

Advanced Topics in Gender & Religion Intensive
HR 8440 3 units
Starr King School for the Ministry - Graduate Theological Union
Summer 2021

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Office Hours by appointment

Online Zoom Meetings
M-F July 26-30 and W-F Aug 4-6
from 10am to 1pm PST



Course Description:

This course will explore ancient and modern constructions of gender and how that impacts an understanding of sacred texts, not only in questions of translation and gender performance but in the pressing need for safe inclusive spaces. Trans and intersex people have been violently victimized, ostracized, and demonized by oppressive readings of sacred texts. Understanding ancient physiology demonstrates that our “scientific” or “natural” conceptions of gender change; they are not fixed but shaped by culture and society. We are currently at the cusp of a broader cultural/social paradigm shift as scientists are more clearly and publicly making known that a focus on two sexes cannot be supported biologically, further supporting the work that gender theorists such as Judith Butler have pioneered. While many welcome the possibilities that are on the horizon, others are using religion as a cudgel to continue to promote the concept of gender binaries. The first week of the course will be setting the historical, cultural, and literary context for the course which will center on Greek, Roman, Jewish, and Christian sources. The second week will be student-led with presentations based on the individual research interests of the students, resulting in a variety of collective resources on gender and religion (not limited to Jewish and Christian traditions). Relates to SKSM Thresholds # 2, 3, 4

Prerequisite: Not open to incoming students. Registration priority given to students who have taken HRHS 8335: Sex and Sin in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity. This hybrid course will meet 3 hours synchronously M-F July 26-30 and W-F Aug 4-6 from 10am to 1pm PST paired with daily asynchronous lectures and activities. [Monday & Tuesday August 2nd and 3rd will be student research days for their presentations, no synchronous meeting.]

Required textbook:

Brooke Holmes, *Gender: Antiquity and Its Legacy* (Oxford University Press, 2012) ISBN: 978-1845119294 [est. \\$ 19.95 https://www.bloomsbury.com/us/gender-9781845119294/](https://www.bloomsbury.com/us/gender-9781845119294/)

I. Student Learning Objectives

This course is meant to explore the history of how Greek, Roman, Jewish, and Christian sources constructed gender and how interpretations of this history have been used support and justify unjust and violent action against those that are perceived as gender “other”. By delving into the literary, cultural, and historical contexts students are provided tools to critically engage in counter-oppressive discourse when exclusionary practices against trans and intersex people are rooted in claims to religious, historical, and/or cultural “tradition.” During the course, students will:

- Explore the historical, literary, and cultural context of a variety of Greek, Roman, Jewish, and Christian constructions of gender.
- Engage in open and respectful dialogue concerning different spiritual and cultural approaches to gender.
- Apply historical-critical and intersectional feminist and queer methodological frameworks to create and foster counter-oppressive readings or ‘flipping the script’ on dominant oppressive readings of sacred texts and traditions that have been imbued into western society & culture.
- Learn how to access, search, and use library research tools and resources.

II. Student Learning Outcomes

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

Learning Goal	Assessment/Evaluation
Identify examples of how social constructions of gender have changed over time (physiological understandings, differences in gender performance expectations, etc.).	Completion of a reading reflection exercise, final project, and participation in zoom discussion.
Be prepared to engage in dialogue and communicate about the history of gender as a spectrum and its liberatory potential when encountered in ministry, life, academia and/or activism.	Student presentation. Active participation in zoom discussions that reflects engagement with the assigned readings and lectures. Watching VT lectures.
Create and foster counter-oppressive readings that speak to a student’s own faith and/or cultural tradition.	Start a ‘flipped script’ through the completion of the final project 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.

