

HIST 548: THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE OF FEMINISM

Sarah C. Williams

August 1-5; 8:30 am - 4:30 pm

2 or 3 graduate credit hours; or 2 audit hour

In-person, live online & Recorded

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores the integral relationship between Christian faith and the rise of the feminist movement in the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Feminism is often presented in the history books as a force antithetical to Christianity. All too often Christianity is cast in the role of chief propagator of oppressive hegemonic constructions of gender and as the long-term enemy of women's social, political, and sexual liberation. This class will demonstrate the deep effects of such a narrative on contemporary culture both inside and outside the church. We will look carefully at the underlying presuppositions that frame our culture's understanding of feminism, womanhood and femininity, showing how these presuppositions shape the missional environment in which we must now operate as Christians in the post-modern West.

Focusing on the spiritual practices of an extraordinary and diverse group of first wave Christian feminists we will encounter a different version of the story. Specifically, we will explore how these early feminists understood the role of prayer as a crucial form of political resistance to the gendered and the religious status quo. Although this class is historical in content and approach, it is especially designed for those who are honest enough to admit that sometimes history can be irrelevant! This class is not so much a history lesson as a 'missional summit' for all those asking difficult questions about gender, sexuality and mission, in which we aim to develop fresh insight through dialogue with the past.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Upon the successful completion of this course, students should have a clearer understanding of:

1. Understand the historical background to present-day debates surrounding sexual difference and gender diversity.
2. Critically evaluate the degree to which perceptions of gender and sexuality are shaped by prevailing political ideologies.
3. Understand the different philosophical, ideological and theological strands that constitute the feminist movement in different geographical settings, at different moments in time.
4. Read their own personal and political context with a deeper awareness of historical influences.
5. Find their missional imaginations furnished with fresh inspiration and hope through examples of individuals from other time periods who engaged theologically and politically with complex issues of sexual identity.
6. Find constructive and compassionate language to articulate an authentic Christian response in their own cultural moment.

COURSE OUTLINE

Day 1 August 1 What is Feminism anyway?; The politics of history

Day 2 August 2 Developing an historical framework part I & II

Day 3 August 3 People and Perspectives: introducing a case-study approach & A Day in the Nineteenth Century; Revolutionary Portraits

Day 4 August 4 More Revolutionary Potraits & A Day in the Twentieth Century; Developing a Theory of Change & Prayer and Political Imagination

Day 5 August 5 Finding out home in Christ; the future of feminism?

REQUIRED TEXTS

For full bibliography, see the course syllabus

Please Note: This Course Information Sheet is meant to assist in selecting courses. The official syllabus should be consulted for more detailed information. A full syllabus with drop deadlines, policies, and course assignment details is available on Moodle for registered students: moodle.regent-college.edu/login

