

Writing to Learn Theology



Women and the Christian Tradition

Hildegard of Bingen



Amanda Berry Smith



Course Description

- Theology Bridge Course (theology and contemporary social issues)
- Women's Studies Course
- Human Diversity Requirement



Writing to Learn (WTL)

- Number of courses: 1 (any course: core, elective, or major)
- Focus is on writing *as a process* for critical thinking and discovery—as a way to learn the content of the course.
- While the writing process is not *explicitly* taught (as in a WI or WID course), the course is infused with writing to learn practices and pedagogies.

Grading

- Replaced Quizzes
- \checkmark (good or 10 points), \checkmark^- (satisfactory or 5 points), or 0 (unsatisfactory or none)
- 10 assignments/semester

Evaluation Criteria

- At least one page, typed, single-spaced
- Submitted in class on the date due
- Accurately incorporates factual knowledge (i.e. quotes or paraphrases from the texts) with references to the text
- Demonstrates creative engagement with the material
- Meets the specific criterion stated in the assignment

Course Objectives met by assignments

- Gaining factual knowledge (terminology, classifications, methods, trends)
- Learning to *analyze* and *critically evaluate* ideas, arguments, and points of view

Dr. Chris Anson

- University Distinguished Professor, Professor of English, and Director of the Campus Writing and Speaking Program at North Carolina State University
- Writing Across the Curriculum Seminar
- Examples from *“Using Low-Stakes Writing to Enhance Reading, Critical Thinking, and Learning”*

Join the Conversation

- Prepare imaginary responses to a reading as quotations
- Students write brief responses to the quotations

- *Using Low-Stakes Writing to Enhance Reading, Critical Thinking, and Learning* (Chris M. Anson)

The Creation Accounts



The Creation Accounts

- Goal – to help you use evidence from the Bible to support an argument about the status of women in the text.
- Assignment - Agree or disagree with the following statement, using quotes and references from the Bible to support your argument: “Both creation accounts in Genesis 1-3 describe the subordination of women before the Fall.”
- Criterion – Your paper will use evidence from the Bible to support your position about the status of women in the text.

"Provided Data" Microthemes

- Provide students with data or information from material in the course.
- Students then write conclusions or arguments based on their analysis of the data.
- *Using Low-Stakes Writing to Enhance Reading, Critical Thinking, and Learning* (Chris M. Anson)

Marriage and Women's Roles

Housekeeping Monthly 13 May 1955



The good wife's guide

- Have dinner ready. Plan ahead, even the night before, to have a delicious meal ready, on time for his return. This is a way of letting him know that you have been thinking about him and are concerned about his needs. Most men are hungry when they come home and the prospect of a good meal (especially his favourite dish) is part of the warm welcome needed.
- Prepare yourself. Take 15 minutes to rest so you'll be refreshed when he arrives. Touch up your make-up, put a ribbon in your hair and be fresh-looking. He has just been with a lot of work-weary people.
- Be a little gay and a little more interesting for him. His boring day may need a lift and one of your duties is to provide it.
- Clear away the clutter. Make one last trip through the main part of the house just before your husband arrives.

Housekeeping Monthly 13 May 1955

- Gather up schoolbooks, toys, paper etc and then run a dustcloth over the tables.
- Over the cooler months of the year you should prepare and light a fire for him to unwind by. Your husband will feel he has reached a haven of rest and order, and it will give you a lift too. After all, catering for his comfort will provide you with immense personal satisfaction.
- Prepare the children. Take a few minutes to wash the children's hands and faces (if they are small), comb their hair and, if necessary, change their clothes. They are little treasures and he would like to see them playing the part. Minimise all noise. At the time of his arrival, eliminate all noise of the washer, dryer or vacuum. Try to encourage the children to be quiet.
- Be happy to see him.
- Greet him with a warm smile and show sincerity in your desire to please him.
- Listen to him. You may have a dozen important things to tell him, but the moment of his arrival is not the time. Let him talk first - remember, his topics of conversation are more important than yours.
- Make the evening his. Never complain if he comes home late or goes out to dinner, or other places of entertainment without you. Instead, try to understand his world of strain and pressure and his very real need to be at home and relax.
- Your goal: Try to make sure your home is a place of peace, order and tranquillity where your husband can renew himself in body and spirit.
- Don't greet him with complaints and problems.
- Don't complain if he's late home for dinner or even if he stays out all night. Count this as minor compared to what he might have gone through that day.
- Make him comfortable. Have him lean back in a comfortable chair or have him lie down in the bedroom. Have a cool or warm drink ready for him.
- Arrange his pillow and offer to take off his shoes. Speak in a low, soothing and pleasant voice.
- Don't ask him questions about his actions or question his judgment or integrity. Remember, he is the master of the house and as such will always exercise his will with fairness and truthfulness. You have no right to question him.
- A good wife always knows her place.

