

The Institute for Feminism and Religion; the Centre for Gender and Women's Studies; the Irish School of Ecumenics, and the School of Religion and Theology, Trinity College Dublin are delighted to host Professor Naomi Goldenberg of the University of Ottawa, Canada.

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**Professor Naomi Goldenberg**

**Topic: Gender, Religion and the Politics of the State**

**Date: April 15<sup>th</sup> 7:30**

**Venue: Joly Theatre, Hamilton Building, Trinity College Dublin  
(Entrance, Lincoln Gate, beside Dental Hospital)**

Naomi Goldenberg is Professor at the Department of Classics and Religious Studies of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Ottawa, Canada and was a founding member and director of the Women's Studies Programme. Prof. Goldenberg is a pioneer of the feminist analysis of religion and the concept of 'thealogy' and her novel marriage of psychoanalytic theory, literary criticism and feminist political analysis in the study of religion, patriarchy and women's (religious) movements remains unique and influential.

Professor Goldenberg is the author of *The Changing of the Gods: Feminism and the End of Traditional Religion* (1979) and *Resurrecting the Body: Feminism, Religion, and Psychoanalysis* (1993) and has given innovative lectures throughout the world, such as her psychoanalytic reading of Dr. Seuss' *The Cat in the Hat*, reviewed positively by the *New York Times*. Her recent work seeks to bridge the religious/secular divide in social theory.

In multi cultural societies, advocates of human rights struggle to reconcile respecting particular religious traditions with honouring those legal and social advances made by women in recent centuries. Professor Goldenberg argues that characterising these debates as occurring between the *religious* and the *secular* realms serves only to confuse what is at issue. She distinguishes between two forms of states. An *operative state* has the ability to command violence. A *vestigial state* once controlled violence (in the name of religion).

Professor Goldenberg suggests that approaching religions as being something other than *vestigial states* mystifies their actual role in society and is deeply problematic. In the first place, such religions, as *vestigial states*, might aspire to command violence once again, alongside or against *operative states*. Second, such mystification works against women. Multicultural policies that cede too much status to religious or quasi-religious groups result in state-sponsored "technologies of ethnicity" that can undermine women's access to opportunities and rights. This happens because *operative states* tend to support sexist community or religious leaders who are given power and influence over spheres such as "the family."

**Chair: Dr. Mary Condren, CGWS; Director, Institute for Feminism and Religion.**

**For further information please contact [cgws@tcd.ie](mailto:cgws@tcd.ie)**