



**Sex & Sin**  
**In**  
**Ancient Judaism & Early Christianity**  
**HRHS- 8335**  
**Fall 2018**

**Starr King School for the Ministry**

**Online Zoom Meetings**  
**every Monday, 9:40-11am PST**

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Marc Chagall, *Eve* (1971)  
Musée National Marc Chagall Nice  
(Image accessed through Réunion des Musées  
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**Course Description:**

This course will introduce ways in which sex was used as a proposed boundary marker for religious identity in Second Temple Jewish and Early Christian texts. Contextualizing these boundary markers in the cultural, religious, and political landscape of the Greco-Roman Mediterranean destabilizes the meta-narrative concerning the picture of 'proper' sexual ethics and gender identity by exposing the permeability of those boundaries. We will explore how Jewish and Christian pseudepigraphal and apocryphal texts from the third century BCE to the third century CE can offer alternative access points into Jewish and Christian tradition that offer a diverse set of voices that can be used to subvert oppressive interpretations that have had lasting and painful repercussions in lived gender experience because of the conflation of sex and sexuality with sin. Topics such as religious leadership, ritual participation (initiations, foundation narratives & practice), sin, violence & rape, the afterlife, fertility & abortion, and sexuality in the Greco-Roman world will be surveyed and discussed in light of current debates on women's ordination, reproductive rights, and LGBTQI identity to track how ancient debates are alive today and consider how silenced voices from this period may be used as counter-oppressive lenses for Biblical and extra-Biblical interpretation.

The format of the course is lecture/discussion. Lectures will be pre-recorded and Zoom sessions will be for group discussion of the lecture and the readings concluding with supplemental lecture based on the direction of questions. Please note that due to the nature of the topic, some images and literary descriptions will be sexually explicit.

## I. Student Learning Objectives

This course is meant to equip students with tools to engage in a meaningful way in the academy, ministry, life, and activism about what Jewish and Christian Sacred Texts and tradition teach about sex and sin. Contextualizing the history of the conflation of sex with sin over time allows us to see the (un)expected ripple effects that we still live with today. During the course, students will:

- Explore the historical context of biblical citations and extra-biblical traditions that are most often used to support systems of abuse and oppression of women and LGBTQI communities.
- Engage in open and respectful dialogue concerning different faith and cultural perspectives on sex, sexuality, gender, and sin.
- Apply historical-critical and post-modern feminist methodological frameworks to develop and practice a hermeneutic of suspicion. This hermeneutic of suspicion will be used to create and foster counter-oppressive readings of Jewish and Christian Sacred Texts and traditions.
- Learn how to access, search, and use library research tools and resources for academic research.

## II. Student Learning Outcomes

After successful completion of all course requirements, students will be able to:

Learning Goal	Assessment/Evaluation
Identify examples in current events that either explicitly or implicitly cite Judeo-Christian Sacred Texts to support abuse and oppression and contextualize this use within the context of the course.	Completion of two 3-5 page reflection papers as described below.
Be prepared to engage in dialogue and communicate liberating readings of the aforementioned citations when encountered in ministry, life, and activism.	Active participation in the weekly zoom discussions that reflects engagement with the assigned readings and lectures.
Cultivate a process oriented understanding of the hermeneutic of suspicion.	Be able to identify 8 common methods that have been used to silence women (and other marginalized communities) in religious texts. This will be assessed through practical application in zoom discussions concerning the readings.
Create and foster counter-oppressive readings of a student's own faith and/or cultural tradition.	Offer a counter-oppressive reading through the completion of a final 10-15 page long reflection paper and brief presentation as described below.

### III. Educating to Counter Oppressions

This course seeks to advance the values expressed in the statement of [Educating to Counter Oppressions \(ECO\)](#) that is central to Starr King School for the Ministry's educational design. The overall goal is to help each person prepare for religious leadership, within a multi-religious and counter-oppressive context to create just and sustainable communities. This course falls primarily within the following SKSM Thresholds: 3) Sacred Text and Interpretation and 4) History of Dissenting Traditions and Thea/ological Quest.

