Course Description: The growing field known as “Queer Theory” focuses on destabilizing essential identity construction and foundational knowledge claims. Such essences and foundations are often housed in religious beliefs. At first glance it seems that thinkers such as Michel Foucault and Judith Butler would be nothing but inimical to the study, much less the practice, of religion. However, many scholars have begun incorporating queer theory as a fruitful lens through which to analyze religion over the past couple of decades. Furthermore, queer theory places an emphasis on the historical construction of religious ideas, values, and beliefs and their effects on human identities, bodies and the rest of the natural world. This course will explore the growing scholarship in queer theory that intersects with religious studies. Furthermore and as a result of this scholarship, there is a growing understanding of the history of “queer” identities within religious institutions and texts. The second component of the course will examine some of these queer histories. Finally, such theoretical and historical examination can be helpful in examining contemporary issues of GLBTQ identity and religion, such as understandings of family, marriage, and GLBTQ clergy. In the last section of the course some of these contemporary issues will be explored.

Objectives: This course has three main objectives: a) to introduce students to the relevant literature on queer theory and religious studies; b) to introduce students to the history of queer identities within various religious communities; and c) to introduce students to contemporary issues at the intersection of Religion and Queer Peoples.

Learning Outcomes: At the end of the course students will: a) be familiar with the basic ideas and names associated with “queer theory” as it relates to religious studies; b) be familiar with some of the history of queer identities within religious studies; and c) be able to critically analyze contemporary issues surrounding queer identities and religion in an informed way.

Course Rationale: This course will fulfill degree requirements in both Religious Studies and in the newly proposed Queer Studies Certificate by the Program on Women’s Studies.
Further more, it will be of interest to students pursuing degrees in other disciplines within the humanities, who want to gain a better grasp of the religious issues surrounding GLBTQ identities. Given the growing recognition of the rights of gay individuals, and the rejection of discrimination based upon sexuality—from the recent repeal of the military ban on open LGBTIQ service (DADT), the movement toward marriage-inclusiveness in several states and calls for the repeal of the Federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), to addressing bullying of LGBTIQ peoples on college campuses, to the recognition of more than “two” genders in many cultures around the world, and the recognition of multiple sexualities throughout histories and cultures—this course will enable students to better understand the historical, religious, and cultural aspects of sexualities in a global context. Understanding sexualities and its many manifestations is crucial in navigating issues on a local, national, and global scale.

Texts:
Jay E. Johnson and Donald Boisvert, Queer Religion: Volume 1 (2011) (required)
Kath Browne, Sally Munt, and Andrew Yip. Queer Spiritual Spaces (2012). (required)
Rosemary Ruether, Christianity and the Making of the Modern Family (2000). (required)

Requirements

Class Participation/Attendance: 20%

The first step to doing well in this class is to show up! You can’t be a part of the learning community if you are not present. If you have to be absent from the course, please notify me ahead of time. Any more than three absences (unless there are extenuating circumstances) will result in a lowering of your participation grade.

The second step to doing well in the class is to speak up during course discussions. This means you must read materials and attend lectures! I realize that we all exist on a spectrum between introversion and extroversion, but remember that the classroom is as good as all of the voices therein. We all lose if we don’t hear your voice at some point(s) throughout the semester.

The classroom is a community of learners. That is, we are all in the process of critically engaging the lectures and course materials together. Learning should be a collaborative process and it will take all of us to learn this semester. Having said that there are some ground rules that should be followed in course discussions and assignments.

1. Confidentiality: Sometimes we are exploring serious issues in the course that may be hard to speak about or give voice too. I expect that students will respect one another’s privacy in this course and allow room for this type of exploration.
2. Trust and Respect: The classroom is a learning community and it is only as good as the relationships of the people that make up the classroom. Give your classmates the benefit of
the doubt before jumping to conclusions about what is said. Also, be sure to state your opinions, questions, ideas and beliefs in a way that is not intentionally disrespectful to others in the class.

3. Academic Honesty. In all written materials, students will be expected to cite sources. Plagiarizing and “Copying” from other students may result in a failing grade. Grading for written assignments will follow the Rubric that is handed out on the first day.

