

# 2011

School of Religion and  
Theology, UKZN

Prof. Sarojini Nadar

Module: THEO735/835

Biblical Hermeneutics:  
Women and Gender

Course Outline



# **BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS: WOMEN AND GENDER**

## **COURSE OUTLINE 2011**

### **(THEO735/835)**

#### **Introduction**

Welcome to the Honours/Masters module “Biblical Hermeneutics: Women and Gender.” Please note that this is an advanced seminar course rather than a series of lectures. As such, the work will be intensive and will require many hours of critical reading and intensive independent research by the student. The course will be taught by Prof. Sarojini Nadar ([nadars@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:nadars@ukzn.ac.za)) and all queries should be directed to her via email.

#### **Course Description**

The module begins by introducing students to the ways in which patriarchy has shaped the production and interpretation of biblical texts, and describes the need for feminist hermeneutics. Thereafter, how feminist biblical scholars practice their trade, i.e. the methods that have been developed by a range of feminist scholars are explored. The course places a particular emphasis on the growing body of scholarship produced by African women in this field. Given that feminism focuses on the practical emancipation of women, the module then moves on to focus on one particular concern of African feminist biblical scholars, namely HIV&AIDS. Finally, one way in which feminist biblical scholarship is “translated” for communities is explored through the practice of Contextual Bible Study for transformation.

#### **Course Outcomes**

At the end of this module you should demonstrate:

- Knowledge of how patriarchy has shaped the production, interpretation and dissemination of the bible in Africa and the world.
- An understanding of different methodologies proposed by feminist scholars in various contexts for interpreting the bible.
- The skill to apply critical feminist and cognate methods to the process of interpretation
- An ability to “translate” academic knowledge for the purpose of social transformation.

#### **Overview of Seminars at a Glance**

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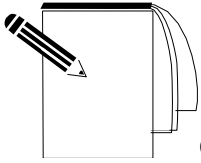
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<b>Seminar</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Readings</b>	<b>Assignments</b>
#1 28 Jul	Introductions and distribution of readings	Distribution of Readings at Registration	
#2 4 Aug	Independent Reading		
#3 11 Aug	Issues of Authority	Nadar (A); Johnson	Short Assignment #1 due
#4 18 Aug	Situating Interpretation	Shillington	
#5 25 Aug	Overview of Feminist Hermeneutics(Class to be rescheduled)	Scholer, Camp; Nolan-Fewell; Exum	Short Assignment #2 Due
#6 1 Sept	Overview of Biblical Hermeneutics in Africa	West (A)	
#7 8 Sept	African Feminist Hermeneutics	Dube (A), Masenya; Nadar (B); Maluleke	Short Assignment #3 due
#8 15 Sept	Gender, Bible and HIV	Dube (B); Nadar (C)	
#9 22 Sept	Gender, Bible and HIV	Ackermann, Stiebert, Van Dyk	
	<b>VACATION</b>		
#10 6 Oct	Reading the bible for Gender Transformation: Contextual Bible Study	Bible study	
#11 13 October	Reading the bible for Gender Transformation: Aspects of Method	Haddad; Maluleke & Nadar; West (B)	
#12 20 Oct	Class Presentations based on Term Essay		Class Presentations
#13 27 Oct	Class Presentations based on Term Essay		Term Essay Due : 11 Nov 2010

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### COURSE EXPECTATIONS AND ASSIGNMENTS

#### *Attendance*

Attendance and participation in class is required. You will only be given a DP if you have attended 80% of the module. The course will be taught on Thursdays from 08:30 to 10:30 in Room 107. In addition to attending class if you want to do your term essay on Topic #4 you must make arrangements with the Ujamaa Centre for Biblical and Theological Community Development and Research, to participate in and facilitate community bible studies with them. If you are interested please contact, Ms Bongzi Zengele, Programmes Director of the Ujamaa Centre on [zengeleb@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:zengeleb@ukzn.ac.za).

#### *Class Marks*

Your class mark counts for 50% toward your final mark. This will be made up of 3 short assignments, which are based on the prescribed readings. Your short assignments must be 1200 to 1500 words long, and must be emailed to Prof. Nadar ([nadars@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:nadars@ukzn.ac.za)) no later than the due date. The subject line of the email must contain the course code (THEO735/835). 2% will be deducted per day after due date up to two weeks. Thereafter the assignment will not be marked.

#### **Short assignment Number 1:**

Write an essay in which you show the various possibilities of engaging with biblical authority. Your essay should draw on the writings of Nadar and Johnson. Please include in your essay some thoughts on why it is important for feminist biblical scholars to engage on the issue of biblical authority.

**Short assignment Number 2:** Write an essay in which you explain what you understand by feminist hermeneutics drawing on the descriptions and analyses provided by Camp; Nolan-Fewell and Exum.