### IV. Course Policies

- a. *Participation*: 45% of final grade. Student participation is determined by active engagement in online discussion and watching the lectures. Students are expected to attend the zoom meetings, attendance will be taken every week. Developing an ability to discuss these texts is a learning objective of the course, so participation in the zoom discussion will be assessed. Each lecture will have a brief interactive component so that participation can be monitored. Please note that contextualizing the history of the conflation of sex and sin may be triggering at times, so it is important to factor in time to process and reflect on the course material before the zoom discussion so that everyone can engage in open, respectful, and productive dialogue. "Without community there is no liberation, only the most vulnerable and temporary armistice between an individual and her oppression. But community must not mean a shedding of our differences, nor the pathetic pretense that these differences do not exist."- Audre Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," *Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Crossing Press, 1984), 112. This course is wrestling with texts that have been used for oppression so in order to develop the proper level of comfort in informed and liberating dialogue each student must engage with the material and the community. See suggested course format below.
- b. *Writing Assignments*: 30% of final grade. **A 3-5 page reflection paper is due twice during the semester (October 8<sup>th</sup> & November 9<sup>th</sup>)** on how a current issue in the media (commercials, news broadcasts, YouTube videos, newspaper articles, Facebook trends, tweets, music, tv, film, etc.) and how it intersects with the themes/topics of the course by placing it in dialogue with the assigned readings. Please include a statement concerning the authorship of the source, date the information was accessed, its purpose, audience, and context. (A handout will be provided that outlines the proper format and citation techniques). These papers will reflect the student's critical engagement with the readings and act as a foundation for how to engage in current discourse with ancient sources.
- c. *Final Reflection Paper & Presentation*: 25% of final grade. **A 10-15 page paper is due Monday December 17<sup>th</sup>** that identifies how the student's faith tradition and/or cultural background has traditionally addressed an issue related to sex and sin, or how a theme/topic does or does not intersect and engage with the student's own faith tradition and/or cultural background. The paper should offer a historical-critical analysis based in academic research of the issue within the context of the

tradition and offer a liberating counter-oppressive interpretation. This research will allow the student the opportunity for deeper engagement within their own context, and thus act as preparation for conversations that they are likely to encounter directly in ministry, the academy, life, and activism. Students will give a brief 5-10 minute presentation at the last zoom meeting, offering an overview of the key points of their paper.

- d. *Attendance Policy:* Students are expected to contact the instructor before the Monday zoom meeting if they are unable to attend. A student will be marked with an unexcused absence if a student does not notify the instructor before the discussion. If a student notifies the instructor, they will be asked to email a reflection on a particular discussion point from the lecture and readings before the next zoom discussion. If the reflection is not submitted in the proper time frame the student will be marked with an unexcused absence. If a student has two unexcused absences from the zoom discussion their participation grade will be affected. Open communication is essential, so if there is an emergency or extenuating circumstance please contact the instructor as soon as possible.
- e. If any students with disabilities or whose first language is not English are in need of academic accommodations, please contact the instructor as soon as possible to discuss options and make arrangements. Planning and communication are essential to providing adjustments that will properly address student needs.

**V. Course Format**

There is a possibility that some of the reading may be triggering, so it is important for self-care as well as productive discussion for students to watch the lecture and complete the readings with adequate time left each week to reflect and process the material. Genuine participation and interaction is essential for this course to be successful.

Tuesday is the start of each week, meaning that the zoom discussion on Monday will always focus on the readings and lecture of the previous week. The new lecture will be posted after the zoom discussion to ensure that the discussion remains focused on the current topic/theme.

This is the suggested overall structure of the course to facilitate the learning outcomes:

Monday	Zoom discussion on previous weeks lecture & reading - 9:40-11am PST
Tuesday	New lecture posted
Wednesday	Read and reflect on course material
Thursday	Read and reflect on course material
Friday	Read and reflect on course material
Saturday	Reflect and process the material in preparation for zoom discussion.
Sunday	Reflect and process the material in preparation for zoom discussion.

Online lectures by the instructor offer background should be viewed early in the week as they provide background information (historical context, reception history, etc.) on the

topic/theme of the week. The readings for the course are a mix of primary sources (created in the time period being addressed) and secondary sources (commentary on primary sources from later periods, including but not limited to our own).

### **Required Texts:**

- Jay Michaelson, [\*God vs. Gay? The Religious Case for Equality\*](#) (Beacon Press, 2011) \$13
- Vita Daphna Arbel, [\*Forming Femininity in Antiquity: Eve, Gender, and Ideologies in the Greek Life of Adam and Eve\*](#) (Oxford University Press, 2012) \$12
- Martti Nissinen, [\*Homoeroticism in the Biblical World: A Historical Perspective\*](#) (Fortress Press, 1998) \$18
- A Bible with Apocrypha, any translation is acceptable, but students will have to cite the translation they are using in all written papers and have available for zoom discussions so that the class can address differences in translation and the potential ideological impact that may have on the topic at hand.

