Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary
South Hamilton, Massachusetts

**CH 665:**
**Women in the Early Church**
**Spring 2011**

**Wednesdays 1:15 p.m. – 4:15 p.m.**

**Syllabus**

**Instructor:**

**Dr. Catherine Clark Kroeger**  
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**Office hours:**

Wednesday mornings: 8:00 a.m. to 12p.m. (no office hours during reading weeks)

**Teaching Assistant:**

**Goran Kojchev**  
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**Objectives:**

- To give the student an overall understanding of women’s daily lives, activities and personal experience with Christ in the Early Church. This must also include an understanding of attitudes toward women and their ministries.
- To provide the contemporary Christian community with role models of personal piety, courage, commitment, and ingenuity as displayed by women in the Early Church.
- To introduce the student to a broad range of academic disciplines for the recovery and evaluation of information from the "hidden history" of the lives and labors of women in the Early Church.
Required Texts:


Also, Recommended Reading: Volume VII, No. 1, Issue 17 of *Christian History*. Special issue on women in the Early Church.

Course Requirements:

The course will require:

- Readings in original sources,
- Term paper or project, and
- Final examination.

Course Topics and Schedule:

February 2

I. The Groundwork: Biblical Antecedents:

The roots in ancient Israel
The record of the Gospel

**Required reading:** Cohick; Tucker and Liefeld, 13-51. Readings from packet.

**Recommended reading:**


February 9

II. The Apostle Paul and Women
   The Religious World of Ancient Women
   The impact of the Gospel on pagan women
   Dealing with the difficult Biblical passages.
   **Recommended reading:**

February 16

III. Expansion of the Gospel to Asia Minor
   Evidence of women's activities in Asia Minor.
   The role of women in the apocryphal Acts of the Apostles.
   Montanist prophetesses and priests
   **Required reading:** Cohick and Readings from packet.
   **Recommended reading:**
   Carbondale, IL: 1980.

February 25 - No Class: Reading Week

March 2

IV. Ordinary lives of women
   Everyday life in Christian and pagan homes
Marriage, divorce, and widowhood
The trades and professions of women

**Required reading:** Cohick. Readings from packet.

**Recommended reading:**

**March 9**

**V. Expansion to Rome**
"The Church of the Household": Marcella's coterie in Rome.
Egeria: the Diary of a Pilgrim
Paula, Eustochium, and Proba
Martyrs of blessed memory.
Feminine images in early Christian art

**Required reading:** Cohick; Tucker and Liefeld, pp. 89-128.

**Recommended reading:**
Anne Yarbrough, "Christianization in the Fourth Century: The Example of Roman Women."
In Church History 45 (1976), pp. 149-165.

March 10: presentation in chapel: all members of class needed for historic pageant

March 16

VI. Expansion to Africa
Women in North Africa
Jewish, Christian, and Pagan Women in Alexandria
Desert fathers and mothers

Required reading: Cohick. Readings from packet.
Recommended reading:

March 23 - No Class: Reading Week

March 30

VII. Implications of Gnosticism
Women in Gnosticism
Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism
"I suffer not a woman to teach" I Timothy 2:12

Recommended reading:
April 6

VIII. Women categorized (often by sexual function)
- Slaves, freedwomen, and concubines
- Empresses, patricians, and women of the upper middle class
- Asceticism and the strange case of the agapetai

**Required reading:** Cohick. Readings from packet.

**Recommended reading:**

April 13

IX. Women in official positions
- The order of widows: literary and epigraphic evidence
- The order of deaconnesses
- Other clerical orders

**Required reading:** Cohick. Readings from packet.

**Recommended reading:**


April 20

**X. Byzantium and Cappodocia**

- Helen, the mother of Constantine
- Cappadocian Mothers and Fathers
- The circle of Olympias and John Chrysostom
- Pulcheria and the Council of Chalcedon

**Required reading:** Cohick.. Readings from packet.

**Recommended reading:**


April 27

**XI. Women of the Early Middle Ages**

- Marriage or enclosure
- Mystics and Monastics
- Voices of Vision

**Required Reading:** Tucker and Liefeld, 129-170.

**Recommended Reading:**

- Stephanie Hollis. *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church: Sharing a Common Fate*. Woodbridge,

Turn in term paper.

Final Exam to be scheduled.