

SC-518: There's Something About Mary Syllabus - Spring 2021

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Email Policy: *The instructor will use the official Hartsem student email addresses for all communications. Please check your Hartsem email account regularly.*

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I. Course Description

Yes, there certainly is *something* about Mary! But which one? The Virgin Mary? Mary Magdalene? Mary of Bethany? What about the other Marys? Who are they? How are they presented in New Testament texts and other early Christian writings? What was their relationship with Jesus? How are these Marys depicted in art, music, film, and other forms of contemporary culture? What is her legacy? That is, how have these Marys been interpreted, and what are the implications thereof? How do these women influence issues concerning the construction of gender and sexuality, surrogacy, rape culture, martyrdom, motherhood, women's roles in both secular and sacred spaces, unjust social systems, etc.? But it's never just Mary, is it? What is that *something* about you that you bring to the discussion? Do you have any biases or assumptions? Would one of these Marys give you the side-eye for judging them when you...? We will engage these questions *and more* employing critical methodologies such as historical, literary, rhetorical, and postcolonial criticisms, and gender studies including, feminist theory, womanist biblical hermeneutics, and masculinity studies. *There is something extraordinary about Mary. And we will love her!*

II. Objectives

To help students:

- Gain an in-depth comprehension about the various Marys in their ancient contexts, considering questions such as how, why, and for whom these texts were written
- Discuss and employ various biblical criticisms and methodological approaches to ancient texts
- Consider and analyze the political, theological, and ethical implications for contemporary society
- Develop skills of critical analysis by reading texts closely, engaging secondary literature, constructively contributing to discussions, and crafting scholarly writing assignments
- Engage in respectful dialogue with others of various faiths with theological and ethical sensitivity

III. Identified Seminary Learning Outcomes:

- To demonstrate foundational and critical knowledge of one's own religion.
- To demonstrate knowledge and skills for dialogical and constructive engagement with diversity.

IV. Required Texts

1. Bible: New Revised Standard Version
2. Esther De Boer, *The Mary Magdalene Cover-Up: The Sources Behind The Myth* (New York, New York: T&T Clark, 2006). [978-0567031822]
3. Jane Schaberg with Melanie Johnson-DeBaufre, *Mary Magdalene Understood* (New York, New York: Continuum), 2006. [ISBN: 978-0826418999]
4. Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Truly Our Sister: A Theology of Mary in the Communion of Saints* (New York, New York: Continuum,) 2006 (new edition). [978-0826418272]

V. Course Requirements and Grades

Regular, constructive engagement in online discussions is expected. Your preparation, critical analysis, and respectful dialogue (among other things) are what will make this course successful. Please note:

This. Course. Is. Not. Your. Personal. Soapbox.

In other words, this is not your venue, your platform on which you will engage in negative rhetoric, aiming political, racist, sexist, religion-ist (whatever) weaponry at your colleagues or the professor. This is a collaborative learning environment, and we shall govern ourselves accordingly. Any student who takes it upon him-/herself to be offensive or derogatory – especially after such an offense has been noted - will be penalized at the professor's discretion.

Now that that's settled....

A. Online Dialogue (55% of final grade): Students will write weekly posts (400 words **MAX**; 350-word **MIN**) based on a prompt provided by the professor. Students will also respond substantively to two classmates' posts (200 words **MAX**; 150-word **MIN**) each week. These posts and responses will not be a recapitulation of the lecture or readings, but rather an engagement that includes critical analysis in efforts to constructively further online class dialogue.

B. *There's Something About Mary* – A Presentation (20% of final grade): Students will analyze the ways in which some element of one of the Marys is represented, alluded to, or otherwise “recycled” in a contemporary cultural artifact (e.g. a sermon, a song, a TV show, video, a [political] speech, or a visual work of art). (Video clips must not be more than 5-min in length.) Students will also write a 400-word (375-word min) post describing the clip, how they see this particular Mary portrayed, how it relates or compares to the early Christian texts in which she is found, and any implications for interpretive communities. Be creative and have fun!