4. Students should be aware of everyone in the classroom and enable each person to contribute to the conversation. Likewise, each participant should refrain from dominating class discussion.

5. In order to facilitate dialogue, on discussion days we may break out into small groups.

Reading Essays: 50%
All students will turn in a reading journal for each of the three sections of the course. It is imperative that you keep up with readings for the course so that you can contribute to the course discussions! The first journal entry will be on the “theoretical” component of religion and queer theory (due September 17th). The second journal entry will be on some “historical” component of religion and queer theory (due October 15th). Finally, the third journal entry will be on the “marriage debate” from GLBTQ perspectives. (Due November 19th).

Essay 1. In the first part of the course we explored some of the components of Queer Theory according to Michel Foucault and how Queer Theory is related to Religion and Religious Studies. In this essay, please: a) describe one major component of Michel Foucault’s History of Sexuality; b) describe how that component effects the study of religion and/or religiosity/spirituality; and c) analyze how that theory challenges your own understanding of religion/spirituality. This draft is due on September 17th, we will have in-class peer review on September 19th, the final will be due in class on September 22nd.

Essay 2: In the second part of the course, we explored the history of sexuality in some of the world religions, the history of “same-sex unions,” and the history of trans identities in some of the world’s religions. Please choose one of these general areas and: a) pick one tradition and explore the relationship of the tradition to the given area; b) pick one example within that tradition, perhaps a piece of artwork or a pericope from a historical, religious text, and analyze that in terms of how it challenges hetero-normative understandings of that tradition. Drafts will be due on turn it in by Wednesday October 15; In class peer review of journals will take place on October 17th; final essays will be due on October 24th in class.

Essay 3: In the third part of the course, we analyzed the problematic construction of “family values” and some contemporary LGBTQ “spiritualities.” Given both of these topics, the final essay will be focused on “the marriage debate” from within the LGBTQ community itself. In other words, this is not about arguments that hetero-normatively define marriage as between “a man and a woman,” but rather it is about arguments within the LGBTQ community itself. Within that community there are arguments for/against the push for marriage. Some argue that “gay marriage” is just conforming to hetero-patriarchal structures of economics, politics and power, while others argue that “gay marriage” is helping to re-define the institution of marriage. Given what you have learned in the course, choose a side of this debate and argue whether or not “gay marriage” is a conforming process or a radical political act of redefining what marriage means (or maybe somewhere in-between). Drafts of this essay will be due on November 19th; In class peer review will take place on November 21st; final essays will be due on December 1st.

Each journal entry should be 3-5 pages, typed, 1-inch margins, 12-point font, and double-spaced. For each section, you should cite information that you use, following the Chicago Manual of Style (see brief citation rules on Moodle; consult Manual in Library if necessary). This means using citations from course
reading, lecture, and discussion materials; you may also use sources outside of the syllabus, but you must use sources from the syllabus. Any type of plagiarism will not be tolerated. (See plagiarism policy below.)

Final Videos: 30%
Each student will create a final video on a topic or issue discussed throughout the course. The goal is to make a video of no more than 1.5 minutes on one of the many identities, issues, or topics we discussed in class as a type of argument for a position (as in the case of marriage) or as in a public service announcement (as in the case of understanding trans-identities or historical identities outside of the heteronormative structure). You will get a more detailed hand out on this project, but we will watch them all in the final session of our class. This is a chance for you to get as creative as you want to. No powerpoint presentations! You must choose a topic by October 20th. And the videos will be due on the date of the final for the course. We will watch these videos during the time scheduled for the final. You can check Video Recording Equipment from FIU in GL 177. They will also instruct you on how to use the equipment if you are not familiar. If you need help with the editing process you can make an appointment with Academic Video Services in GL 150. We will have a workshop on this process during the first few weeks of class.

Plagiarism Policy
This course adheres strictly to FIU’s plagiarism policy:

This Policy views plagiarism as one form of academic misconduct, and adopts the definition of the university’s Code of Academic Integrity, according to which plagiarism is:

the deliberate use and appropriation of another’s works without any indication of the source and the representation of such work as the student’s own. Any student who fails to give credit for the ideas, expressions or materials taken from another source, including internet sources, is guilty of plagiarism.

Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

1. Term papers acquired online or from other sources;
2. Copying of original material without attribution;
3. Use of other students’ work;
4. Copying and pasting, verbatim, information from Internet sources, without quotation marks and correct citation.

Plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the course and a referral to the College of Arts and Sciences Dean of Students for academic misconduct.

Grading Scale

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Schedule

Theory
Week One: August 25, 27, 29 Introduction to Queer Theory and Religion I

M: Overview of syllabus
W: Lecture
F: Writing Workshop

Reading: Foucault, 1-35
Moodle: Warner, “Queer and Then?”
Moodle: Schippert, “Queer Theory and the Study of Religion”

Week Two: September 1, 3, 5 Introduction to Queer Theory and Religion Part II

M: 9/1 Labor Day; No Class
W: Lecture
F: Reading Discussions

Reading: Foucault, 36-91

Week Three: September 8, 10, 12 Introduction to Queer Theory and Religion Part III

M: Lecture
W: Lecture
F: Reading Discussion

Reading: Foucault, 92-159
Ellen Armour and Susan St. Ville, 1-14, 48-70

Week Four: September 15, 17, 19 Introduction to Queer Theory and Religion Part IV

M: Lecture
W: Reading Discussion; Turn in Essay 1 (on Turn in in)
F: In Class Peer Review of Essay 1.

Reading: Ellen Armour and Susan St. Ville, 157-224, 252-275
History

Week Five: September 22, 24, 26 Histories of Religion and Sexuality Part I

M: Lecture (First Essay Final Draft due in Class)
W: Reading Discussion
F: Film


Week Six: September 29, October 1, October 3 Histories of Religion and Sexuality Part II

M: Lecture
W: Lecture
F: Reading Discussion

Reading: Queer Spiritual Spaces: chapters 1&2
Queer Religion, 147-190

Week Seven: October 6, 8, 10 Histories of Same-Sex Unions and Religious Responses Part I

M: Lecture
W: Reading Discussion
F: Film


Week Eight: October 13, 15, 17 Histories of Same-Sex Unions and Religious Responses Part II

M: Lecture
W: Reading Discussion (Drat of Journal 2 due on Turn it in)
F: Peer Review of Journals in class.

Reading: Online: Mark Jordan, 1-21, 100-128

Week Nine: October 20, 22, 24 Trans, Third Genders, Third Spirits: Before and after Gender Dimorphism

M: Lecture (Choose Video Topics)
W: Lecture
F: Reading Discussion (Journal 2 final due in class)

Reading: Queer Religion: 25-68,
Online: Selections
Week Ten: October 27, 29, 31: Trans, Third Genders, Third Spirits: Before and After Gender Dimorphism

M: Lecture
W: Lecture
F: Reading Discussion

**Reading:** Ellen Armour and Susan St. Ville, 15-47

*Queer Religion:* 127-146

**Contemporary Issues**

Week Eleven: November 3, 5, 7 Reconstructing “Family Values”: The Construction of the Modern Family

M: Lecture
W: Reading Discussion
F: Film

**Reading:** Ruether, 3-106

Week Twelve: November 10, 12, 14 Reconstructing “Family Values”: The Great Marriage Debate

M: Lecture
W: Lecture
F: Reading Discussion

**Reading:** Ruether, 156-230

Week Thirteen: November 17, 19, 21 Contemporary, Global GLBTQ Spiritualties

M: Lecture
W: Reading Discussion (**Journal 3 draft due on Turn it in**)
F: In-Class peer-review of Journals

**Reading:** *Queer Spiritual Spaces:* chapters 6-7.

*Queer Religion,* 113-126, 191-214;

November 24, 26, 28: No classes; American Academy of Religion Meeting and Thanksgiving week. Work on Catching up / Final projects.

Week Fourteen: December 1, 3, 5 Contemporary, Global GLBTQ Spiritualties

M: Lecture (**Journal 3 final due in class**)
W: Reading discussions
F: Course wrap up
Reading:  *Queer Spiritual Spaces*: 8-9.  
*Queer Religion*, 215-276

**Week Fifteen: Finals Week**

Final Video Projects Due at the time of our exam period. We will watch these during our exam period.