IV. Course Policies

Please refer to the following course policies links:

- a. Academic Conduct <https://www.skism.edu/current-students/statement-academic-integrity-misconduct/>
- b. Plagiarism <https://www.skism.edu/plagiarism/>
- c. Notice to Students About Your Privacy (FERPA) <https://www.skism.edu/academics/policy-statements/ferpa-family-educational-rights-and-privacy-act/>
- d. Disability Policy <https://www.skism.edu/resources/student-handbook/starr-king-policies/students-with-disabilities-policy/>

V. Course Grading

- a. *Participation*: 40% of final assessment. Student participation is determined by active engagement in online zoom large and small group discussion and watching the asynchronous Voicethread lectures. Students are expected to attend the zoom meetings, attendance will be taken every meeting. Each Voicethread lecture is set so that the system logs if it has been watched to completion. Each lecture needs to be viewed before the next day's zoom meeting in order to get full credit towards your final participation assessment. Voicethread lectures offer historical context and methods that compliment and supplement the readings, they **do not** summarize the readings.

Developing an ability to discuss these concepts is a learning objective of the course. Please note that material covered may trigger trauma 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 wrestles with texts and traditions that have been used to substantiate kyriarchal structures of power and justify violence 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 Zoom Discussion Guidelines/Community Expectations Handout).

- b. *Chapter Reflection Exercise*: 20% of final assessment. **Prior to the start of the course, students are required to read** Brooke Holmes, *Gender: Antiquity and Its Legacy* (Oxford University Press, 2012) ISBN: 978-1845119294 and submit a reading reflection exercise that is **due Monday July 26th by 9am PST through the Moodle submission system**. See "Reading Reflection Exercise Assignment Guidelines" handout on Moodle. This reading acts as a foundation for how to critically engage in current discourse with ancient sources and traditions and this assignment will assess the student's initial engagement in that discourse.
- c. *Final Presentation & Handout*: 20% of final assessment. This project will allow the student the opportunity for deeper engagement within their own context, and thus

act as preparation for conversations that they may encounter directly in their ministry, the academy, life, and/or activism. Students will give a **5-minute presentation on Wednesday August 4th on three non-assigned articles/or chapters that they have read and share a handout with the class** that includes the theme the student is exploring, the citation information of the three pieces and a brief review of each piece. These handouts will offer the class a working annotated bibliography on a variety of gender and religion resources (not limited to Jewish and Christian traditions). (See “Writing Assignment Guidelines and Final Presentation & Project” Handout for further information).

- d. *Final Project*: 20% of final assessment. This is a 2-week intensive course and due to time constraints students do not have the time to research a fully developed “flipped script.” For the final project, students will build on the work started in the presentation assignment by submitting a “flipped script” prospectus and a bibliography to develop that project. The project proposal should offer a liberating counter-oppressive interpretation that reflects the students own voice and integrates critical reflection on the course materials. (See “Writing Assignment Guidelines and Final Presentation & Project” Handout for further information).
- e. *Attendance Policy*: Students are expected to contact the instructor before the Monday zoom meeting if they are unable to attend. They will be asked to email a one-page reflection on a discussion point from the lecture and readings before the next zoom discussion in order to get full participation credit. A student will be marked with an unexcused absence if they do not notify the instructor before the zoom discussion which will impact their overall participation assessment. Open communication is essential, if there is an emergency or extenuating circumstance, please contact the instructor as soon as reasonably possible.
- f. If any students are differently abled or whose first language is not English are in need of academic accommodations, please contact the instructor as soon as possible to make arrangements for accommodations. Planning and communication are essential to providing adjustments that will properly address student needs.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

WEEK ONE:

- Prior to the first zoom meeting, watch the Voicethread Course Introduction and post your own introduction (instructions for how to post will be given in the intro).
- Reading Reflection Exercise of Brooke Holmes, *Gender: Antiquity and Its Legacy* is due via Moodle Monday July 26th by 9am PST.
- The schedule below begins with the zoom discussion and the lecture and reading assignments listed below the zoom link are to be completed before the next zoom discussion.

