Sex and the Bible

(ARLT 100g)

Dr. Cavan Concannon
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Office Hours:
Thurs 2-4 pm and by appointment

Meeting Times:
The seminar will meet Tuesday and Thursday from 9:30-10:50 am.

Course Description
This is a course about reading, religion and sex – more specifically, the dynamic interplay between how Christians have read and interpreted their Bibles on the one hand, and how they have understood sex and human sexuality on the other. (We will deal briefly with the Bible and sexuality in the Jewish interpretive tradition, but the lion’s share of the course focuses on Christianity.) Thus the questions that will drive our inquiry are fundamentally questions about interpretation. What does it mean to make the claim that a particular perspective on human sexual experience is ‘biblical’? How are we to understand the sheer variety of ways that a fixed set of canonical scriptural texts have been used as an authoritative resource for discussing and regulating sexual ethics, identity and practice? How do changing notions of what ‘sexuality’ is (and why sexuality matters) impact the way that biblical texts have been interpreted? We will explore these questions through the study of key texts in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament and an examination of how these texts have been interpreted from antiquity to the present. Topics to be covered include marriage, gender identity, desire, same-sex relationships and sexual renunciation.

No previous study in religion or biblical studies is assumed, and there are no prerequisites for enrolling in the course.

Requirements
• Attendance and participation in seminar (Note: participation in section counts for 10% of your final grade) This course will be
discussing issues that are theologically and politically important to many of your classmates. Thus I expect that everyone will be respectful of, and sensitive to, the opinions that are expressed in class.

- Careful reading of all assigned texts
- Three short papers – see schedule below. Topics will be given out a week in advance of due date in class and posted on the website under “Assignments”
- Weekly blogging and commenting on the course blog. Blog entries to be posted before class on Tuesday and comments on fellow student entries (minimum of two comments) before class on Thursday. The Blackboard site is viewable only to enrolled students (so no one will see your posts outside of the class!). For the last week of class we will be tweeting instead of blogging. You will receive advance instructions in advance for how to log into our private twitter feed.

Grading

Your overall grade will be calculated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short paper #1 (3-5 pgs)</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short paper #2 (4-6 pgs)</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short Paper #3 (5-7 pgs)</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Written Final Exam</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Course Blog</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Section participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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Books Available for Purchase

The following required readings are available for purchase at the bookstore and will be available on reserve at the library. Any readings not found in these books will be available on the course website.

Note: I would like you to use the New Revised Standard (NRSV) translation of the Bible for this course. There are many editions of the NRSV, both off- and online. You can also use the NASB and the New Jerusalem Bible if you already own either version, but I discourage the use of the NIV, the KJV, and the Living Bible.

Peter Berger. *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*

Daniel Boyarin. *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture*
Blogging and Writing

This is a course that focuses on writing and on making and hearing arguments. We do a lot of writing in this course, in the form of blogging on the course blog and the three short papers. We will also talk a lot in class about writing, making good arguments, and responding to others arguments. Please come and see me in office hours if you would like to discuss writing for the course. I have uploaded several “guides” to the course website that may be of help for writing in the various genres required in the course. On the course blog, always remember that the opinions, beliefs, and arguments of your classmates are worthy of the same respect that you would expect for your own.

Students with Disabilities

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

Academic Integrity

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one’s own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another’s work as one’s own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. Scampus, the Student Guidebook, contains
the Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00, while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A: http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov/. Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can be found at: http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/.

Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis
In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies.

Schedule

I. Sex and the Bible: Text, Interpretation and Practice

Aug 26 Introduction

Aug 28 Sex and the Bible
Reading:
Wilfred Cantwell Smith, "Introduction: Presenting the Issues" in What Is Scripture Comparative Approach (1-20)

Sept 2 and 4 The Hebrew Bible
Reading:
Genesis 1-3, 12-22, 38
Leviticus 18-20
Deuteronomy 5-11, 22-30
Judges 19
2 Samuel 11
Song of Songs
Ezekiel 16
Hosea 1-3

*BLOGGING ON THE COURSE BLOG STARTS THIS WEEK
Sept 9 and 11    The New Testament
   Reading:
   Matthew 5-7, 18-19
   Romans 1
   1 Corinthians
   Ephesians 5
   1 Timothy
   Revelation 1-3, 17-22