C. *There's Something About Mary and Social (In)justice* - Final Reflection (25% of final grade): Students will write a 1000 word (minimum 900 words) reflection based on one of the Marys *and* a contemporary issue of social (in)justice. In consideration with the texts and methodological approaches discussed in class, students will critically reflect on the impact and implications of the aforementioned on today's society. How is the interpretation of Mary used in relation to an issue of social (in)justice? Against or for whom? For what agenda? To what end? Who benefits? Who suffers? Why does it matter? What change would you like to see? How should this particular text of Mary be read? For what benefit? What do you propose? Students must show evidence that they actually took this course. In other words, include citations from primary sources, paraphrases of secondary scholarship, etc. Nevertheless, I want to hear your voice! *This is NOT a research paper!*

VI. Attendance and Timing of Course:

A post (the required assignment) equals a class session.

If you are unable to post or need an extension, please notify the professor *in advance* or at the earliest opportunity via email. **Missing two posts without a legitimate excuse will result in an automatic lowering of your final grade by 10%. Missing three or more posts without explanation or permission will result in automatic failure of the course.**

This course is asynchronous. There is no *specific* time in which you have to log in; however, you are expected to log into the course site several times per week in order to take part in discussions and to access readings, videos, mini-lectures and other course materials.

Due dates for assignments are fixed.

The assignment for the *upcoming* week will be posted by 5pm on the previous Wednesday. Students will be expected to post their original response to the assignment by Wednesday 5pm, and respond **substantively** to two of their colleagues by the Friday.

E.g. If I post the assignment on Wednesday, January 20, 2020, your original response to the assignment is due on Wednesday, January 27, 2020, and your responses to two colleagues is due on Friday, January 29, 2020.

VII. Learning Resources and Expectations

Hartford Seminary Grading Scale

Master's Students:

A (95-100) Demonstrates excellent mastery of the subject matter, a superior ability to articulate this, and provides helpful connections to daily life or contemporary issues.

Exceeds expectations of the course.

A- (90-94) Demonstrates mastery of the subject matter, ability to articulate this well, and makes connections to daily life or contemporary issues. Exceeds expectations of the course.

B+(87-89) Demonstrates a very good understanding of the subject matter, able to articulate lessons learned in the assignment well. Meets expectations of the course.

B (83-86) Demonstrates an understanding of the subject matter and the ability to articulate lessons learned. Meets expectations of the course.

B-(80-82) Demonstrates an understanding of the material at hand, has some difficulty articulating this, and basic connection of the material to daily life or contemporary issues/life. Meets basic expectations for the course.

C+(77-79) Demonstrates a basic comprehension of the subject matter, weak articulation and connections. Does not meet expectations for the course.

C (70-76) Demonstrates a minimal comprehension of the subject matter and has difficulty making connections. Does not meet expectations of the course.

F (below 70) Unable to meet the basic requirements of the course.

- Grades range from A to C and F; A+'s and C-'s are not part of the grading system.
- On a 4.0 GPA scale – A (4.00), A-(3.66), B+(3.33), B(3.00), B-(2.66), C+(2.33), C(2.00) and F(0.00). A grade point average of no less than B- (2.66) is required to maintain good standing. The minimum G.P.A. required for graduation is 2.75.

DMin students: High Pass (95-100), Pass (83-94), Low Pass (70-82), and Fail (below 70)

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

Academic honesty and integrity are expected of all students. **Plagiarism exists when:** a) the work submitted was done, in whole or in part, by anyone other than the one submitting the work, b) parts of the work, whether direct quotations, ideas, or data, are taken from another source without acknowledgement, c) the whole work is copied from another source [especially a web based source], or d) significant portions of one's own previous work used in another course. See "Plagiarism" at <http://www.hartsem.edu/current-students/policies/>.

Inclusive Language:

Hartford Seminary is committed to a policy of inclusion in its academic life and mission. All members of the community are expected to communicate in language that reflects the equality of genders, openness to diverse cultural and theological perspectives, and sensitivity to one another's images of God.

Extensions:

Extensions for papers will be given for illnesses or family emergencies only in consultation with the instructor.

Official Handbooks:

For all other questions you might have regarding policies or procedures, please check the student handbook <http://www.hartsem.edu/current-students/student-handbook/> and seminary policies at Academic policies are listed at <http://www.hartsem.edu/current-students/policies/>

CLASS SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

*** Please note that all readings are subject to change.
Students will be notified in advance. ***

Week 1: Jan. 22-25: Course Introduction; Mary's World; Hearing the Voices of Women!

- Roll Call!
- "Netiquette" - Rules of Engagement
- *Truly Our Sister* (Johnson), pp. xiii-43; 137-206.

