

Sex and Spirit (Fall 2010) RARS-4031
Thursdays 7:10-9:40
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If we want to bring our whole selves into connection with Spirit, we can't forget our sexual selves. In this class, we will explore the effects of erotophobia on sexuality and, by extension, spirituality in order to discover how we can integrate these foundational aspects of our humanity. Some topics we will discuss include: sexual well-being, the effects of shame on relationships, sexual diversity, how our sexual selves can inform our spiritual practices, and the dance between boundaries and connection with others. The class will include lecture, interactive exercises, group discussion, and personal reflection in order to offer a range of perspectives and experiences.

Course objectives: By the end of the course, you will be able to:

- Discuss how sexual well-being, shame and interpersonal boundaries influence and are influenced by their relationships with the Divine.
- Identify and commit to at least one step they can take to deepen their understanding of sexual diversity and overcome erotophobia.
- Explore ways in which their personal sexualities can both inform and hinder their roles as ministers.

Session 1, 9/9/10: Coming Together/Sexual Well-Being

Objectives for this session: By the end of this class session, you will be able to:

- Create a safe container for the exploration of sexuality topics
- Identify what concerns they have with respect to sex & sexuality
- Discuss what sexual well-being means to them and how it relates to spirituality

Journal Reflection:

What messages have you received about sex and spirituality? How have those messages shaped your studies? Your spiritual journey? Your daily life?

Session 2, 9/16/10: Barriers to Pleasure

Reading for this session:

Pleasure Zone p 5-25

Pleasure Zone p 29-41

Sex Smart p. 14-32

Erotophobia- The Cruellest Abuse of All

Objectives for this session: By the end of this class session, you will be able to:

- Describe three ways in which they have experienced or witnessed barriers to pleasure
- Discuss the spiritual effects of the barriers to pleasure
- Commit to two ways in which they can support pleasure in themselves, their communities, and their congregation

Journal Reflection:

What are the relationships between pleasure and spirituality for you? How has that changed over time? How can theology inform our understandings of pleasure? How can a positive relationship with pleasure inform our understandings of theology and spiritual practices?

9/23/10 no class

Session 3, 9/30/10: Self-Regulation, Boundaries

Reading for this session:

Pat Ogden article

The Erotic Mind p. 302-321.pdf

Your Sexual Secrets p. 17-51.pdf

Objectives for this session: By the end of this class session, you will be able to:

- Describe at least three ways that people self-regulate their internal experiences
- Describe the characteristics of different boundary styles and how they can affect spiritual practices and communities

Journal Reflection:

What are some of your patterns around self-regulation and/or boundaries? How have they changed over time? Have your spiritual practices or your understandings of theologies affected that? How have boundary issues or concerns affected congregations or other spiritual communities you've been part of?

Session 4, 10/7/10: The Myth of the Normal & Responding to It

Reading for this session:

Thinking Sex.pdf

Objectives for this session: By the end of this class session, you will be able to:

- Identify three ways that the Myth of the Normal can influence sexuality
- Discuss how the Myth of the Normal affects spirituality and religious community
- Commit to two steps to overcoming or challenging the Myth of the Normal with respect to sexuality

Journal Reflection:

What are some ways that the Myth of the Normal shows up in religious/spiritual contexts? How have you personally experienced or witnessed it? What was that like for you?

Session 5, 10/14/10: Sexual Shame part 1

Reading for this session:

Sexual Shame p 85-94.pdf

The Psychology of Shame p. 28-57.pdf

Objectives for this session: By the end of this class session, you will be able to:

- Describe at least two physiological indicators of shame, and at least two affective indicators of shame.
- Describe at least three ways in which shame manifests in interpersonal and group dynamics.

Journal Reflection:

What are some experiences you've had with the Compass of Shame or the Rules of Shame in family or community dynamics? What was that like for you? As a minister or community participant, what can you do to foster more healthy ways for people to deal with challenging issues?

Session 6, 10/21/10: Sexual Shame part 2

Reading for this session:

Shame- A Faith Perspective p. 69-84.pdf
The Psychology of Shame p. 172-181.pdf

Objectives for this session: By the end of this class session, you will be able to:

- Discuss ways that shame is used to control sexuality
- Describe at least two strategies for helping people respond to sexual shame

Journal Reflection:

What are some of your strengths when it comes to supporting other people who are in a place of shame? What are some of your challenges? What tools do you have that can help you in this work? What skills would you like to learn to expand your capacity to engage in this work?

Session 7, 11/4/10: Love & Sex

Reading for this session:

All About Love p. 3-14.pdf
Demystifying Love p. 1-35.pdf

Objectives for this session: By the end of this class session, you will be able to:

- Discuss the relationships between love, shame, and sex
- Explore how our beliefs around love influence spiritual practices

Journal Reflection:

What are some of the relationships between love, religion, and community that you have witnessed or been part of? How does that shape or influence your understanding of the role of clergy or theologians?

Session 8, 11/11/10: Sexual Acting Out/Sexual Compulsions

Objectives for this session: By the end of this class session, you will be able to:

- Describe some of the characteristics of sex addiction
- Discuss their personal values and beliefs around sex addiction

Reading for this session:

In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts p. 135-139.pdf
Sexual Addiction- An Integrated Approach p. 11-36.pdf
Women, Sex and Addiction p. 3-14, 42-69, 224-245.pdf

Session 9, 11/18/10: Sexuality Education in the Community

Reading for this session (pick at least 2):

A New View of Women's Sexual Problem p. 1-7.pdf
Arousal p. 50-79.pdf
My Gender Workbook p. 25-33.pdf
Principles and Practices of Sex Therapy p. 17-33.pdf
Psychotherapeutic Issues with 'Kinky' Clients Clinical Problems, Yours and Theirs.pdf
The Intimate Couple p. 63-75.pdf
Voices From Beyond the Sexual Binary p 23-33.pdf

Objectives for this session: By the end of this class session, you will be able to:

- Identify the role of clergy and community leaders in sex education
- Use the PLISSIT model to offer sexuality information

Journal Reflection:

Take some time to do a little research about one of the sexuality topics of interest to you. Where did you look? What did you discover? What was it like to learn about it?

Sessions 10-12, 12/2, 12/9, 12/16 Student Presentations

Individual or group presentations

For the next three sessions, we will have presentations. They can be sermons on a relevant subject, art presentations, skits, music, videos, or anything else other than a paper or lecture. They can be solo or done with partners or in groups. If everyone does a solo presentation, plan on a maximum of 15 minutes each.

After each presentation, the rest of the class will reflect on what you have done and how it resonates for them. This will not be a time for critique or analysis. It will be a time for us to each offer our thoughts on how we connect with the work, and to support each other.

Journal Reflection:

What came up for you in creating and showing your presentation? What came up for you during your classmates' presentations? Did you discover new thoughts, beliefs, or perspectives? What did you learn from this process?