Course Description:
The Hebrew Bible appears to talk to men about men. Biblical narratives describe men acting heroically and piously or sinfully and immorally; biblical law codes employ male gendered nouns and verbs throughout. And yet, the Bible also offers a number of accounts of women doing things. Moreover, the Bible’s law codes are replete with rules governing women’s behaviors and bodies. Significantly, models of heroic and immoral women deviate a great deal from their archetypal male counterparts. Moreover, laws governing women are quite distinct from laws governing men. In this course we explore biblical texts about women, in order to parse out these differences. In so doing, we aim to understand the female social identities and gendered power dynamics advocated by the Hebrew Bible, as well as the social realities that governed living as a woman in ancient Israel. Some women we will explore include Eve, Ruth and the prophetess Huldah (among many others). Some laws we will examine address marriage and divorce, rape, and menstruation.

Course Objectives:
1. To explore ancient Israelite perspectives about women and their role in society
2. To explore scholarly issues regarding how to interpret biblical texts, especially those about women and gender
3. To apply a variety of interpretive strategies to the study of biblical texts
4. To confront challenges that arise from studying biblical texts about women and gender

Learning Outcomes:
1. To demonstrate foundational and critical knowledge of one’s own religion (MARS # 1)
2. To demonstrate knowledge of the practices of one’s own religious tradition and the capacity to appreciate the practices of other religious traditions (MARS #3)
3. To demonstrate the knowledge, capacities, and willingness to respectfully engage the religious pluralism of contemporary American society through exposure to the teachings of other faiths and those who practice those faiths (DMIN # 3)

Required Texts & Readings:
1. An English translation of the Bible such as The Harper Collins Study Bible. New Revised Standard Version. Other translation options will be discussed on the first day of class.
All other readings will be posted on Canvas.

Course Requirements and Assessment:
1. Regular Attendance, Active Participation (15%):
   - Missing two sessions will result in an automatic lowering of your final grade. (If you know in advance that you will be missing a class please inform the professor.) Missing three or more sessions will result in automatic failure of the course.
   - Peer review of colleague’s Essay 1

2. 3 Topical Essays (60%):
   - Students will write three 4-5 page essays:
     - Essays 1 and 2: The student will write an essay on one syllabus topic. For the student should utilize and deeply engage ALL of the topic’s syllabus reading, as well as any relevant biblical passages. Students will be asked to perform a peer review on their colleagues Essay 1. More instructions on this will be forthcoming.
     - Essay 3: The student will compose a biblical source list and bibliography, and write an essay on a topic of his/her choosing. The topic of this essay will be presented in class.

3. Peer Review (10%)
4. Presentation (15%):

   Essay 1 due: TBA
   Peer Review due: TBA
   Essay 2 due: TBA
   Paper due: TBA
   Presentation on: TBA

Syllabus: Topics and Readings

1. Introduction to the Hebrew Bible and to Women’s Roles Therein
   - Lawrence Boadt, Reading the Old Testament: An Introduction, Chapter 1
   - Bellis, pp. 3-34
   - Carol Meyers, Rediscovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context, pp. 1-37

Iconic Female Constructs

2. Partner: Eve
   - Genesis 1-3
   - Bellis, pp. 37-57
c. Danna Nolan Fewell and David M. Gunn, Gender, Power, and Promise: The Subject of the Bible's First Story, pp. 22-38, 188-89

3. Mother: Sarah and Hannah
   a. Genesis 18
   b. 1 Samuel 1
   c. Bellis, pp. 57-62, 123-124
   d. Esther Fuchs, The Literary Characterization of Mothers and Sexual Politics in the Hebrew Bible Semeia (1989), 151-166

4. Heroine: Ruth and Esther
   a. Ruth 1-4
   b. Esther 1-10
   c. Bellis, pp. 183-195
   d. Esther Fuchs: “Status and Role of Female Heroines in Biblical Narrative,” in Women in the Hebrew Bible: A Reader, pp. 77-84

5. Villain: Delilah, the Philistine Woman, and Jezebel
   a. Judges 15
   b. Judges 16
   c. 1 Kings 16 and 21
   d. Bellis, 143-148

6. Warrior of Israel: Deborah and Jael
   a. Judges 4-5
   b. Bellis, pp. 101-108
   c. Women’s Bible Commentary, IVP, pp. 74-76

Sex and Marriage

7. Law: Marriage, Virginity, and Adultery
   b. Tikva-Frymer Kensky, “Law and Philosophy: The Case of Sex in the Bible,” in Jewish Explorations of Sexuality, pp. 3-16

8. Lust: Bathsheba, Dinah and Tamar
   a. Genesis 34
   b. 2 Samuel 11-13
   c. Bellis, pp. 130-134, 73-77

Women in Cult, and Community

10. Goddesses
   a. Jeremiah 44:1-30
   b. Bellis, pp. 163-164
   c. Tikva-Frymer Kensky, “Introduction,” “Godwomen,” and “The Marginalization of the Goddess” and “Master of the Universe,” in In the Wake of the Goddess

11. The Prophetess of Doom: Huldah
   a. 2 Kings 22
   b. Bellis, 153-154
   c. Lowell Handy, “Reading Huldah as being a Woman,” Biblical Research, 55 (2010), p 5-44

12. Presentations