#### **Short assignment Number 3:**

Write an essay in which you provide a critical overview of the hermeneutical methods used by African women biblical scholars drawing on the works of Masenya; Dube, Nadar and the critical response by Maluleke.

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#### *Term Paper*

- Completion of a term essay in consultation with the course co-ordinator is required. This is worth 50% of your final mark. PLEASE NOTE: There is no exam for this course. Your term paper replaces an exam and has to be substantial in content and analysis. Therefore you will be required to do a **presentation of a proposal** beforehand highlighting the central thesis of your paper, your general theoretical framework, a literature review clearly positing how your essay contributes to the existing body of knowledge in the chosen area of research and a preliminary list of readings you will use for your essay. All students will be required to present this detailed proposal in class using PowerPoint. Presentations will be done on **20 and 27 October**. Topics are provided below, but should you wish to write on a topic of your choice, please be in touch with the course co-ordinator. Your essay should be 4000 words in length for Honours students and 5000 words for Masters Students properly referenced, using the school guidelines on referencing. Your final term paper is due on **11 November**.

#### **Term Paper Topics**

1. Anne Borrowdale<sup>1</sup> has argued “If submission continues to be the “theory,” then abuse will inevitably continue to be the “practice”. Write an essay in which you show how the bible or interpretations thereof supports the theory of submission. Thereafter, demonstrate, through a detailed analysis of a particular text, how Borrowdale’s statement can be engaged with.
2. Sugirtharjah<sup>2</sup> argues that “Liberation hermeneutics has made historical tools more ethically responsible.” Write an essay, in which you use African feminist hermeneutics, particularly as it is conceived of and practiced in Africa, as an example of liberation hermeneutics, to show how Sugirtharjah’s statement is true. Your essay must include a detailed historical exegesis of a text of your choice to illustrate the above thesis.
3. HIV and AIDS is a gendered pandemic. African women biblical scholars have argued that we need to re-read biblical texts in the light of the HIV&AIDS pandemic to find empowering messages in our context. Using one of the methodologies proposed by African women bible scholars, choose a text (excluding texts covered in class) and show how this text can offer a new reading in the context of HIV and AIDS.
4. Tinyiko Maluleke and Sarojini Nadar have posed the question “whether the academy ought to see its role in relation to the poor and marginalized as that of

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<sup>1</sup> Anne Borrowdale. *Distorted Images. Christian Attitudes to Women, Men and Sex*. (London: SPCK, 1991), 104

<sup>2</sup> R. S. Sugirtharajah. *The Bible in the third world. Pre-colonial, colonial, postcolonial encounters*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 142

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conscientization, education and the imparting of skills.”<sup>3</sup>They have further argued that “for some, the fact that the poor and marginalized are and can be agents of survival and transformation, implies all intellectual interventions should be dialogical (e.g. reading with) rather than pedagogical and kerygmatic”<sup>4</sup> In the light of your experiences of participating in Contextual Bible Study, write an essay in which you demonstrate to what extent the interaction of the academy with communities of faith is dialogical and to what extent it is pedagogical or kerygmatic. Your essay must include illustrations and examples from actual bible studies participated in, or facilitated by yourself.



### Books to buy

Many of the prescribed readings can be found in the following two books. It is therefore recommended that you purchase your own copies of these books. Part of the discipline of academia is building one's own library and this is the best way to do it. The course co-ordinator has secured both these books at a nominal rate and these can be purchased from her:

1. Musa W. Dube. 2001. (Ed.), *Other Ways of Reading: African Women and the Bible*, Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature.
2. Musa Dube and Musimbi Kanyoro, (Eds). *Grant me Justice! HIV/AIDS and Gender Readings of the Bible*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis

The rest of the readings will be provided in a bound course reader.



### Reading List

#### Seminar # 1 - Introductions and Readings

<sup>3</sup> T.S. Maluleke and S. Nadar. “Alien Fraudsters in the White Academy: Agency in Gendered Colour.” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 120 (2004), 7.

<sup>4</sup> Maluleke and Nadar, *Alien Fraudsters in the White Academy...* 7

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Introductions and Handing out of Readings

#### **Seminar # 2 - Independent Reading**

Students are required to spend time familiarising themselves with the module content and what is required of them. In addition, they are required to do the readings for the following week.

#### **Seminar # 3 - Issues of Authority**

Nadar, Sarojini. (A) 2009. "The Bible Says! Feminism, Hermeneutics, and Neo-Pentecostal Challenges." *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 134 (July 2009), 131-146.

