

Mount Saint Agnes Theological Center for Women

Mount Saint Agnes Theological Center for Women offers quality programs on a wide variety of topics, all approached with an eye to women. Some programs can be brought to you. Contact us if you are interested in a program for your region.



Sampler of Programs

Contact Us Today

410.435-7500

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HISTORICAL THEOLOGY

Reflections on The Second Vatican Council

This course considers the significance of the Second Vatican Council to the Catholic Church and assesses what progress has been made in realizing the vision that informed it.

Take Up & Read St. Augustine

The new translation of *The Confessions*, by Gary Wills, reads like a novel. Under the guidance of Dr. Caplin, this class studies the philosophical framework of Augustine's thought and reads this classic memoir as a spiritual odyssey.

Teaching Authority of the Church and the Ordination of Women

After considering the meaning of authority in the Church, this program applies this understanding to the questions surrounding the ordination of women.

The God Contest

This course presents the outline and main ideas of Karen Armstrong's magisterial work, *The Battle for God*, as a way of helping participants understand rising religious fundamentalism and its impact on world events.

The Passion of Perpetua & Felicity

Through the story of Perpetua and Felicity, this program examines the enduring questions about conflicts of faith with culture, family loyalties, gender expectations, and models of heroism. The program is based on a fascinating study of the same name by Joyce E. Salisbury (Routledge, 1997).

LITURGICAL YEAR

Advent & Psychic Birth

Advent is a time to prepare for the birth of Christ. It can also be a time to prepare for our own interior rebirth. This program considers the elements of such a rebirth. It is based on a book of the same name.

Advent in Art

This program entails meditations on central figures in the Advent readings as portrayed by artists famous and not yet known. Participants will learn to "read" a work of art much as one reads a biblical text—and to compare the insights available through each.

Advent: The Meaning of Hope

Advent, the season of waiting, is a perfect time to reflect on hope. In this program, you will be introduced to the layers of meaning conveyed by that small word. Advent prayer accompanies the presentations.

Advent: The Silence of God

The Bible is full of stories in which God speaks. Yet our contemporary religious experience is marked more by the silence of God. What can be learned from this silence? This Advent program explores what others have had to say in answer to this question, what the Advent readings suggest, and what insights we can glean from our own lives.



Advent: With The Magnificat

A study of the Magnificat, this program invites participants to reflect on the circumstances, the historical meaning and the contemporary application of Mary's memorable prayer.

Advent with the Scriptures

Following an introduction to the study of and meditation on Sacred Scripture, this course considers key readings for the Advent season. Each class includes a blessing and prayer over the Advent wreath so that study and worship will combine in an experience of meditative preparation for the great Feast of Christmas.

Advent: The Men of Advent

Cycle A of the lectionary takes all the Sunday Gospel readings from the *Book of Matthew*. In these readings, the spotlight is definitely on the men. The Advent program subjects these readings to the kind of imaginative interpretation that has become a hallmark of Mount Saint Agnes Theological Center for Women, seeking to find in them redeeming truth for all. Presentations will include selected artistic renderings.

Christ Became Obedient Unto Death

A series designed to concentrate attention on the mysteries of the passion, death and resurrection of Christ and of Christians. Time is reserved for discussion after each lecture.

Lent: Theological Meditations of the Crucifixion

This slide/presentation draws out from selected works of art insights into the meaning of the crucifixion for Christian understanding and life.

MORAL THEOLOGY

A Question of Conscience

Participants undertake an intensive study of a very important text by Linda Hogan, *Confronting the Truth, Conscience in the Catholic Tradition*. The question of conscience formation will be uppermost in the consideration.

Deciding for Life

This course introduces women's thinking about contemporary ethical themes. Guided by the writings of Janice Raymond, Margaret Farley, Anne Patrick and Christine Gudorf, participants study conscience, commitment and relationships, women and the medical establishment, and the notions of "bodyself" and "bodyright."

