
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 Jewish and 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: 15%
2. Analysis Paper (x2): 40%
3. Midterm: 15%
4. Learning Finale: 15%
5. Participation/Attendance: 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

9/6: Introduction: Gender Studies

9/8: Gender Studies—Basics Reading: Gender Studies Terms*

9/13: Introduction to the Hebrew Bible Reading: Book of Genesis

II. ENGENDERING: GOD AS MALE AND HUSBAND

9/15: Genesis + Exodus Reading: Book of Exodus (NRSV Bible)

9/20: **No Class**

9/22: *God's Phallus* Reading: God's Phallus: Introduction and Chapter 4

9/27: Song of Songs

10/04: Masculinity, Feminity and Sexuality in the Prophets Reading: Hosea 1-3* + Graybill, *Are we Not Men?**

10/06: Intro to Christianity Reading: TBA

10/11: Paul and Sex Reading: I Corinthians 6-7; Galatians 3; Romans 5-8 **Analysis Paper Due**

10/13: Origen Reading: Commentary on the Song of Songs: Prologue

10/18: Origen Reading: Origen: TBA + Stephen Moore, "Song of Songs in History of Sexuality"

10/20: *Take-home Midterm*

III. UNGENDERING: SOME BEGUINES AND FEMALE MYSTICS

10/25: Introduction to Medieval Christianity

10/27: Introduction to the Beguines

11/1 Hadewijch, Poem 9 and "Ever in Unrest"

11/3: Hadewijch + Jeromos, "To Queer or Not to Queer"

11/8: *The Book of Margery Kempe*

11/10: *The Book of Margery Kempe*

11/15: *In-Class Writing Assignment*

IV. CONTEMPORARY STAKES OF QUEERING HISTORY

11/17: Heather Rachelle White, *Reforming Sodom*

11/22: Heather Rachelle White, *Reforming Sodom* + Documentary

11/24: THANKSGIVING

11/29: Amendment One / UCC

12/1: Lightsey, *Our Lives Matter*

Analysis Paper Due

12/6: Lightsey, *Our Lives Matter*

12/8: *Learning Finale*

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.