SC-518: There’s Something About Mary
Preliminary Syllabus
Spring 2019

A MORNING CLASS!

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Meeting Dates and Times: Wednesdays 9am-11:45am
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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. Required Texts
IV. Course Requirements and Assessment

A. Presence, Participation, and Preparation (10% of Final Grade)
   
   **Regular attendance at all class sessions and active participation in discussions are expected.**
   
   If you are unable to attend a class session, please notify the professor in advance or at the earliest opportunity. Please plan to arrive promptly to class, and stay for its duration. **It is also important that students return promptly after class breaks.**

B. Book Review & Show and Tell (30% of final grade): Students will write a (750-1000 word) critical review of a book on one of the Marys. Reviews will include: an examination of the text’s title (Is it accurate? Does it match the content?); how Mary is presented (and in relation to other characters, if any); an overview of the text’s main argument(s) regarding her and how the author arrived there; and her or his own overall assessment of the work. On a specified date, students will bring the book to class and give a brief (approx. 7 minute) talk about it. Two questions to facilitate dialogue will be required. Books must be approved by the professor in advance.

C. There’s Something About Mary – A Presentation (25% of final grade): Students will give a 10-15 minute presentation that analyzes 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). Students will also write (and submit) a 500 word (450 word minimum) essay 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. Presentations must not overlap significantly with your other writings. Take heed to the time limit; rehearse beforehand. Be creative with your presentation, and have fun! Presentation ideas must be approved by the professor in advance. Sign-up sheet to be distributed.

D. There’s Something About Mary and Social (In)justice - Final Reflection and Presentation (35% 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! These will be read on the last day of class. The actual presentation is worth (25%) of this grade.**