End of Life Issues

This course considers some ethical dilemmas that result from advanced technologies, offers principles for thinking through such dilemmas and culls from the literature best practices regarding advance directives, living wills, etc.

Growing in Wisdom, Age, Grace

This program considers the human experience of aging. Special attention will be paid to the reflections of women on the topics of growing older and growing wise.

Life and Death Matters ✦

Drawing on what previous generations and what contemporary thinkers have to offer, participants are invited to muse on themes central to a virtuous life: love, wisdom, work, suffering and loss.

Modern Catholic Social Teachings ✦

Distinguished from the more general Catholic social thought, the Church's social teaching is intended to enlighten and guide the faithful in moral reform on social issues. This course, then, examines current social issues where reform is being proposed and helps activists prepare for engagement. Participants in this seminar-style program not only examine the Church's teachings but also consider the very claim that universally valid positions are possible. The seminar will focus on teachings of war and peace, economic justice, the meaning of work and religious freedom, among others.

Women & Virtue: New Eyes on Ancient Wisdom ✦

The ancient virtue traditions were developed by men. This course considers the contributions of women to this ancient wisdom. It will include a consideration of the challenges women experience with the authority--exercising it and being subject to it.

PHILOSOPHICAL THEMES

The Art of Wondering

Philosophy, the love of wisdom, entails the capacity for wondering. This course examines that capacity and suggests ways to develop it in oneself and in others.

Authority in the Church & Family

This course redeems the notion of authority applies it to life in family. It includes an examination of the meaning and exercise of authority in the Church.

Catholic Church Teachings on Homosexuality

A study of the text by the American bishops, "Always Our Children," this course endeavors to explain and critique the document and the assumptions behind it.

For Though They Cling Together: Women on the Mystery of Friendship ✦

An examination of the philosophical tradition on the topic of friendship, this program culminates in a study of how St. Paul transforms the received tradition. Implications for women and our understanding of church and society are explored.

Identity & Virtue The Development of the Self ✦

Human beings are capable of shaping a "second nature" through the development of good habits—habits that make doing the good easier as one goes through life. In time, these habits form their identity. The virtuous life, then, is greatly to be desired, as the ancients knew and contemporaries are rediscovering through many of the self-help manuals.



Longing for Home ✨

This course explores the joys, the problems, the asceticism, and the promise of home-making.

Longing to be Human

Being human is ultimately a mystery. Topics under consideration in this course are freedom and nature, sexual differentiation and equality, love and justice, mortality and eternal life.

Solitude & Intimacy ✨

Among the things that holiness requires is a balance of closeness and independence. This course considers the disciplines and graces that are necessary for achieving such a balance.

Topics in Philosophy: Question Authority

This course explores the philosophical traditions regarding authority: its meaning, its exercise, its criticisms.

Women & Authority Issues & (Experienced) Challenges

Based on doctoral dissertation research into the nature and function of authority in community, this course examines the challenges women face when accepting and exercising authority. Whether your challenges come from guiding a family, a parish or religious community, a business or a foundation, this course provides a context for you to teach and learn with others.

Women Authority & Leadership ✨

Participants examine the meaning and practice of authority and leadership, with special attention to the experiences of women.

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Workshop: Preparing Communal Prayer

Designed for those who would like to participate in preparing prayers, this workshop covers prayer and personality, traditional prayer forms, selecting music for a group, and the distinct character of communal prayer.

Writing Women

Each student is equipped with a notebook, a pen, and a writing assignment. Class time is spent writing in a group setting. The group decides whether and when these items are read. The purpose of the class is to capture insights, ideas, memories (especially regarding religious formation and experience) that reflect the lives of women by providing a setting and some stimuli for women to tell stories in a distinctive way.



