Course Description
Christian doctrine affirms the material order as good and given by God in all its particularity. However, all too often gendered existence seems to beckon more toward the Fall than it does to creation. In this course, we will look at the biblical, theological and cultural factors that contribute to questions of gender and theology. We will analyze important texts from the theological tradition that have sought to address the question of women in the church, and we will do our own exegetical digging to discern how the biblical material comes to play. All of this is in service of moving our discussion of gender from one marked by sin to a discussion marked also by grace.

Course Objectives

- **Understand biblical, theological, and cultural factors** that contribute to questions about gender and theology
- Gain skills to help you **analyze** the above approaches **biblically and theologically**
- **Understand** the place of women’s stories in the Biblical text
- **Analyze** the arguments for women in public church ministry
- Work to **develop a paradigm for faithful living** of God’s intentions for you as a gendered creature.

The course consists of five key sections:

I. Gender, Culture, Church
II. Women in Scripture
III. Feminist Thought and Christian Theology
IV. Ecclesial Questions
V. Thinking Faithfully about Gender

Required Texts to purchase:


**Required Texts available through the GCTS library:**


**Course Grading:** The course is designed in such a way that faithfulness and diligence on your part will be rewarded. The student’s grade will be determined as follows:

- Class Attendance and Participation in Discussion Groups 20%
- Required Reading Responses (8) 20%
- Sermon on Judges 19 30%
- Text Analysis of 1 Corinthians 11:1-6 or 1 Timothy 2:9-15 30%

Grading Rubric: After all the requirements of the course have been completed, the instructor will use the following rubric for the assignment of grades, based on the overall performance of the class. The grades assigned will represent the instructor’s interpretation of the following standard:

- **A=** Outstanding mastery of the subject: excellence is evident in preparation for and attendance in class sessions; unusual ability to retain, analyze and synthesize the material; with a positive attitude making productive contributions to the learning community in the classroom.

- **B=** Superior mastery of the subject: sincere effort in preparation for and attendance in class sessions; ability to master the essential aspects of the material; with a mostly consistent attitude in making contributions to the learning community in the classroom.

- **C=** Basic mastery of the subject: inconsistent effort in preparation for and attendance in class sessions; engagement with the material but difficulty in grasping some of its aspects; with occasional contributions to the learning community in the classroom.

- **D=** Inadequate mastery of the subject.

- **F=** Failure: course must be repeated.

**Warning on Plagiarism:** Helpful guidelines on plagiarism can be found on the Indiana University website [http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/plagarism.html](http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/plagarism.html). This document has the official recognition of the Gordon-Conwell faculty and provides very helpful tools to guide you as you prepare for your assignments. If a student is caught plagiarizing, the student will receive the consequences of this act according to the process established by the seminary.
Intellectual Property Rights: To protect the professor’s intellectual property rights with regard to classroom content, students are asked to refrain from audio and video recording of classes, as well as audio, video, and written publication (including internet posting and broadcasting) or live transmission of classroom proceedings.

Internet Usage: Students are asked to refrain from accessing the Internet at any point during class sessions, unless otherwise instructed by the professor. “Surfing the web,” checking email, and other internet-based activities are distracting to other students and to the professor and prevent the student from fully participating in the class session.

**Required Reading Responses**- There are eight reading responses assigned throughout the course. The aim of these assignments is a) to demonstrate a student’s critical engagement with the assigned text, and b) further classroom discussion by generating critical questions. Once you have read the assigned text, visit the Discussions module on Canvas and post a three-paragraph response, following these guidelines:

1) **In paragraph one,** carefully describe the author’s argument. What is the main thesis of this text? What is the content of this piece?

2) **In paragraph two,** offer one or two critical questions. A critical question will attend to how the author makes their argument. How does the author engage the biblical text? What kind of assumptions do they make about the Bible? What are their nonnegotiable theological commitments?

3) **In paragraph three,** offer a question or statement of application regarding why this argument matters. What kind of change is the author promoting, if any? What are the implications of this argument for the kind of church you attended? What might be a response to this argument from your own faith community?

4) **After you have posted a response, respond to two (2) other posts.** In these two responses, work to move forward the post your colleague has offered. Are there places where you can build on their question, or work to answer it? Do you have any disagreements with the way your colleague has read the text?