### **Course Schedule:**

#### ***Week One: September 4<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup>***

- **Reading:** (Moodle) Peter Gardella, *Innocent Ecstasy: How Christianity Gave America An Ethic of Sexual Pleasure* updated edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), "Since 1985: Redeeming the Body" 159-181, notes 219-224.
- **Zoom Discussion:** September 10<sup>th</sup> – Introductions, syllabus, and discuss reading. [special guest, Beth Kumar, GTU Reference Librarian will offer a brief 10-15-minute overview of Library services and upcoming workshops and how to access Library resources relevant to this course]

#### ***Week Two: September 11<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup>***

- **Lecture:** Building Context: A Hermeneutic of Suspicion & Deconstructing Binaries
- **Reading:** Michaelson, *God vs. Gay? The Religious Case for Equality*, 30-40; Teresa Shaw, *The Burden of the Flesh* (Fortress Press, 1998), 53-78; Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, 1-15. Listen to [Hedwig and the Angry Inch, Origin of Love](#).
- **Zoom Discussion:** September 17<sup>th</sup> 9:40- 11am PST

#### ***Week Three: September 18<sup>th</sup>- 24<sup>th</sup>***

- **Lecture:** Greek & Roman Sexuality, the Hebrew Bible, & Same-Sex Love
- **Reading:** *God vs. Gay?* 41-72, 94-102; *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, 37-88.
- **Zoom Discussion:** September 24<sup>th</sup> 9:40-11am PST

#### ***Week Four: September 25<sup>th</sup>- October 1<sup>st</sup>***

- **Lecture:** Ancient Jewish & Early Christian Etiologies of Sin
- **Reading:** Genesis 2-3, 6:1-4; *Forming Femininity in Antiquity*, 1-37, 87-121. Moodle: I Enoch, Book of the Watchers 1-36; *Life of Adam and Eve*, 7-8 and 15-30.
- **Zoom Discussion:** October 1<sup>st</sup> 9:40-11am PST

### Week Five: October 2<sup>nd</sup> -8<sup>th</sup>

- **Lecture:** Eve, Lilith, & Other Sexually Taboo Women in Jewish Tradition
- **Reading:** Wojciech Kosior, "A Tale of Two Sisters: The Image of Eve in Early Rabbinic Literature and Its Influence on the Portrayal of Lilith in the Alphabet of Ben Sira" *Nashim* 32 (2018), 112-130 & **choose one** of the following: Shelly Colette, "Eroticizing Eve: A Narrative Analysis of Eve Images in Fashion Magazine Advertising" *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* (2015) 31.2: 5-24; Anne Lapidus Lerner, "Back to the Beginning: An Exploration of the Roles Played by Eve and the Garden of Eden in Modern Poetry by Jewish Women" *Nashim* 19 (2010): 9-31; Geoffrey and Avi S. Dennis, "Vampires and Witches and Commandos, Oy Vey: Comic Book Appropriations of Lilith", *Shofar* 32.3 (2014): 72-95 (notes 96-101).
- **First Reflection Paper Due October 8<sup>th</sup> by 5pm PST**
- **Zoom Discussion:** October 8<sup>th</sup> 9:40-11am PST

### Week Six: October 9<sup>th</sup>- 15<sup>th</sup>

- **Lecture:** The Ubiquitous Use of Adam & Eve to Sustain Gender Hierarchies & Heteronormativity; Recovering Eden in Asceticism: Fasting, Virginity, and Gender Refutation
- **Reading:** *God vs. Gay?* 3-14; Megan Warner, "Therefore a Man Leaves His Father and His Mother and Clings to His Wife": Marriage and Intermarriage in Genesis 2:24, *JBL* 136.2 (2017): 269-288; *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, 135-140; Shaw, *The Burden of the Flesh*, 171-219, 235-253.
- **Zoom Discussion:** October 15<sup>th</sup> 9:40-11am PST