Monday:

- Discuss:
 - Zoom July 26th 10am-1pm PST: [For the first zoom discussion on Monday July 26th have your reading reflection exercise accessible]

- Read: (Assignment for Tuesday discussion):
 - Lisa Stenmark and Whitney Bauman, "Introduction" in *Unsettling Science and Religion: Contributions and Questions from Queer Studies*. (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2018), 1-26.
 - Mallory Moore and Anarchasteminist, "Alert: Transphobic feminism and far-right activism rapidly converging" TransSafety.Network March 18, 2021: <https://transsafety.network/posts/gcs-and-the-right/>
- Watch:
 - Voicethread Lecture (for Tuesday discussion): "In A Beginning: The Validity & Authority of Queer Theory & the Need for Flipped Scripts"
- Listen:
 - "Noa: The Beauty of Taking Up Space" Wholly Jewish podcast interview: <https://whollyjewish.libsyn.com/noa-the-beauty-of-taking-up-space>

Tuesday:

- Discuss:
 - Zoom July 27th 10am-1pm PST:
- Read:
 - Simón(e) D Sun, "Stop Using Phony Science to Justify Transphobia: Actual research shows that sex is anything but binary" *Scientific American: Voices Blog* June 13, 2019: <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/voices/stop-using-phony-science-to-justify-transphobia/>
 - Dee Amy-Chinn, "Is Queer Biology a Useful Tool for Queer Theology?" *Theology & Sexuality* 15.1 (2009): 49-63 (61-63 bib.)
 - Austen Hartke, "Just As I Am: Against the odds, transgender Christians persevere" *Sojourners* June 2017: <https://sojo.net/magazine/june-2017/just-i-am>
- Watch:
 - Voicethread Lecture: "Gender is a Construct: Changing Conceptions of the Body"
 - Dr. Joy Ladin, "Ain't I A Woman?" TEDxBeacon Street, January 7, 2016: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g0K2YvvQyEw>

Wednesday:

- Discuss:
 - Zoom July 28th 10am-1pm PST:
- Read:
 - Zairong Xiang, "'adam Is Not Man: The Queer Body Before Genesis 2:22 (and after)" in *Unsettling Science and Religion: Contributions and Questions from Queer Studies*. (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2018), 183-197.
- Watch:
 - Voicethread Lecture: "Gender & Genesis: Reject Essentialism, Embrace Ambiguity"
 - The Rev. Dr. Wil Gafney, "Biblical Language for a God Who Transcends Gender" TheoEd Talks, February 20, 2020: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zLfpaRhsSUI>
 - Jericho Vincent, "Genderqueer Torah" CLGS Jewish Queeries Series Event, October 16, 2020: <https://www.clgs.org/multimedia-archive/genderqueer-torah-with-gericho-vincent-a-clgs-jewish-queeries-series-event/>

Thursday:

- Discuss:
 - Zoom July 29th 10am-1pm PST:

- Read:
 - Tat-siong Benny Liew, "Queering Closets and Perverting Desires: Cross-Examining John's Engendering and Trans-Gendering Word Across Different Worlds" in *They Were All Together In One Place: Toward Minority Biblical Criticism*, edited by Randall Bailey, et al. (Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 251-288 (Bib. 281-88)
- Watch:
 - Voicethread Lecture: "The Expansive Divine: Inclusion & Transformation"

Friday:

- Discuss:
 - Zoom July 30th 10am-1pm PST:
- Read:
 - Siobhan M. Kelly, "Multiplicity and Contradiction: A Literature Review of Trans* Studies in Religion" *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 34.1 (2018): 7-23.
- Watch:
 - Voicethread Lecture: "What Brought You Here? And Where Do You Want To Go Next?"
- Find and read 3 articles and/or chapters on theme of your choosing to present on next Wednesday and begin work on final project. Remember that the GTU reference librarians are available to help you find resources.

