“Gender, Culture and Scripture:”
Teaching Gender at Stellenbosch University

Prof L Juliana Claassens
Associate Professor of Old Testament
Prof Denise Ackermann
Session 1: Introduction to Course
Session 2: Women and the Media
Session 3: Women and Poverty
Session 4: Women and Work
Session 5: Women and HIV-AIDS
Session 6: Women and Violence
Session 7: Women and the Church
Session 1: Introduction

- Gender and Culture
- Stereotypes
- Privilege, Power, Patriarchy
- Can one critique culture?
- Gender, Culture and Scripture
Session 1: Introduction

• Gender and Culture
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• Can one critique culture?
• Gender, Culture and Scripture
One is not born a woman, but rather becomes one

Simone de Beauvoir

Strictly speaking, “women” cannot be said to exist

Julia Kristeva

Woman does not have a sex

Luce Irigaray

It took many years for early feminists to convince men and women that biology is not destiny and that what it means to be masculine and feminine can change over time and across cultures.

Margaret Kamitsuka
Session 1: Introduction

• Gender and Culture
• Stereotypes
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• Gender, Culture and Scripture
Stereotypes

Men are....

• Strong
• Logical
• Destroyer
• Violent
• Independent
• Aggressive
• Dominant
• Protector

Women are....

• Weak
• Emotional
• Nurturer
• Non-violent
• Dependent
• Meek
• Submissive
• Protected
Session 1: Introduction

- Gender and Culture
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Where We Stand: Power, Privilege & Perspective
Session 1: Introduction

- Gender and Culture
- Stereotypes
- Privilege, Power, Patriarchy
- Can one critique culture?
- Gender, Culture and Scripture
Footbinding
Corsets
Session 1: Introduction

- Gender and Culture
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Feminist Biblical Interpretation
Feminism is the radical notion that women are people.
Johnson identifies four practices of memory that is important in a feminist theological approach to biblical and Christian tradition:

(1) recover lost memory [Hagar];
(2) rectify the distorted story [Mary Magdalene];
(3) reassess value [the Virgin Martyrs];
(4) reclaim the silence [the myriad of anonymous women],

(Friends of God and Prophets, 141-162).
The example of Hagar illustrates one front on which women’s practices of memory are working. Hagar is certainly in the biblical text; her suffering is profound; her wits are keen; her encounters with the divine are groundbreaking. Yet the prevailing voice of the tradition has made her virtually invisible. Recovering the lost memory of her creative striving to survive interrupts the dominant discourse. It demands that the corporate memory of the ekklesia make room for the female, the foreigner, the one in servitude, the religious stranger – and the person who is all four – as a vital player in the history of humanity with God. By bringing Hagar visibly into the cloud of witnesses, it lifts up a source of lament and resistance as well as strength and inspiration for all who remember her name (Johnson, *Friends of God and Prophets*, 145-146.)
Session 2: Women and the Media

- Bathsheba: “Plotted, Shot and Painted”
- Female representations in the Bible, Art, Movies
- Women and Advertising
1In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab with his officers and all Israel with him; they ravaged the Ammonites, and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem. 2It happened, late one afternoon, when David rose from his couch and was walking about on the roof of the king’s house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing [...]; the woman was very beautiful [...]. 3David sent someone to inquire about the woman. It was reported, “This is Bathsheba daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite.” 4So David sent messengers to get her [...], and she came to him [...], and he lay with her [...]. (Now she was purifying herself after her period.) Then she returned to her house [...]. 5The woman conceived [...]; and she sent and told David, “I am pregnant” [...]. 6So David sent word to Joab, “Send me Uriah the Hittite.” And Joab sent Uriah to David.
Rembrandt, *Bathsheba at Her Bath*, 1654
STUPENDOUS!
The Story Of The All-Conquering Lion Of Judah
...And The Woman For Whom He Broke God's Own Commandment!

"DAVID AND BATHSHEBA"

STARRING
GREGORY PECK
SUSAN HAYWARD

TECHNICOLOR

SEE the story of David, the mighty man of war, as told in the Bible.
SEE the love affair between David and Bathsheba.
SEE the consequences of their sin.
SEE the wise counsel of Nathan the prophet.
SEE the courage of Joab and the cunning of Absalom.
SEE the power of God in the life of His chosen king.