Johnson, Luke. T. 2007. "The Bible's Authority For and In the Church," in William P. Brown (ed.) *Engaging Biblical Authority: Perspectives on the Bible as Scripture*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox. 62-87

#### **Seminar # 4 - Situating Interpretation**

Shillington, V. George. 2002. *Reading the Sacred Text: An Introduction to Biblical Studies*, London, T & T Clark, 219-244

#### **Seminar # 5 - Overview of Feminist Hermeneutics**

Camp, Claudia. V. 1993. "Feminist Theological Hermeneutics: Canon and Christian Identity", in E. Schüssler Fiorenza (ed.). *Searching the Scriptures. Volume One: A Feminist Introduction*. New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 154-171.

Exum, J. Cheryl. 1995. "Feminist Criticism: Whose Interests are Being Served?" In Gale Yee. (Ed.) *Judges and Method, New Approaches in Biblical Studies*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 65-90.

Nolan-Fewell, Danna. 1999. "Reading the Bible Ideologically: Feminist Criticism". In S.L. McKenzie and S.R. Haynes (eds.) *To Each its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and their Applications*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 268-282.

Scholer, David. 1987. "Feminist hermeneutics and evangelical biblical interpretation." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 30.4 (1987) 407-420. Must be

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accessed on <http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/30/30-4/30-4-pp407-420-JETS.pdf>

#### **Seminar # 6 – Biblical Hermeneutics in Africa**

West, Gerald (A). 2010. "Biblical Hermeneutics in Africa," in Stinton, Diane B. (ed) *African Theology on the Way: Current Conversations*, London: SPCK, 21-31. Can be accessed on [http://www.chora-strangers.org/files/chora/west2008\\_Parratt.pdf](http://www.chora-strangers.org/files/chora/west2008_Parratt.pdf)

#### **Seminar # 7 – African Feminist Hermeneutics**

Dube, Musa W (A). 2001. "Divining Ruth for International Relations." In Musa W. Dube (ed.), *Other Ways of Reading: African Women and the Bible*, Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 179-189.

Masenya, Mmadipoane. 2001. "A Bosadi (Womanhood) Reading of Proverbs 31:10-31", in Musa W. Dube (ed.), *Other Ways of Reading: African Women and the Bible*, Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 145-157.

Nadar, Sarojini (B). 2001. "A South African Indian Womanist Reading of the Character of Ruth", In Musa W. Dube (ed.), *Other Ways of Reading: African Women and the Bible*, Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 159-175.

Maluleke, Tinyiko. S. 2001. "African Ruth's in Ruthless Africa: Reflections of an African Mordecai," In Dube, M. W. (Ed). In Musa W. Dube (ed.), *Other Ways of Reading: African Women and the Bible*, Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 237-252.

#### **Seminar # 8 – Gender, Bible and HIV & AIDS**

Dube, Musa. 2004. "Talitha Cum! A Postcolonial Feminist & HIV/AIDS Reading of Mark 5:21-43." In MW Dube and MRA Kanyoro, (Eds). *Grant me Justice! HIV/AIDS and Gender Readings of the Bible*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 115-140

Nadar, Sarojini (C). 2004. "'Barak God and Die!': Women, HIV and a Theology of Suffering." In MW Dube and MRA Kanyoro, (Eds). *Grant me Justice! HIV/AIDS and Gender Readings of the Bible*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 60-79.

#### **Seminar # 9 – Gender, Bible and HIV & AIDS**



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Ackermann, Denise. M. 2004. "Tamar's Cry: Re-Reading an Ancient Text in the Midst of an HIV and AIDS Pandemic." In MW Dube and MRA Kanyoro, (Eds). *Grant me Justice! HIV/AIDS and Gender Readings of the Bible*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 27-59.

Stiebert, Johanna. 2004. "Women's Sexuality and Stigma in Genesis and the Prophets." In MW Dube and MRA Kanyoro, (Eds). *Grant me Justice! HIV/AIDS and Gender Readings of the Bible*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 80-96.

Van Dyk Alta C and Van Dyk Peet J. 2002. "HIV/ AIDS in Africa. Suffering Women and the Book of Ruth." *Old Testament Essays* 15/1, 209-224.

#### **Seminar # 10 - Contextual Bible Study**

Class notes to be provided

#### **Seminar # 11 Reading the bible for social and gender transformation**

Haddad, Beverley. G. 2000. "Practices of solidarity, degrees of separation - doing theology as women in South Africa." *Journal of Constructive Theology* 6,2: 39-54.

Maluleke Tinyiko S & Nadar, Sarojini. 2004. "Alien Fraudsters in the White Academy: Agency in Gendered Colour." *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 120 (2004), 5-17.

West, Gerald O. 2006. "The Vocation of an African biblical scholar on the margins of biblical scholarship." *Old Testament Essays* 19/1, 307-336.

#### **Seminar # 12 & #13 - Class Presentations**

Class presentations based on proposals for term essays