READING WOMEN (Book Discussions)

At the Root of This Longing: Reconciling a Spiritual Hunger and a Feminist Thirst

A groundbreaking work in which Flinders seeks to reconcile a spiritual life with feminist goals and attitudes. (Carol Lee Flinders)

Christianity & Feminism In Conversation

A work that covers major themes in this ongoing conversation. (Regina Coll)

Composing a Life

Catherine Bateson's excellent book provokes reflections on how women typically find our way in life and what spiritual disciplines are needed for that journey.

Enduring Grace: Living Portraits of Seven Women Mystics

An amazingly original take on familiar lives, this text is eminently readable and accessible. (Carol Lee Flinders)

Enduring Lives: Portraits of Women and Faith in Action

Flinders examines the lives of four contemporary women with a view to finding in them the motherline from earlier Christian mystics. (Carol Lee Flinders)

Extravaqant Affections

Ross applies the best of feminist thinking to the understanding of the sacraments. (Susan Ross)

Freeing Theology

This collection of essays by feminist Catholic theologians was one of the earliest published. It has stood the test of time. (Catherine Mowry LaCugna, editor)

Friends of God and Prophets: A Feminist Theological Reading of the Communion of Saints .

Johnson brings the power of her theological mind and her feminist instincts to the Christian belief in the communion of saints. (Elizabeth A. Johnson)

La Diosa de las Americas

A study of a text, edited by Ana Castillo, which contains essays by Mexican and Mexican American writers who pay tribute to the Virgin of Guadalupe.

Reading Lolita in Tehra

The captivating story of women in Tehran reading western literature under the guidance of Nafisi, this book was a best seller. It is rich in glimpses of the universal in the particular. (Azar Nafisi)

She "Who Is"

A study of Elisabeth Johnson's prize winning book.



Speaking of Faith

A discussion of Krista Tippett's book, *Speaking of Faith*.

Speaking with Authority, Catherine of Siena and the Voices of Women Today

Hilkert's *Madaleva Lecture* is a wonderful introduction to and analysis of Catherine of Siena's importance for contemporary women. (Mary Catherine Hilkert)

Super, Natural Christians: How We Should Love Nature

McFague advances an impressive argument for Christian concern and dedication to the preservation of the natural world. (Sallie McFague)

The Cloister Walk

In this important memoir, Norris traces her spiritual journey, which has been much influenced by the Benedictine tradition. (Kathleen Norris)

Woman, An Intimate Geography

With clarity and humor, Angier explores the facts about the female body. (Natalie Angier)

Women of Crisis

In 1978, Robert and Jane Hallowell Coles co-authored a remarkable book in which they told the stories of four women whose lives play out on the margins of our society. These women are unforgettable and their experiences illumine many of the challenges that women face in our time.

Women Writers on the Bible ✚

A study of selected essays on biblical texts by emerging women exegetes.

RETREAT

God's Word in Poetry ✚

This retreat relies on poetry inspired by scriptural texts. The aim is to ascertain how the poet has developed the teaching or insight of the original.

Longing for Home ✚

This retreat meditates on the joys, the problems, the asceticism, and the promise of home-making.

Love God & Avoid Temptation ✚

An adaptation of Dorothy Söelle's wonderful work, *The Silent Cry: Mysticism and Resistance*, this retreat examines the two notions of loving God and avoiding temptation.

Mary: Icon of the Laity ✚

This retreat offering traces the life of Mary, and meditates on her as an icon for lay life.

SCRIPTURE

Pondering Hannah's Prayer

The story of Hannah in the narratives of I Samuel is a powerful example of the importance and efficacy of prayer. This program connects the lessons learned from Hannah's story to Mary of Nazareth's experience with God.



Sacred Scripture & The Active Imagination

Through the engagement of the active imagination, this course teaches how to interpret Sacred Scripture with a disciplined method and a wide ranging intuition. After an initial presentation of method, selected biblical passages are assigned for reading and then are interpreted each day by the class.

Sacred Scripture: Its World and Ours

St. Gregory the Great once wrote, "Scripture grows with its readers." By examining what scholars mean by "the world of the text," this course considers the shifts that take place when a living tradition is preserved in a written text. It also takes up the challenges a faith community faces in recovering the living word.

