



Feminism's New Age: Gender, Appropriation, and the Afterlife of Essentialism

Karlyn Crowley

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Explores the relationship between feminism and New Age Culture.

Crystals, Reiki, Tarot, Goddess worship—why do these New Age tokens and practices capture the imagination of so many women? How has New Age culture become even more appealing than feminism? And are the two mutually exclusive? By examining New Age practices from macrobiotics to goddess worship to Native rituals, *Feminism's New Age: Gender, Appropriation, and the Afterlife of Essentialism* seeks to answer these questions by examining white women's participation in this hugely popular spiritual movement. While most feminist approaches to the New Age phenomenon have simply dismissed its adherents for their politically problematic racial appropriation practices, Karyln Crowley looks honestly at the political shortcomings of New Age beliefs and practices while simultaneously reckoning with the affective, political, and cultural motivations which have prompted New Age women's individual and collective spiritualities. New Age spirituality is in fact the dynamic outgrowth of a long-standing tradition of women's social and political power expressed through religious writings, art, and public discourse, and is key to understanding contemporary women's history and religion's role in modern American culture alike. Crowley offers a new and provocative assessment of the significance of the New Age movement, seen through a feminist and critical race studies lens.

Karlyn Crowley is Director of Women's and Gender Studies and Associate Professor of English at St. Norbert College.

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