Week 2: Jan. 28 – Feb. 1: There's Something About Mary/Miriam of Nazareth. A Scandal or Nah?

- Mark 3:20-21, 31-35; Matthew 1:1-25; 2:1-23; Luke 1:26-56; 2:1-52; John 2:1-11; 19:25-27; Acts 1:14-15; 2:1-21
- *Truly Our Sister* (Johnson), pp. 209-304.

Week 3: Feb. 4 -8: Mary in Patriarchal, Dualist Theology; Mary, the Maternal Face of God; Mary – A Woman of the Spirit; Images of Mary

- *Truly Our Sister* (Johnson), pp. 47-48, 54-70, 71-76, 86-92, 305-325.
- Christine Schenk Parish, "It Is Time to Free Mary and Let God Have Her Own Maternal Face." May 2016. Online: <https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/simple-spirit/it-time-free-mary-and-let-god-have-her-own-maternal-face>

Week 4: Feb. 11-15: Mary as "Mother"; Maternal Self -Sacrifice

- Stephanie Buckhanon Crowder, “Mary: A Favor(less) Mother – Luke 1:26-38” in her *When Momma Speaks: The Bible and Motherhood from a Womanist Perspective* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2016), pp. 73-83.
- Kathleen Gallagher Elkins, “Agency, Submission, and Motherhood: Mary in the Canonical Gospels,” in her *Mary, Mother of Martyrs: How Motherhood Became Self-Sacrifice in Early Christianity* (Indianapolis, Indiana: FSR Books, 2018), pp. 1-17, 22-33.
- Rev. Michael A. Van Sloun, “How Is Mary The Greatest Role Model for Christian Mothers?” 2003. Online: <http://rediscover.archspm.org/belonging/how-is-mary-the-greatest-role-model-for-christian-mothers/>

Week 5: Feb. 18-22: Mary in the Qur’an (Guest Lectures)

- *Readings from the Quran* TBD
- *The Protoevangelium of James*
- Rita George-Tvrtkovic, *Christians, Muslims, and Mary: A History* (New York, New York: Paulist Press, 2018), pp. ix-xii, 36-43, 49-56.

Week 6: Feb. 25 – Mar. 1: Mary’s Perpetual Virginit?; Mary as Widow; Reading Mary along with Indian Surrogacy

- Kyle Roberts, “What’s So Bad About Good Sex?,” in his *A Complicated Pregnancy: Whether Mary Was a Virgin and Why It Matters* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 2017), pp. 29-56.
- Andrew M. Mbuvi, “Jesus and His Mother: An Analysis of Their Public Relationship as a Paradigm for African Women (Widows) Who Must Circumvent Traditional Authority in Order to Thrive in Society,” in *Mother Goose, Mother Jones, Mommie Dearest: Biblical Mothers & Their Children*, ed. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan and Tina Pippin (Atlanta, Georgia: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), pp. 129-139.
- Sharon Jacob, *Reading Mary Alongside Indian Surrogate Mothers: Violent Love, Oppressive Liberation, and Infancy Narratives* (New York, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. xi-xxiii, 29-33, 139-143.

Week 7: Mar. 4-8: The Virgin Mary and Rape Culture

- Dora Rudo Mbuwayesango, “Sex and Sexuality in Biblical Narrative,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Narrative*, ed. Danna Nolan Fewell (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 456-464.
- Frank Reilly. “Jane Schaberg, Raymond E. Brown, and the Problem of the Illegitimacy of Jesus.” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 21.1 (2005): 57-80.
- Sarah McDavitt Woods, “Jesus Was a Rape Baby.” November 2017. Online: <https://medium.com/@artscisarah/jesus-was-a-rape-baby-98e652f2d8f8>
- Ruth Everhart, “Our Culture of Purity Celebrates the Virgin Mary. As a Rape Victim, That Hurts Me.” December 2016. Online: file:///C:/Users/ssmith/Downloads/1779_001.pdf
- Katie Yoder, “No, God Did Not Rape the Virgin Mary.” December 2018. Online: file:///C:/Users/ssmith/Downloads/1780_001.pdf

Week 8: Mar. 11-15: There's Something About Mary of Bethany.