Marriage and Women's Roles

- Goal – to help you compare two biblical texts.
- Assignment – Write a letter to a good friend who is about to be married, comparing the statements about marriage and women's roles found in 1 Corinthians 7:1-40 to Ephesians 5:21-33. End the letter by giving your own reaction to this advice.
- Criterion – Your paper will accurately compare the two texts and offer a thoughtful response.

Situating the Reader/Mini-Cases or Scenarios

- Put students into the context of the reading and ask them to write a response from that perspective.
- (For example, in a work of literature, the student could adopt the role of a character.)
- You can follow up with some role-play in class.
- *Using Low-Stakes Writing to Enhance Reading, Critical Thinking, and Learning* (Chris M. Anson)

Women and the Catholic Reformation

Syndics in Geneva



Nuns in Geneva



Women and the Catholic Reformation

- Goal – to help you understand the theological, social, and political reasons for supporting or rejecting reform.
- Assignment - Half the class will be assigned to write as a syndic (or city official) in Geneva and the other half will be assigned to write as a nun in the convent in Geneva. Syndics: Write a short speech to the nuns, explaining why they must attend a debate and ultimately leave the convent. Nuns: Write a short speech to the syndics, explaining why you will not attend the debate or leave the convent. (Role play in class.)
- Criterion – Your papers will accurately present the views of either the syndics or the nuns in Geneva and the theological, social, and political reasons for their positions.

Feminist Theologies

Dr. Letty Russell



Letty Mandeville Russell

Rev. Dr. Jacquelyn Grant



Feminist Theologies

- Goal – to help you understand and summarize the major concerns of feminist theologians.
- Assignment - Write a blog as a feminist theologian, describing the changes you would like to see in Christian theology and worship and explaining their importance.
- Criterion – Your paper will accurately present the key issues and concerns of feminist theologies.

Invented Dialogues and Letters

- Students write dialogues with or letters to scholars, theorists, or others whose work they are learning about.
- Dialogues can take place between two thinkers or between the student and a thinker.
- Occasions for dialogue: imaginary talk show, interrogation, or instant messenger chat.
- *Using Low-Stakes Writing to Enhance Reading, Critical Thinking, and Learning* (Chris M. Anson)

The Woman's Bible: Elizabeth Cady Stanton



Elizabeth Cady Stanton

The Woman's Bible: Elizabeth Cady Stanton

- Goal – to help you critically evaluate Elizabeth Cady Stanton's biblical interpretation, describing both its strengths and weaknesses.
- Assignment – You will be assigned one of Elizabeth Cady Stanton's interpretations of a biblical passage in the Woman's Bible and asked to compare it to the biblical text that she is interpreting (i.e. Genesis 1, Judges 11, or Matthew 25). Write an email conversation between the two of you, describing your reaction to her interpretation and her response to your statements. (She will be defending and explaining her interpretation of the biblical text in response to your questions and objections.)
- Criterion – Your paper will critically evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of Elizabeth Cady Stanton's biblical interpretation.

Catholic Teaching on Ordination



Catholic Teaching on Ordination

- Goal – To help you present both sides of a theological argument.
- Assignment: Two friends just finished reading “Ordinatio Sacerdotalis”. After a long day of studying, they meet at a coffee shop and start talking about the text. One of them agrees with the text and the other one does not. Recreate their conversation as they discuss the ordination of women.
- Criterion – Your paper will present and critique the key points of “Ordinatio Sacerdotalis”.

Evaluation of Results

- My perceptions
- Anonymous WAC student survey

Writing Across the Curriculum Student Survey

Before taking this course,
my attitude towards
academic writing was :

Extremely positive

Mostly positive

Neutral

Mostly negative

Extremely negative

My attitude towards the
writing assignments in
this course and how
they were supported is:

Extremely positive

Mostly positive

Neutral

Mostly negative

Extremely negative

Writing Across the Curriculum Student Survey (2010 and 2011)

Before taking this course, my attitude towards academic writing was extremely or mostly positive:

- 50%
- 57%

My attitude towards the writing assignments in this course and how they were supported is extremely or mostly positive:

- 86%
- 83%