RAYMOND MASSEY, KIERON MOORE

DIRECTED BY
DARRYL F. ZANUCK, HENRY KING

SCREENPLAY BY
IRA ROBERTS, HERMAN M. SHORE

WRITTEN FOR THE Screen
By Philip Dunne

20TH CENTURY-FOX PRESENTS
Women and Advertising

Jean Kilbourne, *Killing us Softly III*
Session 3: Women and Poverty

- Biblical story of Naomi and Ruth
- The Feminization of Poverty”
  - Access to and level of employment or income
  - Access to and level of education
  - Household work/ Access to leisure
  - Access to private property
  - Poverty and motherhood
- Globalization
Struggling to Survive

Katharine Sakenfeld (Ruth, 45) actualizes gleaning laws in the following way:

Gleaning continues in various forms in the modern world as a means of survival for the destitute. In some countries, it is structured by law, routinized as a welfare safety net, or organized through food banks; but even there, people rummage through garbage cans to survive. In some poorer nations, conditions for the destitute in search of food are even more extreme.
The Peaceable Community

It is a human community in which the marginalized person has dared to insist upon full participation, in which the one in the center has reached out beyond societal norms to include the marginalized. It is a community in which children are celebrated and the elderly are attentively cared for. It is a community in which all are fed, a community in which joy is the dominant note” (Sakenfeld, *Ruth*, 8).
Women and Poverty in South Africa
Session 3: Women and Poverty

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- The Feminization of Poverty
  - Access to and level of employment or income
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Women hauling water, Welverdiend Village
www.ots.duke.edu/~abarbee/academic/web/albun14.ht
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• Globalization
Role of Globalization

Many are the economic widows and orphans who are being created by the poverty enhancing syndrome of globalization. Africa has known many traumatic displacements of her population. When Southern African men left women and children to serve in the mines of Egoli, they began a trend which continues to this day. Women and children who are expecting fathers and sons to return, to bring wealth or send a contribution for the management of the family have been regularly disappointed. These women and children have worked the land and themselves dry, trying to survive (Mercy Amba Oduyoye 1990: 76).
Session 4: Women and Work

- Equality in the workplace
- Equal work, equal pay
- The glass ceiling
- Sexual harassment
- Formal vs informal sector
- Globalization
- Employment and Motherhood
- The second shift (Unpaid work, i.e. household activities and child care)
Session 4: Women and Work

- Equality in the workplace
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- **Globalization**
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Global Women: Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy
“The globalization of child care and housework brings the ambitious and independent women of the world together: the career-oriented upper-middle-class woman of an affluent nation and the striving woman from a crumbling Third World or post-communist economy. Only it does not bring them together in the way that second-wave feminists in affluent countries once liked to imagine – as sisters and allies struggling to achieve common goals. Instead they come together as mistress and maid, employer and employee, across a great divide of privilege and opportunity” (Ehrenreich and Hochschild, p11)
Session 4: Women and Work

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Session 5: Women and HIV-AIDS

• Movie *Yesterday*
• Denise Ackermann, Tamar’s Cry: Reading 2 Sam 13 in the Midst of an HIV/AIDS Pandemic”
• Beverley Haddad, “Gender, Violence and HIV/AIDS: A Deadly Silence in the Church,”
“The Body of Christ is grievously ill. The Body of Christ has Aids”

Denise Ackermann, *After the Locusts*

“Many who suffer from HIV and Aids are not killed by the virus but by the stigma”

Nelson Mandela, quoted in Gerald West, “Reading the Bible”
Beverley Haddad, “Gender, Violence and HIV/AIDS: A Deadly Silence in the Church,”

Women particularly vulnerable to HIV/AIDS pandemic due to following reasons:

• Biological
• Cultural practices (lobola, dry sex)
• Migrant labor system
• Child rape/ myth virgin girl
Session 6: Women and Violence

- Rape scripts
- Rape as means of war
The Greatest Silence: Rape in The Congo (Official Trailer)
Session 7: Women and the Church

• What is the reality of women’s ministry in the church(es) today?
• What gender constructs and stereotypes underlie this experience?
• How does this reality relate to the biblical vision of the church as well as the instances throughout the history of the church where women were included in ministry?
• What are practical strategies that we can employ to effect change in our congregations?
Exercise

• You are pastor of a church. You are convinced that the church needs more female pastors; that your church needs a female pastor.

• What strategies do you propose to convince congregation of value of female pastors?