- Luke 10:38-42; John 11; 12:1-8
- Judith E. McKinlay, "Reading Biblical Women Matters," in *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Narrative*, ed. Danna Nolan Fewell (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 398-404, 406-410.
- T. J. Wray, "Martha and Mary of Bethany: Sisters (Sister Friends) in *Good Girls, Bad Girls of the New Testament: Their Enduring Lessons* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2016), pp. 17-30
- Frances Taylor Gench, "Martha and Mary (Luke 10:38-42)" in her *Back to the Well: Women's Encounters with Jesus in the Gospels*" (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press), pp. 56-83.
- Sandra McCracken, "Martha, You Don't Have to Be Mary." April 2018. Online: <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2018/may/martha-you-dont-have-to-be-mary.html>

Week 9: Mar. 18-22: There's Something About Mary Magdalene. Who Is She? What Did She Look Like? What's Been Passed Down to Us? Mary Magdalene the *Star*

- *Mary Magdalene Understood*, pp. 17-19, 32-66.
- Esther De Boer, "The Mary Magdalene Cover-Up" in her *The Mary Magdalene Cover-Up: The Sources Behind The Myth* (New York, New York: T&T Clark, 2006) pp. 1-6.
- Lesa Belleve, "The Saint as Pop Star: The Mary Magdalene Effect in Popular Culture," in *Secrets of Mary Magdalene: The Untold Story of History's Most Misunderstood Woman*, ed. Burstein and De Keijzer (New York: New York, CDS Books, 2006), pp. 259-267.

Week 10: Mar. 25-29: Mary Magdalene Before The Christian Testament

- *Mary Magdalene Understood*, pp. 67-97
- *The Gospel of Peter*
- *The Gospel of Mary*
- *The Gospel of Thomas*
- Pistis Sophia
- Esther De Boer, "Disciple and Witness" and "Mary's Teaching," in her *The Mary Magdalene Cover-Up: The Sources Behind The Myth* (New York, New York: T&T Clark, 2006), pp. 42-43, 47-49, 50-52, 65-66.
- Karen L. King, "Controversy Over Mary's Teaching," in her *The Gospel of Mary of Magdala: Jesus and the First Woman Apostle* (Santa Rosa, California: Polebridge Press, 2003), pp. 83-90.

Week 11: Apr. 1-5: Mary Magdalene In The Christian Testament

- Matthew 27:55-56, 61; 28:1-10; Mark 15:40-41, 47; 16:1-11; Luke 7:36-50; 8:1-3; 23:49,
- 55-56, 24:1-11; John 19:16-20:23.
- *Mary Magdalene Understood*, pp. 98-126, 127-129, 144-151.

- Esther De Boer, “Mary’s Teaching,” in her *The Mary Magdalene Cover-Up: The Sources Behind The Myth* (New York, New York: T&T Clark, 2006), pp. 53-54, 59-65.
- Dan Burstein and Arne J. De Keijzer, “An Apostle Diminished: The Challenge to Mary Magdalene’s Authority – An Interview with Ann Graham Brock,” in *Secrets of Mary Magdalene: The Untold Story of History’s Most Misunderstood Woman*, ed. Burstein and De Keijzer (New York: New York, CDS Books, 2006), pp. 135-143.

Week 12: Apr. 8-12: Mary Magdalene - Continuing the Discussion Her Sexuality; Was Mary and Jesus Married?

- Esther De Boer, “Apostle” and ““Has he Chosen her Above us?’(sic)” in her *The Mary Magdalene Cover-Up: The Sources Behind The Myth* (New York, New York: T&T Clark, 2006), pp. 88-98, 184-194.
- Dan Burstein, “Was She Married to Jesus?” in *Secrets of Mary Magdalene: The Untold Story of History’s Most Misunderstood Woman*, ed. Burstein and De Keijzer (New York: New York, CDS Books, 2006), pp. 157-164.
- Heidi Schlumpf, “Who framed Mary Magdalene?” April 2000. Online: <https://www.uscatholic.org/articles/200806/who-framed-mary-magdalene-27585>
- Monique Moultrie, “Horny and Holy: Saved Women Seeking Sexual Pleasure,” in her *Passionate and Pious: Religious Media and Black Women’s Sexuality* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2017), pp. 116-120, 130-141.

Reading Days (No Classes): April 15-19

Week 13: Apr. 22-26: There’s Something About Mary in Contemporary Culture

See page 3 for instructions.

Week 14: Apr. 29 – May 3

- Final Essays and Responses Due
- Course Conclusion