

RELIGION AND SEXUALITY IN AMERICA
an introductory undergraduate course

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The course I map here is one I have only taught in a seminar context. However, as I begin my new position at Yale, I plan to make this a staple lecture course, serving as an introductory lecture class in service of multiple institutional contexts: American Studies, LGBT Studies, Religious Studies, and Women, Gender, & Sexuality Studies. Currently, there is no course in the Yale undergraduate curriculum that treats religion and sexuality in concert; the multiple departmental locations listed indicate not only the nature of my particular appointment, but also an attempt by me to construct a foundational course that embodies the interdisciplinary nature of its object.

To prepare this syllabus, then, I have sought to meet three goals: first, to offer a substantial survey of scholarship on sexuality and American religion; second, to select readings and assign writing tasks that reflect the sort of critical thinking appropriate to a first- or second-year Yale undergraduate; and third, to suggest some of the methodological problems and classificatory opportunities enjoined by a course on religion and sexuality. The latter is, to be sure, a goal less related to pedagogy than it is to an intellectual argument, but it does explain two features of the syllabus, namely its relative disinterest in chronology and its deconstruction, through its assignment, of historical methodologies. Since it is an undergraduate introductory course, only so much can be accomplished on that end; however, I have found in a wide variety of institutional contexts that students enjoy the respect afforded them when they're asked to "follow the footnote" (as I ask in the source analyses) or "reply to the syllabus" (as I suggest by their nomination of a text). These are ground-floor enterprises in historiography, and by asking them to do so in a class including readings suspicious of history (i.e., Foucault) I seek to surface how we design our stories does, in powerful ways, name the categories (straight, gay, queer, married, single, polyamorous) to which we/they are troublingly consigned.

To accomplish the first two ambitions of the draft syllabus (constructing a 'survey' and 'select readings'), I e-mailed several other colleagues teaching analogous courses. We all do this—ask for friends' syllabi so we may ground ourselves in an alternative option—but I want to mention it here precisely because this is a field (religion and sexuality) which is, in the American context, nascent and anemic. So the people from whom I borrowed (Amy DeRogatis, Marie Griffith, Tracy Fessenden, Randall Styers, and Heather White), are not only contributing scholarship to this field but also already working to invent ways to teach this subject lacking as yet any strong textbook synthesis. I am grateful to them for their models.

Finally, I remain torn about the question of reading quizzes. I have always given them, and have always tried to treat them in a comic light. I have done this because many speak of the 'condescending' nature of quizzes. I hear this complaint, but I don't entirely respect it, since I am unsure when it became a (historical, sociological, psychological) truth that to check on whether somebody tracked the nouns in a particular piece of reading was condescending to their process as a thinker. I suppose this has something to do with our own trepidation about "facts," and our worry that students should "get more" than facts. On this point, I'll remain an ethnographer, open to change, yet committed to the idea that we're not doing much to teach them about the importance of reading if we don't, in some way, teach through examination about they're reading. Sermon over—on to the syllabus!

FALL 2009 - RLST 111a/AMST 111a/WGSS 111a
SEXUALITY AND RELIGION
Tuesday/Thursday from 11.35-12.25
(*plus* one discussion section)

Prof. Kathryn Lofton

This course seeks to answer one question: What is the sexuality of American religion? Through a series of case studies and theoretical ruminations, we will explore the relationship between ideas about sex and ideas about religion, as well as sexual practices and religious practices. The purpose of this course is to prepare you not only for upper-level work on the subjects of sexuality, religion, or American culture, but also to encourage a revamping of presumptive norms as well as an abiding suspicion of pat dichotomies.

Prof. Lofton will lecture on Tuesday and Thursday, with one additional period reserved for small group discussion sections. Office hours will be held at her office (451 College, Room 406) on Wednesdays from 11 a.m. until 1 p.m. Appointments outside of office hours must be made in advance by e-mail at <kathryn.lofton@yale.edu>

The course grade is determined as follows: two source analyses will constitute 20% of your grade; a mid-term examination will constitute 20% of the course grade; a grade for discussion section participation will constitute 15% of the course grade; a text nomination will constitute 20% of your grade; the take-home final will constitute 25% of the course grade.

source analysis

Many of the readings for this class are works of historical scholarship. A source analysis requires that you track one of the footnotes from an assigned text in order to weigh the author's usage of that source. Examples of this will be given in-class, but each source analysis needs to (a) reproduce the footnote, (b) discuss why you think they chose that material to cite, and (c) how well you estimate that usage. This will involve a visit to the library and, possibly, requisitioning material through ILL. Each source analyses will be 2-3 pages, double-spaced; you may submit one at any time, but you must submit one by November 3, and another by December 1.

text nomination

For this assignment, your task is to find a text—no less than 1,000 words in length—that might be used in this class on sexuality and religion in America. This needs to be a *primary* document, written by a member of a recognized religious community or by a writer seeking to start a new religious community. It may be published (print or online), or it might be a reproduced sermon or commentary. To receive credit for the assignment, you must submit the full citation for the document, as well as a 3-4 page justification for its choice on November 12.

Students will have one day of class devoted to investigating the library's resources, but in additions students may want to meet with a librarian for assistance with either of these assignments: e-mail librarians Kelly Barrick at kelly.barrick@yale.edu, or Emily Horning at <emily.horning@yale.edu>

There is a **course pack** for this class (available at Tyco, 262 Elm Street). The pages of those readings are indicated by their page number with an asterisk.* There are also four required books (available at the Yale Book Store): Tanya **Erzen**, *Straight to Jesus* (2006); Tracy **Fessenden**, et al, *The Puritan Origins of American Sex* (2001); Michel **Foucault**, *The History of Sexuality* (1978); and Janet R. **Jakobsen** and Ann **Pellegrini**, *Love the Sin* (2004).

