

RELIGION, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY
UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA-LINCOLN
RELG 398-800

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Virtual Office Hours: Fridays 9:30-10:30 and by appointment

COURSE OVERVIEW

Description: This five-week online course considers how religion is used to shape, maintain, and transform gender and sexuality in the United States and beyond. We tackle questions such as: How is gender inequality maintained and challenged within religious organizations? How do religious beliefs and practices structure gender relations? How do religious institutions naturalize and privilege heterosexuality? How do LGBT people understand and interact with religious teachings about natural sex differences? We learn from many disciplines, including religious studies, theology, history and sociology, and draw heavily from scholarship that addresses the intersection of religion, gender, and sexuality from a feminist/queer theoretical perspective.

Objectives: Following the completion of this course, students will be able to:

- ✓ Explain examples of gender and sexual diversity within major religious traditions to illustrate how religion, gender, and sexuality are socially constructed
- ✓ Explain how religions have upheld, modified, and challenged gender and sexual norms in various global settings
- ✓ Distinguish the gender and sexual norms of major religious traditions across the globe
- ✓ Compare the major theoretical concepts and frameworks that scholars use to study the relationship between religion, gender, and sexuality

Required Readings: Required readings are listed in the course schedule at the end of the syllabus and include a combination of academic journal articles and book excerpts. They are available electronically through Canvas. In addition, the following book is required:

Griffith, R. Marie. 2017. *Moral Combat: How Sex Divided American Christians and Fractured American Politics*. Basic Books. ISBN: 978-0465094752

Course Format and Online Learning: This course has five modules to organize content. Each module begins on a Monday at 12am and ends the following Sunday at 11:59pm. At the end of each module, there is an exam. Each week, you will engage in a class discussion board that requires you to respond to assigned readings and the thoughts of your peers. In the last module, you will be responsible for submitting a video presentation.

GRADED ASSIGNMENTS

Overview of Grades:

	Points	Percent of Grade
Exams	500	50
Presentation	100	10
Discussion Posts	400	40
Total	1000	100%

<u>Grading Scale:</u>	A+	97-100% (970-1000 pts)	C+	77-79% (770-799 pts)
	A	93-96% (930-969 pts)	C	73-76% (730-769 pts)
	A-	90-92% (900-929 pts)	C-	70-72% (700-729 pts)
	B+	87-89% (870-899 pts)	D+	67-69% (670-699 pts)
	B	83-86% (830-869 pts)	D	63-66% (630-669 pts)
	B-	80-82% (800-829 pts)	D-	60-62% (600-629 pts)
			F	0-59% (0-599 pts)

Exams: At the end of each week, you are required to complete an exam made up of short answer and essay questions. You must answer all short answer questions (a total of 10) worth 5 points each. There are 2 essay questions and you must pick 1 (worth 50 points). Your response should be about 3 paragraphs long (400-600 words). You will be able to access the exam over a 3-day period (Friday 12am – Sunday 11:59pm), but once you start it, you must complete it within 90 minutes. Each exam is worth 10% of your overall grade. Combined, exams make up 50% of your overall grade. A grading rubric and detailed instructions are available on Canvas.

Presentation: You will prepare one virtual presentation in this class that is based on a 5-7 minute video-recorded Power Point presentation. You can sign up for a presentation topic (based on one chapter from the required book, *Moral Combat*) in the second week of class. The presentation will be posted on the discussion board in the 5th week of class, before Tuesday, August 14 at 11:59pm. More details about the presentation and its components, including the grading rubric, are available in Canvas. The presentation is worth 10% of your final grade.

Discussion Posts: Most weeks, you must complete 1 discussion post and 2 replies. The first is due on Tuesday by 11:59pm, and the 2 replies are due by Thursday at 11:59pm. All are written discussion posts, except for Week 3, when you are required to post one video response. For the first post of the week, you will be assigned a role (summarizer, concept identifier, methodologist, big picture finder, or questioner) and a reading to respond to. For the 2 replies, you must respond to the two other discussion threads. In the final week, the discussion posts will center around student presentations. More details about these posts, including the grading rubric, are available in Canvas. Combined, all discussion posts are worth 40% of your final grade.

EXPECTATIONS AND COURSE POLICIES

By attending this class, you agree to the UNL **student code of conduct** (<http://stuafs.unl.edu/dos/code>). It is your responsibility to know what constitutes academic dishonesty. The penalty for the first act of academic dishonesty will be an automatic failing grade on the assignment or exam. A second offense will result in automatic failure of the entire course. Students committing academic dishonesty may also be subject to additional university disciplinary sanction.

Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) works with students to develop **academic accommodations** to meet their needs, including for mental health disabilities such as depression and anxiety. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to provide individualized accommodations to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to fully participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. To receive accommodation services, students must be registered with SSD which is located in 232 Canfield Administration (472-3787).

I am committed to a learning environment that supports varied thoughts and perspectives and respects **diverse backgrounds and identities**. For further information regarding UNL policies in this regard, please visit <http://www.unl.edu/equity/> or call (402) 472-2322. If you feel like your experiences outside of class are affecting your performance in class, please let me know. I may be able to help find resources to support you.

Email is the best way to get in touch with me. I generally do not check or reply to emails during the evenings but will respond to your message within 24 hours. For this class (and all correspondence with college instructors), follow basic email etiquette. This means your message includes a subject, has a proper greeting (e.g. Hi Dr. Burke.), follows rules of standard written English, and has a closing (e.g. Thank you,).

Unless already approved by the instructor, **late assignments** will not be accepted. If a **technology problem** in Canvas prevents your submission of an assignment, you must contact the appropriate technical support and document that you attempted to fix the problem *in advance* of an assignment due date (this includes ticket number with timestamps, and screen shots with timestamps). It is your responsibility to ensure your online assignments are successfully submitted on time.

You are **not able to take an exam outside of the exam window**, except for extreme emergencies. You are expected to notify me as soon as possible (ideally, in advance) and provide documentation. Travel during the summer term is not considered an emergency.

If you believe **an error was made in grading an assignment or exam**, you may address the situation in a type-written memo within 48 hours of receiving your grade. For a request to be considered, you must provide relevant evidence that warrants re-grading. Please note that re-grading means that the grade on the assignment or examination may increase, not change at all, or decrease. If a student is not satisfied with the response to a request for re-evaluation of an assignment or examination grade, the student may contact the chair of Classics and Religious Studies, in writing, to detail the complaint.

READING SCHEDULE

Module 1: Patriarchy, Feminism, and Women in Religion

July 15-July 21

Daly, Mary. 1973. *Beyond God the Father* (excerpt) Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Avishai, Orit. 2008. "Doing Religion in a Secular World: Women in Conservative Religions and the Question of Agency." *Gender & Society* 22: 409-33.

Hirschkind, Charles and Saba Mahmood. 2002. "Feminism, the Taliban, and Politics of Counter-Insurgency." *Anthropological Quarterly*, 75: 339-354.

NOTE: There are 2 discussion posts and 2 replies due during this week (see Canvas for details)

Module 2: Negotiating Sexuality and Gender in Religion

July 22-July 28

O'Brien, John. 2017. *Keeping it Halal* (excerpt) Princeton, NJ: Princeton University press.

Wolkomir, Michelle. 2004. "'Giving it up to God' Negotiating Femininity in Support Groups for Wives of Ex-Gay Christian Men." *Gender & Society* 18: 735-755.

Peterfeso, Jill. 2011. "From Testimony to Seximony, from Script to Scripture: Revealing Mormon Women's Sexuality through the Mormon Vagina Monologues." *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, 27: 31-49.

NOTE: You should sign up for a chapter for your final presentation in Module 5 by Sunday, July 28 11:59pm

Module 3: Queer Religion

July 29-August 4

Bacchetta, Paola. 1999. "When the (Hindu) Nation Exiles Its Queers." *Social Text* 61: 141-166.

Gerber, Lynne. 2018. "We Who Must Die Demand a Miracle: Christmas 1989 at the Metropolitan Community Church of San Francisco." In *Devotions and Desires: Histories of Sexuality and Religion in the Twentieth-Century United States*.

Brintnall, Kent L. 2013. "Queer Studies and Religion." *Critical Research on Religion* 1: 51-61.

NOTE: One discussion reply this week should be an embedded video, rather than text (see Canvas for details)

Module 4: The Gender (Non)Binary and Religion
August 5-August 11

Taparia, Swadha. 2011. "Emasculated bodies of Hijras: Sites of imposed, resisted and negotiated identities." *Indian Journal of Gender Studies* 18: 167-184.

Burke, Kelsy. 2016. *Christians under Covers: Evangelicals and Sexual Pleasure on the Internet* (excerpt). Berkeley, University of California Press.

Strasseld, Max. 2018. "Transing Religious Studies." *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 34: 37-53.

Module 5: American Christianity and Gender/Sexual Politics
August 12-August 18

Griffith, R. Marie. 2017. *Moral Combat: How Sex Divided American Christians and Fractured American Politics*. Basic Books. (Yes, the whole book)

NOTE: Your presentations are due by Tuesday, Aug. 13, at 11:59pm. You then must post 2 replies to these presentations before Thursday, Aug. 15, at 11:59pm.