

Sex and the Bible

(ARLT 100g)

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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:

Short paper #1 (3-5 pgs)	10%
Short paper #2 (4-6 pgs)	15%
Short Paper #3 (5-7 pgs)	20%
Written Final Exam	25%
Course Blog	20%
Section participation	10%

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*

Mary Carpenter. *Imperial Bibles, Domestic Bodies: Women, Sexuality, and Religion in the Victorian Market*

Michel Foucault. *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*

Jennifer Knust, *Unprotected Texts*

Dale Martin, *Sex and the Single Savior*

E. Ann Matter. *The Voice of My Beloved: The Song of Songs in Western Medieval Christianity*

Stephen Moore. *God's Gym: Divine Male Bodies of the Bible*

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)

Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, "People of the Body: The Problem of the Body for the People of the Book" in *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 2/1991 (1-24)

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"

John Cassian, *The Conferences*, "Twelfth Conference: On Chastity"

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

David Morgan, *Visual Piety: A History and Theory of Popular Religious Images* (97-123)

*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:

Amy DeRogatis, "What Would Jesus Do? Sexuality and Salvation in Protestant Evangelical Sex Manuals, 1950s to the Present," *Church History* 74.1 (2005) 97-137

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:

Richard Hays, "Homosexuality" in *The Moral Vision of the New Testament* (379-406)

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, "Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons (1986)" in *Homosexuality in the Church: Both Sides of the Debate* (39-47)

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, "Arsenkoites 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