### Week Seven: October 16<sup>th</sup>- 22<sup>nd</sup>

- **Lecture:** Song of Songs: Destabilizing the Focus on Reproduction; Judaism and the Body: Subverting Heteronormativity or Enforcing Gender Roles?
- **Reading:** *God vs. Gay?* 15-23; M.L. Case, "Cunning Linguists: Oral Sex in the Song of Songs" *Vetus Testamentum* 67 (2017): 171-186; Ronit Irshai, "Judaism" *Oxford Handbook of Theology, Sexuality, and Gender* (2014).
- **No Zoom Discussion- Reading Week October 22<sup>nd</sup>-26<sup>th</sup>**

### Week Eight: October 23<sup>rd</sup>-29<sup>th</sup>

- **Lecture: No lecture Reading Week**
- **Reading: Begin research for final paper**
- **Zoom Discussion:** October 29<sup>th</sup> 9:40-11am PST- zoom discussion will be on the week seven lecture and readings.

### Week Nine: October 30<sup>th</sup>- November 5<sup>th</sup>

- **Lecture:** Egalitarian vs. Complementarian: Break(ing) down views of women, leadership, and violence in the church & Special Guest Lecture on Feminine Language for God & the Gospel of John by The Rev. Dr. Daniel London
- **Reading:** *God vs. Gay?* 24-29, 73-77; Eugene F. Rogers Jr., "Doctrine and Sexuality" *Oxford Handbook of Theology, Sexuality, and Gender* (2014) 14 pages; Dorothy Lee, *Flesh and Glory: Symbolism, Gender and Theology in the Gospel of John* (Crossroad

Pub, 2002), 29-64; Michael O'Sullivan, "Reading John 7:53-8:11 as a Narrative Against Male Violence Against Women" *HTS Theologese Studies/Theological Studies* 71 (1), Art.#2939, 8 pages.

- **Zoom Discussion:** November 5<sup>th</sup> 9:40-11am PST

### **Week Ten: November 6<sup>th</sup>- 12<sup>th</sup>**

- **Lecture:** Paul & Deutero-Pauline Epistles
- **Reading:** *God vs. Gay?* 78-93; *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, 89-122; Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, "Emancipative Elements in Ephesians 5.21-33: Why Feminist Scholarship Has (Often) Left Them Unmentioned, and Why They Should Be Emphasized", 37-58; Bernadette Brooten, "Research on the New Testament and Early Christian Literature May Assist the Churches in Setting Ethical Priorities" *JBL* 136.1 (2017): 229-236.
- **Second Reflection Paper Due November 9<sup>th</sup> by 5pm PST**
- **Reschedule Zoom Discussion:** November 12<sup>th</sup> - Veterans Day

### **Week Eleven: November 13<sup>th</sup>- 19<sup>th</sup>**

- **Lecture:** Abortion & Boundary Formation in Greco-Roman, Jewish, & Early Christian Contexts; Fertility in Shaping Empire & the Early Church
- **Reading:** Rabbi David M. Feldman, "Abortion: The Jewish View" *Hoshen Mishpat*: (HM 425:2.1983a), p. 800-806; Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, 95-128 notes pg. 219; Seth Downland, "Family Values" and the Formation of a Christian Right Agenda, *Church History* 78.3 (2009): 606-631.
- **No Zoom Discussion:** November 19<sup>th</sup> – Moodle forum prompts

### **Week Twelve: November 20<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup>**

- **Lecture:** Revelation
- **Reading:** Marion Carson, "The Harlot, the Beast, and the Sex Trafficker: Reflections on Some Recent Feminist Interpretations of Revelation 17-18", *The Expository Times* (2011) 122.5: 218-227; Surekha Nelavala, "Babylon the Great Mother of Whores (Rev 17:5): A Postcolonial Feminist Perspective", *The Expository Times* (2009) 121.2: 60-65; Joan Sakalas, "The Whore of Babylon metaphor—Permission to erase evil?" *Journal of Religion & Abuse* 5.4 (2003): 3-13.
- **Zoom Discussion:** November 26<sup>th</sup> 9:40-11am PST

### **Week Thirteen: November 27<sup>th</sup>- December 3<sup>rd</sup>**

- **Lecture:** Stepping Back & the Big Picture
- **Reading:** *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, 123-134; work on final papers
- **Zoom Discussion:** December 3<sup>rd</sup> 9:40-11am PST – Reflections on the course & start of final presentations

### **Week Fourteen: December 4<sup>th</sup>- 10<sup>th</sup>**

- **Zoom Discussion:** December 10<sup>th</sup> 9:40-11am PST – Presentations on final papers
- **Final Paper Due on Monday December 17<sup>th</sup> by 5pm PST**