



Spring workshop

Women and Religion

History, Agency, Challenges

Codesigned by

Fondazione per le Scienze Religiose (FSCIRE)

Arrupe Jesuit University (AJU)

Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA)

Kenyatta University (KU)

Makerere University (MAK)

University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN)

Tangaza University (TU)

University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM)

April 9th – May 14th, 2026

General information

Dates and time: Every Thursday, from April 9th to May 14th

2:00 PM- 4:30 PM CEST/SAST

3:00 PM - 5:30 PM EAT

Target: undergraduate and graduate students, as well as anyone interested in exploring the topic in greater depth.

Modality: Virtual Exchange / Hybrid.

Zoom link: will be provided to registered participants before the beginning of the workshop. To register, please contact Elena Esposito at elena.esposito7214@gmail.com

Focus and purpose:

The workshop examines women's roles, experiences, and agency across major religious traditions – Christianity, Islam, and African indigenous religions – with a primary focus on the African context. It explores how women navigate, challenge, and transform religious structures, reshape theological thought, engage in interreligious dialogue, and challenge patriarchy contributing to social change, including within migrant and minority communities. Framed by religious literacy, intercultural exchange, and decolonial gender perspectives, the program combines comparative analysis with collaborative discussion to foster a transnational understanding of women and religion.





Structure: The course runs for six weeks, from April 9 to May 14, with one weekly session of 2.5 hours. Each session is organized in two parts:

a) Lectures

The session begins with two to three short lectures presenting relevant case studies. Lecturers provide key readings and bibliographical references to support participants in further exploring the topics addressed.

b) Discussion and Virtual Exchange

In the second part of the session, participants are divided into **small breakout groups** facilitated by trained moderators. In these groups, students discuss the themes presented in the lectures and engage with the assigned readings. The session concludes with a **plenary discussion**, during which each group shares the main insights from their exchange, encouraging collective reflection and intercultural dialogue.

Preparation: Participants are expected to complete the assigned readings before each session and actively contribute to group discussions and the final plenary exchange.

Expected learning outcomes:

By the end of the workshop, participants will be able to:

- Critically examine women's agency across diverse religious traditions and contexts.
- Analyze intersections of religion, gender, power, migration, and social change using interdisciplinary and decolonial perspectives.
- Identify and assess women's roles in promoting religious literacy, interreligious dialogue, and engagement within diaspora communities.
- Strengthen intercultural communication and collaborative skills through participation in Virtual Exchange activities and group discussions.

Credits: Each university will decide according to its program/syllabus.

Evaluation: Participants will be evaluated based on their active participation in the workshop's sessions and activities. Partner institutions may choose to adopt additional evaluation methods in accordance with their own academic requirements. FSCIRE will issue a certificate of attendance to participants who attend at least 70% of the sessions.





Sessions

Session 1: Introduction to the workshop – April 9th, 2026

Introduction to VEREAD and to the workshop – Dr. Iliaria Macconi (FSCIRE)

Women and Religious literacy – Dr. Francesca Cadeddu (FSCIRE)

Q&A and discussion.

Session 2: Women in Christianity – April 16th, 2026

The position of women in the Catholic Church (teaching, social doctrine, organizations) – Sr. Mary Joan Iwenofu (TU).

Women in Pentecostal Churches in Africa – Prof. Philomena Mwaura and Dr. Zacharia Samita (KU)

Q&A and discussion.

Session 3: Women in indigenous religions, April 23rd, 2026

The status and influence of women in indigenous religion/ATR (Zimbabwean case study) – Dr. Francis Zangairai (AJU).

Conflicting world views: women movements and traditional values in South Africa – Dr. Xolani Sakuba (UKZN).

Q&A and discussion.

Session 4: Women in Islam, April 30th, 2026

Women and qur'anic exegesis: an introduction – Dr. Margherita Picchi ("MSCA Postdoctoral Fellow", University of Rome "La Sapienza" / University of Johannesburg).

The place of women in contemporary Islam. Muslim marriages in South Africa: Looking at lived realities through the work of the MPL Network – Dr. Cherry Muslim (UKZN).

Between Piety and Professionalism: Muslim Women's Agency in Secular Work Environments – Asha Ibrahim (UDSM)

Q&A and discussion.





Session 5: Women in socio-historical phenomena, May 7th, 2026

Women and Interreligious Dialogue – Fr. Innocent Maganya (TU)

Negotiating Faith and Belonging: Migrant and Indigenous Women in European Protestant Churches
– Dr. Alessia Passarelli (FSCIRE).

Religion, Gender and Development – Dr. Veneranda Mbabazi (MAK).

Q&A and discussion.

Session 6: Conclusion. Decolonial invitation to the study of religion from a gender perspective, May 14th, 2026.

Reflections: Drawing on the work of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians – Prof. Mary Getui (CUEA).

Takeaways and final discussion guided by Rev. Lauren Matthew (UKZN).



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