
RELIGION 230: GOD, SEX, LOVE

Instructor: Dr. Onishi

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Time: TR 12:40-2:00

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Christian approaches to the divine have played a decisive role in the formation of Western and global cultures, including approaches to love, sex, and marriage. However, within the Christian tradition there are—and always have been—transgressive voices who have challenged and subverted these approaches. In this class, we will first examine Christian constructions of love, gender, and marriage based on notions of the complementarity of the sexes, love as eternal union, and marriage as a divine intimacy with God. We shall then approach texts and figures that challenged such conceptions, and in some ways opened pathways for modern/contemporary discussions concerning love, sex, and partnership.

OBJECTIVES

1. To explore how conceptions of the divine shape approaches to sex and gender.
2. To explore how sex and gender shape conceptions of the divine.
3. To understand the complex relationships among sex, gender, and images of God in the history of Judaism and Christianity.
4. To develop the ability to read and think critically.
5. To employ discussion and writing as a means of exploring and refining ideas, and to express those ideas in effective prose.

ASSIGNMENTS

1. In-Class Writing Assignment (2x): 40%
2. Analysis Paper: 20%
3. Term Paper: 30%
4. Participation/Attendance/Quizzes: 10%

BOOKS TO PURCHASE

Plato, *The Symposium*. Alexander Nehemas and Paul Woodruff, trans. ISBN 978-0872200760

Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, *God's Phallus: And Other Problems for Men and Monotheism*. ISBN 978-0807012253.

- Other texts available as PDFs via our class Blackboard site.

SCHEDULE

I. THE MYTH OF THE ONE

9/8: Introduction: *Modern Romance*

9/13: Symposium + Nussbaum in *Philosophy of Eros*

9/15: Symposium + Nussbaum in *Philosophy of Eros*

II. ENGENDERING: GOD AS MALE AND HUSBAND

9/20: Hosea + Ezekiel + *God's Phallus*

9/22: *God's Phallus*

9/27: *God's Phallus* + Boyarin

9/29: Song of Songs + David Carr, "Gender and the Shaping of Desire in the Song of Songs and Its Interpretation"

10/04: **NO CLASS: INSTRUCTOR AT CONFERENCE**

III. ENGENDERING: THE SOUL AS BRIDE

10/06: Intro to Christianity / Origen + Patricia Cox Miller, "Pleasure of the Text"

Analysis Paper Due

10/11: **NO CLASS: Yom Kippur**

10/13: Bernard + Stephen Moore, "Song of Songs in History of Sexuality"

10/18: Ann Astell, *The Song of My Beloved*, Chapter 5

10/20: *In-Class Writing Assignment*

IV. UNGENDERING: SOME BEGUINES AND FEMALE MYSTICS

10/25: Bernard McGinn, *Flowering of Mysticism* + Barbara Newman, *From Virile Woman to Woman Christ*, p. 1-7 and Chapter 5: *La mystique courtoise*

10/27: Hadewijch and Taylor Jeromos, "To Queer or not to Queer"

11/1: Hadewijch, Poem 9 and Hollywood, "Queering the Beguines"

11/3: Marguerite and Marin, "Annihilation and Deification in Beguine Theology and Marguerite Porete's Mirror"

V. CONTEMPORARY STAKES OF QUEERING HISTORY

11/8: *The Book of Margery Kempe* and Tara Williams, *Inventing Womanhood*, Chapter 4

11/10: Margery Kempe and Lisa Isherwood, "Fucking Straight and the Gospel of Radical Equality" in *The Sexual Theologian*

11/15: John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*, Chapter 6.

11/17: Alred of Rievelaux and Martin Hugo Cordovo Quero, "Friendship with Benefits" in *The Sexual Theologian*

11/22: No Class: Instructor at AAR Conference

11/24: THANKSGIVING

VI. RECENT HISTORIES AND MOVEMENTS

11/29: Heather Rachelle White, *Reforming Sodom*

12/1: Heather Rachelle White, *Reforming Sodom*

Term Paper Due

12/3: Amendment One / UCC

12/8: Mark D. Jordan, *Blessing Same-Sex Unions*, Chapter 4

12/13: *In-Class Writing Assignment*

ATTENDANCE

You are expected to attend all classes. Attendance is constituted by more than your mere presence in the classroom. Teaching and learning at Skidmore is characterized by close readings of difficult texts and close learning with colleagues. Thus, you cannot participate in our class if you have not properly prepared for it. Attendance is counted when one is physically present, has completed the assigned readings and other tasks for the colloquium, and is ready to discuss, argue, and dialogue with his/her peers and instructor about them. Anything less than this will be considered an absence. If you are not prepared to participate in the discussion, I may ask you to leave.

If you are absent for any reason, I expect you to notify me. I will take every absence into consideration when it comes to calculating your final grade in the course.

PLAGIARISM:

All cases of suspected plagiarism will be taken to the Honor Council for official investigation. The consequences for any student found guilty of plagiarism range from suspension to expulsion.

The following summary will help you think about what constitutes plagiarism and how to avoid it:

See: www.plagiarism.org/plagiarism-101/what-is-plagiarism:

"WHAT IS PLAGIARISM?"

Many people think of plagiarism as copying another's work or borrowing someone else's original ideas. But terms like "copying" and "borrowing" can disguise the seriousness of the offense:

ACCORDING TO THE MERRIAM-WEBSTER ONLINE DICTIONARY, TO "PLAGIARIZE" MEANS

- to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own
- to use (another's production) without crediting the source
- to commit literary theft
- to present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source

In other words, plagiarism is an act of fraud. It involves both stealing someone else's work and lying about it afterward.

BUT CAN WORDS AND IDEAS REALLY BE STOLEN?

According to U.S. law, the answer is yes. The expression of original ideas is considered intellectual property and is protected by copyright laws, just like original inventions. Almost all forms of expression fall under copyright protection as long as they are recorded in some way (such as a book or a computer file).

ALL OF THE FOLLOWING ARE CONSIDERED PLAGIARISM:

- turning in someone else's work as your own
- copying words or ideas from someone else without giving credit
- failing to put a quotation in quotation marks
- giving incorrect information about the source of a quotation
- changing words but copying the sentence structure of a source without giving credit
- copying so many words or ideas from a source that it makes up the majority of your work, whether you give credit or not (see our section on "fair use" rules)
- Most cases of plagiarism can be avoided, however, by citing sources. Simply acknowledging that certain material has been borrowed and providing your audience with the information necessary to find that source is usually enough to prevent plagiarism. See our section on [citation](#) for more information on how to cite sources properly."

LATE WORK

Late work will not be accepted without an instructor-approved extension, which will be granted in cases involving documented illness, family emergencies, or other health-related issues.

TECHNOLOGY IN THE CLASSROOM

Computers, tablets, and cellphones are not allowed in class for personal or academic use. If you have a documented need to use computers for note-taking purposes, please notify me ASAP.