- September 3** **Introduction to Sexuality and Religion**
- September 8, 10** **Gender Identity, Part I**
Reading:
James Dobson, *Bringing Up Boys*, 1-35*
Dannah Gresh, *And the Bride Wore White*, 36-68*
- September 15** **Gender Identity, Part II**
Reading:
Fausto-Sterling, “The Five Sexes”, “The Fives Sexes, Revisited”*
Mak, “The Hermaphrodite’s ‘Self’ in Medical Discourse”*
- September 17** **Defining Sexual Desire**
Reading:
Bergner, “What Do Women Want?”*
Cott, “Passionlessness: An Interpretation of Victorian Sexual Ideology”*
- September 22** **The History of Sexuality, Part I**
Reading:
Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, p. 3-91
- September 24** **The History of Sexuality, Part II**
Reading:
Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, p. 92-159
- September 29** **Rites of Sexuality**
Reading:
Peucker, “‘Inspired by Flames of Love’ Homosexuality, Mysticism, and Moravian Brothers around 1750”*
- October 1** **Beginning a History of American Religious Sexuality**
Reading:
Ingebretsen, “Wigglesworth, Mather, Starr” **and**
Schorb, “Uncleanliness Is Next to Salvation...” in *Puritan Origins*
- October 6** **The Sexuality of Nativism**
Reading:
Monk, ch. 1-3, 9, 10, 12, 16, *Awful Disclosures* (1837)
available on GoogleBooks
- October 8** **Asceticism and Onanism**
Reading:
Castronovo, “Enslaving Passions” **and**
Fessenden, “The Other Woman’s Sphere” in *Puritan Origins*
- October 13** **The Sexuality of Charisma**
Reading:
Carroll, “The Religious Construction of Masculinity in Victorian America”*
Bramen, “Christian Maidens and Heathen Monks” in *Puritan Origins*
- October 15** **MIDTERM EXAMINATION**

- October 20** **Complex Marriages, Part I**
Reading:
Selections from *Doing the Works of Abraham: Mormon Polygamy**
- October 22** **Complex Marriages, Part II**
Reading:
Selections from *Free Love in Utopia*, “Life in the Association” and
“Administration of Complex Marriages”*
- October 27** **The Sexuality of Spiritualism**
Reading:
McGarry, Introduction and Chapter 3 from *Ghosts of Futures Past**
- October 29** **LIBRARY VISIT**
Your text nomination is due on **November 12**.
Your first source analysis is due by **November 3**.
- November 3** **Sacred Spaces, Sexual Spaces**
Reading:
Humphreys from *Tearoom Trade*, 282-290*
Rushbrook, “Cities, Queer Space, and the Cosmopolitan Tourist”*
- November 5** **The Gay Evangelical**
Reading:
Derogatis, “What Would Jesus Do? Sexuality and Salvation in Protestant
Evangelical Sex Manuals”*
- November 10** **Queer Conversions, Part I**
Reading:
Erzen, *Straight to Jesus*, p. 1-125
- November 12** **Queer Conversions, Part II**
Reading:
Erzen, *Straight to Jesus*, p. 126-230
- November 17** **The Homosexual and American Religion**
Reading:
Warner, “Tongues Untied: Memoirs of a Pentecostal Boyhood”*
Ingebretsen, “Sacred Monster: Matthew Shepard,” in *At Stake* *
- November 19** **The Sexuality of Secularity, Part I**
Reading:
Jakobsen and Pellegrini, *Love the Sin*, p. ix-44
- December 1** **The Sexuality of Secularity, Part II**
Reading:
Jakobsen and Pellegrini, *Love the Sin*, p. 45-151
- December 3** **There Is No Such Thing As Free Love**
Reading:
Kipnis from *Against Love**

TERMS OF USAGE THE LOFTON CLASSROOM

It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it.

Aristotle

The need to be right is the sign of a vulgar mind.

Albert Camus

- 1.1 Your teacher speaks quickly.
- 1.2 Your teacher speaks with great bombast.
- 1.3 Your teacher does not claim to offer a “narrative” or ready “data.”
- 1.4 If 1-3 bother you, you should drop the class immediately. You are hereby making a contract not to complain about (a) the speed of your teacher’s voice, (b) the language or anecdotes laced in that voice’s speech, or (c) to ask, ever, “What’s the point?” (“Who cares?” and “So what?” and “I just don’t think it’s that complicated” are parallel idiocies.) If you know already that you cannot resist such complaining, you should retreat to other courses with slower talk, obvious facts, and clean living.

- 2.1 Progress isn’t an aspiration, it is a demand.
- 2.2 “Progress” means going from one place to a better one.
- 2.3 This means you should expect criticism and conflict.
- 2.4 Or, in the words of my farmer friend Lloyd, “You’ve got to burn the prairie.”
- 2.5 Expect to burn your prairies. Do not expect it to be always fun.
- 2.6 Even people who know 16 languages and have read the entirety of *Remembrances of Things Past* will have their prairies burned. This is the sad thing about progress: it never ends.

- 3.1 There are some tedious items that shouldn’t need to be discussed, and yet always are.
- 3.2 First, don’t plagiarize. It’s just cowardly.
- 3.3 Second, if you miss more than three days of class I will call student services and have them hunt you down and make you talk about your feelings.
- 3.4 Third, no knitting. Or laptop gaming. Or text messaging. Or dogs.
- 3.5 Finally, remember that the point is to make you upset and confused. Otherwise, what would be the point? Placid thoughts make for placid lives, my friends.