**Women in Traditional Religious Movements:**
Orthodox Feminist Activism in a Comparative Perspective
Dr. Yael Israel-Cohen
Spring, 2016
Mondays & Wednesdays, 12:30-1:50 Tech. M164
Northwestern University

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**Course Description:**
In this course, students will be challenged to think about feminism through the lens of women committed to traditional, at times even fundamentalist, religious values. We will investigate the ways in which such women negotiate their status and examine the evolving feminist movements that have arisen within traditional religious life. More specifically, we will focus on a case study of feminist activism among Orthodox Jewish women in Israel, in a comparative perspective with Evangelical women and Muslim women in the USA. Some of the central questions we will engage are: how are the forms of feminist identity and activism among women in traditional religious traditions similar? In what ways can feminist activism within religious life be compared with secular feminist activism?

The following is a tentative list of topics for each class and accompanying weekly reading. Note that the reading list may change. Notification will be given in class for all changes in readings.

**Topics and Assigned Readings**

**Week 1**

**Tuesday, March 29: INTRODUCTION**

Readings due March 30:


**Wednesday, March 30: TRADITIONAL RELIGION IN THE MODERN ERA**
Readings due April 4:


Week 2

Monday, April 4: AMBIGUITY ABOUT FEMINISM

Readings due April 6:


Wednesday, April 6: FILM - ARRANGED – Class will meet in the Forum Room, 2nd Floor South Tower, of the library

Readings:
No readings

*FILM REVIEW DUE MONDAY, APRIL 11*

Week 3

Monday, April 11: THE APPEAL OF TRADITIONAL RELIGION + FILM DISCUSSION

Readings due April 13:


Wednesday, April 13: STRATEGIES OF FEMINIST RESISTANCE AND RELIGIOUS CHANGE
Readings due April 18:


Week 4

Monday April 18: ACTIVE RESISTANCE AND RELIGIOUS CHANGE

Reading due April 20:


Wednesday April 20: BETWEEN ACTIVE AND PASSIVE RESISTANCE: CASE OF ISLAMIC FEMINISM IN IRAN

No readings

Week 5

Monday, April 25: no class

Readings due April 27:


Wednesday, April 27: BETWEEN ACTIVE AND PASSIVE RESISTANCE: CASE OF CATHOLIC AND JEWISH ORTHODOX WOMEN

Readings due May 2:


**Week 6:**

**Monday, May 2: FEMINIST IDENTITY AND THE FEMINIST LABEL & DISCUSSION OF FINAL PAPER**

**Readings due May 4:**


**Wednesday, May 4: FILM - “MOSQUE IN MORGANTOWN” Class will meet in the in the Forum Room, 2nd Floor South Tower, of the library**

**No readings**

**FILM REVIEW DUE WEDNESDAY MAY 9TH**

**Week 7**

**Monday, May 9: DISCUSSION OF FILM + FUNDAMENTALIZATION OF CONSERVATIVE RELIGION**

**Reading due May 11:**


**Wednesday, May 11: WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP ROLES WITHIN CONSERVATIVE RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS**

Readings due Monday, May 16:


**Week 8**

**Monday, May 16: FEMINISM AND THE BLURRING OF DENOMINATIONAL BOUNDARIES**

No Readings

**Wednesday, May 18: ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF RELIGIOUS FEMINISM ON CONSERVATIVE RELIGION**

No Readings

**PRESENTATIONS START MONDAY, MAY 23**

**FINAL PAPER DUE BEFORE CLASS, MONDAY, MAY 23**

**Weeks 9:**

**Monday, May 23: student presentations**

**Wednesday, May 25: student presentations**

**Week 10:**

Monday, May 30: memorial day, no class

Wednesday, June 1: reading week, no class
GRADING
Reading Responses   25%
Film Reviews    30%
Final Paper     35%
Participation     5%
Presentation of Paper   5%

6 READINGS RESPONSES (25%):
You must read all the assigned readings for each class. Of the readings, you are required to turn in 6 reading responses total which reflect not only your in-depth reading of the text but also personal reflection and thought on what you read.
Reading responses must be turned in through canvas by 9:00am on the day the readings will be discussed. See syllabus for when readings are due. (In general, readings are due on the class day following the assigned reading. This means that by Monday at 9:00, or by Wednesday at 9:00, depending on when the reading was assigned, your reading assignment is due.) Late responses will not be accepted. If you have a problem submitting through canvas, send it to both me and Laura via email.

