

Adam & Eve in the Mirror

The story of the first humans has figured more prominently in the history of Western culture than any other biblical narrative. From peoples of the book to modern advertising and sitcoms, Adam and Eve have served as prototypes, archetypes, and stereotypes determining - and being determined by - prevailing ideas about the roles and status of men and women throughout history. Find out just when, and how: Satan entered the Garden, Lilith joined in, the forbidden fruit became an apple, Adam and Eve "fell", Original Sin happened, and Eve became the Devil's handmaid. Join us for this grand tour of the history of interpretation in Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and beyond - from Ben Sira to Judith Plaskow, St. Augustine to the Aryan Nations - and discover how this biblical text has served as a social and cultural mirror for 2500 years and counting.

Lecture 1 The Garden of Eden – introduction, overview of the story; women and men in ancient Israel

Lecture 2 The Ancient Near East – the cultural and literary context of the biblical story allows reconstruction of potential back-story

Lecture 3 Early Jewish Interpretations – Ben Sira, Philo, and the Rabbis

Lecture 4 The New Testament and Early Christianities – Gospels, Paul, and Gnostics

Lecture 5 Church Fathers & Original Sin

Lecture 6 Medieval Interpretations – Jewish, Christian, Muslim

Lecture 7 Protestant Reformation & Paradise Lost

Lecture 8 Modernity and the American Context: Gender, Slavery and Human Rights

Lecture 9 Twentieth and Twenty-First Century Interpretations – feminist, anti-feminist, homophobic, racist