

**Gender and the Hebrew Bible**  
REL 3291.2412, JST 3930, Spring 2024  
Tuesday 5-6 (11:45-1:40), Thursday 6 (12:50-1:40), AND 013

Professor: Robert Kawashima  
office hours: Thursday 10:00-11:00, 1:45-2:45; or by appointment  
email: rsk@ufl.edu  
office: 120 Anderson  
Department of Religion: 107 Anderson

Course Description:

This course will introduce students to the modern, critical study of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament), as well as other ancient works, emphasizing in particular the analysis and interpretation of gender and sexuality in the ancient world. Specifically, we will engage in careful and informed readings of a range of biblical texts (narrative, law, wisdom literature), in order to investigate a series of questions regarding the mutual constitution of male and female in the literary traditions of ancient Israel. What happens to the goddess in monotheism? How does biblical narrative imaginatively realize the lives of women and men. What ideal roles are constructed and assigned to each? How are their bodies and sexualities conceptualized and legislated by biblical law? Comparative evidence from classical Greece and the ancient Near East will help bring the specificity of the biblical traditions into clearer focus. Selected secondary readings will introduce students to some of the theoretical issues involved in the study of gender and sexuality, of ancient literature in general, and of biblical literature in particular. No previous coursework on the Bible is required.

Required Texts:

*The SBL Study Bible* — or other approved translation  
Tikva Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*  
Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale*  
additional secondary readings, course materials, and information will be made available through UF's e-Learning website: <http://elearning.ufl.edu>

Accommodations for students with disabilities: students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation.

Course Requirements:

**Attendance is mandatory**

Participation (10%)

2 Written Exercises (3 pages) – (30%)

2 Exams – (60%)

Make-up exams must be approved by instructor beforehand, or justified afterward by providing appropriate documentation (medical, etc.).

Grade scale:

	87–89 = B+	77–79 = C+	67–69 = D+	below 60 = E
93–100 = A	83–86 = B	73–76 = C	63–66 = D	
90–92 = A-	80–82 = B-	70–72 = C-	60–62 = D	

Schedule:

Week 1

1/9 **Introduction:** syllabus; general background

1/11 **Gender and Creation:** Dalley, “Epic of Creation”; Genesis 1; Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, chs 5, 8 and 13

Week 2

1/16 **The Death of the Goddesses:** Hesiod, *Theogony*; Homeric Hymn, “To Demeter”; Dalley, *Descent of Ishtar*; Frymer-Kensky, *Wake*, chs 1, 2 and 7

1/18 **The Origins of Gender:** Genesis 1-3; Hesiod, *Theogony* (pp 18-21) and *Works and Days* (pp 37-42); Frymer-Kensky, *Wake*, ch 19

Week 3

1/23 **Women and the Origins of Culture:** Genesis 2-11; Dalley, *Gilgamesh* (pp 50-60); Hesiod, *Theogony* (pp 18-21) and *Works and Days* (pp 37-42); Frymer-Kensky, *Wake*, chs 4 and 10

1/25 **Heroism:** Dalley, *Gilgamesh* (pp 61-77); Baal; Judges 1-5; Genesis 14; Frymer-Kensky, *Wake*, ch 6

Week 4

1/30 **Purity and Pollution:** Leviticus 12-16; Frymer-Kensky, “Pollution, Purification, and Purgation in Biblical Israel”; Frymer-Kensky, *Wake*, ch 17

2/1 **Gender and Law (Legal Status and Property Rights):** Numbers 27, 30, 36

Week 5

2/6 **Gender and Law (Marriage, Divorce, Adultery):** Numbers 5; Deuteronomy 22; Genesis 19, 34; 2 Samuel 13-14

2/8 **Gender and Law (Levirate Marriage):** Deuteronomy 25:5-10; Genesis 38; Ruth

Week 6

2/13 **TBA**

2/15 **Women in the Cult:** Leviticus 8-10, 21; Numbers 6; Bird, “The Place of Women in the Israelite Cultus”

Week 7

2/20 **Gender and Authority: (traditional)** 1 Kings 2, 10, 21; Esther 1  
(charismatic) Exodus 15; Numbers 6, 12; Judges 4; 2 Kings 22:14-20; 2 Samuel 14; **PAPER 1 due**

2/22 **Domestic Violence:** Lot’s daughters (Genesis 19); Isaac (Genesis 22); Jephthah’s daughter (Judges 6-12); The Levite’s concubine (Judges 19-21; Genesis 19); 1 Samuel 11

Week 8

2/27 **EXAM 1** (1/11 to 2/22)

2/29 **Domesticity:** Genesis 12-50, esp 12, 15, 17-18; Dalley, Gilgamesh (pp 77-120); Frymer-Kensky, Wake, chs 3 and 11

Week 9

3/5 **Husbands and Wives:** Sarah and Hagar (Genesis 16, 21); Rachel and Leah (Genesis 29-30); Sarah & Pharaoh (Genesis 12); Sarah & Abimelech (Genesis 20); Rebekah & Abimelech (Genesis 26)

3/7 **Motherhood:** Sarah (Genesis 18, 20-21); Rebekah (Genesis 25); Samson's mother (Judges 13); Hannah (1 Samuel 1-2); Lot's daughters (Genesis 19)

Week 10

3/12 **Spring Break**

3/14 **Spring Break**

Week 11

3/19 **Wisdom and Gender:** Psalm 1; Proverbs 1-9, 31; Newsom, "Woman and the Discourse of Patriarchal Wisdom"; Frymer-Kensky, Wake, ch 16

3/21 **Greek "Homosexuality":** Plato, *Symposium* (excerpts); Halperin, "Two Views of Greek Love"

Week 12

3/26 **Sexual Taboos:** Genesis 19; Leviticus 18-20; Deuteronomy 24, 27; Boyarin, "Are There Any Jews in 'The History of Sexuality'?"

3/28 **"Just Friends"?:** Gilgamesh; 1 Samuel 16-20, 31; 2 Samuel 1; Halperin, "Heroes and their Pals"

Week 13

4/2 **Politics and Gender:** 1-2 Samuel; 1 Kings 1-2

4/4 **Politics and Gender:** 1-2 Samuel; 1 Kings 1-2

Week 14

4/9 **Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale***

4/11 **Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale***

Week 15

4/16 **Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale***

4/18 **EXAM 2** (2/29 to 4/16)

Week 16

4/23 **Passover: class cancelled**

**PAPER 2 due Monday, April 29**