There are three components to the reading response:
1) A brief summary of what you see as the main issues and arguments raised by the author.
2) Focus on a specific paragraph/sentence which you found particularly interesting or troubling. Write your reactions to it. Make sure to specify the page number where the paragraph or statement was taken from. If not too long, copy the statement/paragraph itself into the reading response. Otherwise, first paraphrase the statement and then give your reactions.
3) Ask 2 open ended discussion questions based on your reading of the text that cannot be answered by a google search. These questions will be incorporated in class discussions and you may be asked to elaborate on them in class.

Reading responses should be between 1 ½ - 2 pages long. You will be given full credit (100%) if it looks like you have made an effort to grasp the material and offered thoughtful analysis. You will be given partial credit (80%) if you complete each section, but your analysis lacks serious engagement with the text. At the end of the course, if you did not turn in 6 reading responses on time or turned in incomplete assignments, you will receive 0 credit for each of the missing/incomplete assignments.

NOTE: The reading responses are not only important because they fulfil part of your requirement for a grade. They are intended to help you process the readings and be useful to you in formulating your thoughts for class discussions. Moreover, these responses will be resources for you in putting together your other written assignments which require you to engage the literature in formulating your opinions (thereby saving you time in the long run).
As noted, you are required to turn in 6 responses. You will certainly find that some topics/readings are of more interest to you than others. You should do the responses for the readings that draw your interest the most. Do not procrastinate with the assignments as this will
limit your choices of which readings you can focus on. Most likely, the more interested you are in the reading, the better your response will be.

2 FILM REVIEWS (30%):
You will watch two films in class and be required to turn in a 3 page review for each (each review will be worth 15% of your grade). The film review should not be a summary of the plot. It should include deeper analysis of some of the themes raised in the film and your reactions to them. The film review must also include reference to course readings which shed light on some of the themes you discuss. A good review will 1) offer insightful analysis of the issues raised by the film, 2) make reference to readings which complement your ideas or shed light on aspects of the film, 3) be well written, clear and coherent. Include a bibliography with your review.

FINAL PAPER (35%):
Final paper should be about 6 pages. The topic of the paper will be discussed during week 5.

PARTICIPATION (5%):
The benefit of small classes is that there is room for discussion. You will be expected to be part of these discussions. Note that time at the end of each class will be designated to sharing questions/issues that you found interesting in the readings.
Part of the participation grade is being in every class and arriving on time. If you are unable to attend a class because of an emergency or illness, please email me ahead of time if possible. Attendance will often be taken at the start of class.

PRESENTATION (5%)
You will be asked to share your thoughts on some of the topics discussed in class in a short presentation. Details will be given during week 5.

Deadlines:
- Reading Responses are always due by 9:00am through Canvas on the class-day following the assigned reading.
- Film reviews are due before class on Monday April 11th and Monday May 9th. If you cannot attend class on the day of the showing, it is your responsibility to watch the film at the library and turn in the film review assignment on time.
- Final Paper is due Monday, May 23 before class.
- Presentations will be on Monday May 23 and Wednesday May 27.

Policy Notes:
1) Late work will not be accepted. If you have an illness or emergency situation, and an exception is necessary, please see Laura to discuss options to turn in your work.
2) All assignments should be submitted through canvas. If you are having a problem with the system, send the assignment to both Laura and myself via email.
3) If you are absent, it is your responsibility to get notes from your classmates and stay updated with the material.
4) Small changes may be made to the syllabus. You will be informed in class and by email of such changes.
5) For all assignments, use 12-point font, standard margins, double spaced.
6) As in all courses, policies of academic integrity and plagiarism apply. Familiarize yourself with Northwestern’s policy at: http://www.weinberg.northwestern.edu/handbook/integrity/