**Sermon on Judges 19. Due January 18.**
The first major assignment for this course will be to write a sermon on Judges 19. This extremely difficult text presents a challenge for expositors. Consult the Lapsley, Thompson, and Trible readings in addition to three other commentaries, and write the transcript of a 25 minute sermon. Questions to consider in preparation: How can this text be received as a good word of God for the church? What kinds of concerns must be addressed that this text raises? What hermeneutical choices do various interpreters make as they approach this text, and what assumptions are at play? Students will have the option to submit audio or video versions of this file if preferred.

**Text Analysis of 1 Corinthians 11:1-6 or 1 Timothy 2:9-15. Due January 25.**
Select either 1 Corinthians 11:1-6 or 1 Timothy 2:9-15. For this 8-10 page paper, your goal will be to evaluate your chosen text and to evaluate the decisions commentators and interpreters are making as they approach it. What are the distinctive hermeneutical decisions made regarding these texts? In addition to comparing Craig Keener’s reading with the following articles, you will need to engage one article on Feminist Biblical interpretation and evaluate whether feminist strategies are being
employed, and how they might come to bear if they are not. The paper will include the following sections:

Introduction to the Text- both historical and literary
Competing Interpretations
Hermeneutical Questions
Conclusions for Ecclesial Communities


For 1 Timothy: Consider the articles addressed in footnote 82 and 84, Keener p. 127.

I. Gender, Culture, Church

January 7


RR#1 (reading response): Interacting with the readings assigned for today, offer an initial answer to the following question: why should Christians care about gender?


RR#2: Interacting with Stackhouse, address the question of his subtitle; are both sides wrong and right?

II. Women in Scripture

January 8

AM: Read the following in preparation for today’s class:


Carolyn Osiek, “The Feminist and the Bible: Hermeneutical Alternatives,” in *Feminist Perspectives on
RR #3: What does Feminism as a method have to contribute to Biblical interpretation? Review the various methods discussed in the Osiek reading. What are the varying feminist approaches to biblical studies, and how do they differ?

PM:


Assignment 1: Your first major assignment for this course will be to write a sermon on Judges 19. This extremely difficult text presents a challenge for expositors. Consult the Lapsley, Thompson, and Trible readings in addition to three other commentaries, and write the transcript of a 25 minute sermon. Due January 18.

III. Feminist Thought and Christian Theology
January 9


RR#4: Identify a cultural example of “essentialist” or “constructivist” understanding of what it means to be male and female, and, interacting with S. Jones a theological assessment of the following: should Christian sympathies be with essentialists or constructivists? Feel free to bring your cultural example with you to class.

PM: Christology and Incarnation, Sin and Redemption

RR#5: What is the stated contribution of these readings to Christian doctrine? Put another way, how does Feminist theology benefit the task of Christian doctrine?

IV. Ecclesial Questions
January 10
AM: Women in Public Ministry: The Exegetical Questions
Craig Keener, Introduction and Chapters 1-3 and 7
See also the following interview: https://theotherjournal.com/0206/04/02/gender-equality-and-hermeneutics-an-interview-with-craig-keener/

PM: Keener 4-6.

RR #6 on Ephesians 5.
Ephesians 5 presents an opportunity to reflect on gender relations, both in Scripture and the local church. In this paper, you goal is to reflect on the chapter of Ephesians 5 and what it has to say about relationships between men and women. For this paper, you should: a) acquaint yourself with the entire book of Ephesians, treating chapter and verse distinctions as incidental. How does Paul’s discussion of men and women fit within the larger book? b) acquaint yourself with various approaches to this passage, including Keener’s approach. Do these approaches reflect Paul’s command to “walk in the way of love” (Eph. 5:1)? c) Consider 5:21-33. What is Paul asking of the men and women in Ephesus? d) Reflect on your own experience in the local church. Do gender relations reflect Paul’s stated desire? Why or why not, and what would need to change in order for them to do so?

V. Thinking Faithfully about Gender
January 11
AM: Feminism and Evangelicalism in Conversation

Read and Respond to Three of the Following:
**RR#7:** Interacting with at least 3 of today’s readings, reflect on how evangelicals should assess the project of feminist theology. What difference might such assessment make in the life of the church?

PM: Where do we go from here?

**RR#8:** Interacting with today’s readings, write about about your best hopes for evangelicals to develop faithful paradigms for living as male and female creatures.