Sept 16 and 18   Canon and Interpretation
   Reading:
   Peter Berger, “Religion and World-Construction” and “Religion and
   World-Maintenance” in The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological
   Theory of Religion (3-51)
   Jonathan Z. Smith, “Sacred Persistence: Towards a Redescription of
   Canon” in Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown (36-52)
   Stanley Fish, “What Makes an Interpretation Acceptable?” in Is There
   a Text in This Class?: The Authority of Interpretive Communities (338-355)

*FIRST SHORT PAPER DUE ON THURSDAY (9/18)

II. Reading Sex Scripturally in the Pre-Modern World

Sept 23    Constructing Gender and Masculinity in the
           Ancient World
           Reading:
           TBA

Sept 25    Ascetic Christian Women in the Second Century
           Reading:
           The Acts of Paul and Thekla

Sept 30 and Oct 2    Genesis, Gender and the ‘Fathers’ of the Church
           Reading:
           Tertullian, “On the Apparel of Women”
           John Chrysostom, Homilies on Genesis 15, 16, 17, 18
           Augustine, City of God 14.10-28
Oct 7 and 9  Asceticism as an Interpretive Problem
Reading:
Jerome, *Letter 22*
John Cassian, *The Institutes*, "Sixth Book: The Spirit of Fornication"

Peter Brown, "Bodies and Minds: Sexuality and Renunciation in Early Christianity" in *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World* (479-493)
Elizabeth Clark, “Intertextual Exegesis” in *Reading Renunciation: Asceticism and Scripture in Early Christianity* (122-128)

Oct 14 and 16  Reading and the Rabbis
Reading:
Daniel Boyarin, *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture*

Oct 21  The Song of Songs from Antiquity to the Middle Ages
Reading:
Origen, *Homilies on the Song of Songs* 1
Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermons on the Song of Songs* 2, 8, 84
Suggested Reading: E. Ann Matter, *The Voice of My Beloved: The Song of Songs in Western Medieval Christianity* (4-58, 123-142)

Oct 23  Images of Jesus from the Renaissance to Modern America
Reading:
Leo Steinberg, *The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and in Modern Oblivion*, selections

*SECOND SHORT PAPER DUE ON THURSDAY* (10/23)

III. The Invention of Sexuality: Modernity, Postmodernity and Biblical Interpretation
Oct 28 and 30 The Invention of ‘Sexuality’ in the Modern World
Reading:
Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*

Nov 4 and 6 Gender, Bibles and Sex in the Victorian Age
Reading:
"Onania; or the Heinous Sin of Self-Pollution" [selections]
Mary Carpenter, *Imperial Bibles, Domestic Bodies: Women, Sexuality and Religion in the Victorian Market* (Introduction and Chapters 1-3)

Nov 11 and 13 Biblical Hermeneutics and Contemporary Cultural Debate (Protestant Sex Manuals and STDs)
Reading:
Skim: Tim Lahaye, *The Act of Marriage* (handouts)
Amy DeRogatis, “Born Again Is a Sexual Term: Demons, STDs, and God’s Healing Sperm,” *JAAR* 77.2 (2009) 275-302
Skim: Handouts on sexually transmitted demons

Nov 18 and 20 Biblical Hermeneutics and Contemporary Cultural Debate (Homosexuality and the Politics of Marriage)
Reading:
Bernadette Brooten, “Paul’s Views on the Nature of Women and Female Homoeroticism” in *Immaculate and Powerful* (61-87).
Dale Martin, “Heterosexism and the Interpretation of Romans 1:18-32” in *Sex and the Single Savior* (51-64)
Dale Martin, “Arsenokoites and Malakos: Meanings and Consequences” in *Sex and the Single Savior* (37-50)
Nov 25 - AAR/SBL Annual Meeting - No Class

Thanksgiving Break

Dec 2 and 4 Postmodern Musings: Bodies and the Bible
   Reading:
   Stephen Moore, God’s Gym: Divine Male Bodies of the Bible

*THIRD SHORT PAPER DUE ON THURSDAY (12/4)

Final Exam: December 11, 11 am to 1 pm