Feminist minister visits campus, puts religious spin on the erotic | Journalism

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Susan Shaw – an author, ordained minister and professor at Oregon State University – provided a voice to feminist theological perspectives during her brown bag speech Wednesday in the Merrill-Cazier Library.

Students and teachers came together to hear Shaw’s remarks on how bodily passions are endowed of God.

“Jesus came to redeem the body, not to further a dualism between body and spirit, but to rejoin them in celebration of flesh and senses and joy,” Shaw said.

Shaw taught the audience about process theology, which labels God as creative love, not coercive power.

“The goal of creative love is enjoyment, and the goal for creative beings is enjoyment,” Shaw said.

The Center for Women and Gender, which sponsored the event, has been hosting various women speakers since the fall of 2010 after the center was established. This time, the center wanted to bring a religious speaker to the university.

Ann Austin, director of the center, said Shaw was invited to speak because of her unique views on religious perspectives.

Austin said she liked how Jesus was defined as leader of the oppressed. Shaw called this the “Fat Jesus,” a term coined by feminist theologian Lisa Isherwood.

“The Fat Jesus connects us with our desires; he does not disconnect us from our passions,” Shaw said. “He helps us determine our real desires and passions, not the ones advertisers sell us or the culture demands of us.”

Following her speech, Shaw allowed some time for questions from audience members.

Feminist Clara von Dohlen, who attended the event, asked Shaw if she feels using the term “feminist,” as opposed to “equalist” or “humanist,” actually perpetuates inequality between the genders.

Shaw said women are perceived as primarily sexual – as vessels for other people to use – and women need to take a stand.

“We are taught to be nice, aren’t we?” Shaw said. “But nice can sometimes also mean that we don’t stand up when we need to. Sometimes it’s OK not to be nice; sometimes we just have to say, ‘This is just wrong.’”

Robin de Bont, an undergraduate enrolled in a women and gender studies class, agreed with Shaw.

“Women are not equal to men,” de Bont said. “Women’s equality does not exist. The wage gap, stereotypes and expectations still exist in Western countries. I know you can’t change some things, but you can try.”

Shaw finished her speech with a touch of humor as she asked the audience a final question: How will we know when we achieve God’s community and oppression of all people is over?

“We’ll know when the Fat Jesus sings,” she said.

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