WEEK TWO:

- 5-minute presentation & handout due on Wednesday August 4th and Final Project due via Moodle by midnight PST on Friday August 6th

Monday:

- No zoom discussion- Research & Writing Day
 - *Optional Lecture:* Dr. Joy Ladin, "A Jewish Journey Between Genders" hosted by USF Swig Program in Jewish Studies and Social Justice, October 2, 2012:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JvOZLvcLiuA&list=PLvKFITxS5HD83yzDvT2m7zqotpWAPyNOq>

Tuesday:

- No zoom discussion- Research & Writing Day
 - *Optional Lecture:* Dr. Max Strassfeld, "(Cis)gendering Religion" hosted by Judaic Studies University of Arizona, October 19, 2017:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vVnebClyGk>

Wednesday:

- Discuss:
 - Student Presentations: Zoom August 4th 10am-1pm PST:
- Read:
 - Max Strassfeld, "Transing Religious Studies" *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 34.1 (2018): 37-53. (This is the opening article to the *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* Roundtable: Toward a Transfeminist Religious Studies that is assigned over the next two days)
 - Joy Ladin, "In the Image of God, God Created Them: Toward Trans Theology" *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 34.1 (2018): 53-58.
 - Ellen T. Armour, "Transing the Study of Religion: A (Christian) Theological Response" *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 34.1 (2018): 58-63.
- Watch:

- Voicethread Lecture: “A Whole Spectrum of Possibilities Are On The Horizon”

Thursday:

- Discuss:
 - Zoom August 5th 10am-1pm PST:
- Read:
 - Cameron Partridge, “Scotch-Taped Together”: Anti-“Androgyny” Rhetoric, Transmisogyny, and the Transing of Religious Studies” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 34.1 (2018): 68-75.
 - Judith Plaskow, “Transing and Gendering Religious Studies” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 34.1 (2018): 75-80.
 - Zohar Weiman-Kelman, “Transing Back the Texts, Queering Jewish Prayer” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 34.1 (2018): 80-84.
 - Melissa M. Wilcox, “Religion Is Already Transed; Religious Studies Is Not (Yet) Listening” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 34.1 (2018): 84-88.
 - Robyn Henderson-Espinoza, “Transing Religion: Moving Beyond the Logic of the (Hetero)Norm of Binaries” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 34.1 (2018): 88-92.
- Watch:
 - Voicethread Lecture: “*Enkyklios Paideia*: Reexamining the Paths We Have Taken Thus Far & Looking Towards The Horizon”

Friday:

- Final Discussion: Zoom August 6th 10am-1pm PST:
- Final Project Due via Moodle by Midnight PST August 6th

A selection of suggested resources related to the course material will be posted to the general section of the Moodle course page, including but not limited to the following:

- Lisa Stenmark and Whitney Bauman, “Annotated Bibliography” in *Unsettling Science and Religion: Contributions and Questions from Queer Studies*. (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2018), 265-268.
- Melissa M. Wilcox, “A Partial List of Books in Queer and Transgender Studies in Religion” and “Glossary” in *Queer Religiosities: An Introduction to Queer and Transgender Studies in Religion*. (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2021), 211- 219, and 221-226.

If you have been the victim of sexual misconduct, including sexual and gender-related: violence, assault, harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking, first get to a safe location.

SKSM encourages all members of the SKSM community to report these incidents to local law enforcement authorities and to seek medical attention as needed.

For emergencies, call 911

- Rape Crisis Center 24-hour helpline: 1-800-670-7273
- National Domestic Violence hotline: 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)
- Community Overcoming Relationship Abuse (CORA) 24-hour hotline: 1-800-300-1080
- National Sexual Assault hotline: 1-800-656-HOPE (4673)
- Trans Life Line: 1-877-565-8860 <https://translifeline.org>
- National Center for Transgender Equality: <https://transequality.org/additional-help>

Incident(s) of possible sexual misconduct against SKSM students should also be reported by emailing a written complaint to the Title IX Coordinator or by using the on-line reporting form at <https://www.sksm.edu/reporting-sexual-misconduct/> • Rev. Dr. Christopher Schelin, Title IX Coordinator; cschelin@sksm.edu.