Song of Songs

Rabbi Akiva (50-135 C.E.) called this text "the holy of holies" of the Hebrew Scriptures. Christian mystics of all ages have been inspired by it. Artists have attempted repeatedly to capture its allure. This course investigates the mystery of the Song of Songs, beginning with a reader response to the text itself and continuing with Jewish, Christian, and contemporary Feminist commentary. Works of art are also consulted. Text: Marcia Falk's translation of the *Song of Songs*.

Women Encounter the Letters of Paul

This course introduces the epistolary form, the life and theology of Paul and the issues being raised by feminists regarding Paul's understanding of women and of the church.

SCRIPTURE & ETHICS

Thinking Women

This course is designed to instill an appreciation for the strengths of the Catholic Moral Tradition and to identify the challenges that women are posing to it. Through lecture, case study, and discussion, the class will consider what feminist theologians are saying about conscience, the nature of ethical decision making, the changing nature of vocational commitment, female sexuality and the virtuous human life. Whether you are a beginner or an avid student of ethics, this course will stretch your horizons.

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

A Theology for Mary

This lecture considers the wide-spread rejection of traditional Mariology by women with a feminist consciousness and offers a theology for Mary that respects revelation, doctrinal development, and the experience of women.

An Apostleship of Equals

This lecture argues that women can assume more responsibility for the Church without access to ordination.

Baptism & the Meaning of Christian Life

An examination of the meaning of Baptism, this program translates the traditional understanding of the sacrament into language understandable today.

Christian Feminism: Calling or Curse



An introduction to the issues and challenges of attempting to hold together Christian faith and a feminist consciousness, this course includes a critique of both. Topics include images and understandings of God, the vocation to be human, women and the church, and women as moral decision makers.

Female Embodiment and the Incarnation ✦

This lecture was prepared for the summer Villanova Theology Institute, and argues for an appreciation of the role of the female body in the incarnation.

Eucharist ✦

This course considers Paul's theology of the Eucharist, the meaning of the Eucharist in the Synoptic Gospels, and the implications of these insights for contemporary Eucharistic practice.

Holiness of the Ordinary ✦

This lecture argues for a connection between the sacraments and the ordinary exchanges of loving service in daily life.

Mary in Art

Designed as a mini-retreat, this offering is set in a meditative mode. It consists of a slide/presentation tracing the developing understanding of and devotion to Mary, the Mother of God.

Mary in Art and Poetry ✦

The figure of Mary, the Mother of God, has inspired artists throughout the ages. This program considers selected works of art that have, in turn, inspired poetry. The aim is to learn to

understand what we believe by considering line and form and color, rhythm and sound and image.

Mysticism & Resistance

Based on the final book of noted German Protestant theologian, Dorothee Soelle, this course explores mysticism, the “silent cry” at the heart of all the world’s religions. Participants also consider Soelle’s conviction that mysticism is essential in the struggle against the destructive aspects of ego, group bias, materialism, and violence.

Sacrificing Women: Ecclesial Language and the Second Sex ✦

This lecture examines the resistance of some thinking women to the language of sacrifice, and attempts to retrieve an understanding of sacrifice that is compatible with the experience, insights and aspirations of Christian women.

Spirituality and Women

A lecture that analyzes the specific contours of the spirituality of women.

The Sacraments: Symbols in Action

The sacraments are at the heart of the church. This course examines the nature of a sacrament and concentrates on the two sacraments accepted by all Christians: Baptism and Eucharist.



The Symbolism of Evil

In a groundbreaking book, called *The Symbolism of Evil*, Paul Ricoeur analyzed the ways in which human beings have confessed their experience of evil. Using this method, Ricoeur espies three fundamental categories of experience: defilement, sin and guilt. Ricoeur's discoveries throw new light on the Christian notion of original sin and on the great myths of evil that have shaped the consciousness of the western world.

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