefer,
   International Journal of World Peace
5. Part 1: International Council of 13 Indigenous Grandmothers:
   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ASE0Ri_0F8g
6. Origins of the 13 Grandmother’s Council:
   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z8mrqpOE0Pw

Monday, May 4
The Goddess: the alternative?
GUEST LECTURER: TBA

Reading Due:
1. Carol Christ: “Why Women Need the Goddess”
3. “Coatlicue’s Rules: Advice from an Aztec Goddess” Pat Mora
4. “Guadalupe the Sex Goddess” Sandra Cisneros
   [ in Women’s Studies in Religions]

Monday, May 11---last class
The Earth: Embodying our Hope

Reading Due:
1. “Wicca, the Apocalypse and the Future of the Natural World,” Shawn Arthur
2. “Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing” Rosemary Radford Ruether [please note that this article is on Canvas, just not in alphabetical order]

The FINAL PAPER will be the final exam. Guidelines will be offered.
For Extra Credit FINAL PAPERS may be handed at this final class session.

Or the FINAL PAPER can be handed in on or anytime before the Final Exam Date Tuesday, May 18 at 4p. Papers will be deposited in the Humanities Office, 4th floor Clark.