GENERAL INFORMATION

PROFESSOR INFORMATION

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Office Hours: By Appointment
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COURSE DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE

Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth—
for your love is more delightful than wine.
3 Pleasing is the fragrance of your perfumes;
your name is like perfume poured out.
No wonder the young women love you!
4 Take me away with you—let us hurry!
Let the king bring me into his chambers.
Solomon’s songs of Songs (1:2-4)

Sexuality and religion have always been intimately connected. Even in our secularized western societies, the dominant views about reproduction, gender, desire, love, power, purity, celibacy, and identity are directly informed by religion. To be sure, today’s most fervent political and cultural debates such as abortion, contraception, same-sex marriage, transgender rights, pedophilia, and, most recently,
sexual victimization lie within the perimeters of perhaps the ultimate taboo: religion and sexuality. Interestingly, whether the sacredness of religion is appropriated to approach sexuality in a beneficial or detrimental way, these two topics will forever intersect—sometimes in palpable ways, but also in ambiguous and unexpected manners.

The interest of this course is to provide a safe and broad platform to critically discuss the complex and fluid intersections between sexuality and religion. We will address urgent and perennial questions from different religious perspectives, such as what is the spiritual meaning of sexuality? Is sexuality an obstacle or a vehicle for spiritual fulfillment? Who are the voices of authority who set the sacred rules on sexuality and who gets to enforce them?

In this ambitious and interdisciplinary overview, we will analyze the intricate ways in which religion and sexuality have influenced each other over the last half century; and the variety of challenges that contemporary sexual practice and research pose to traditional religions. Moreover, the course heavily relies on the women’s movement, since it has been at the forefront of the modern struggle to redefine gender roles, human sexuality, as well as religious interpretations of these around the globe. Given that the women’s movement began in the West, there will be more scholarship available from there, although the situation is beginning to change.

Our analysis will include religions mainly from the west, such as the Abrahamic traditions, but we will also study Buddhism, Hinduism, and Mesoamerican traditions, as they have grown deep transnational roots in our cultural soil.

Note: I reserve the right to alter this syllabus if and whenever necessary.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Explain the trajectory of meanings of sex, gender and sexual orientation within western religions;
- Discuss the present status of research regarding the above; and
- Describe the challenge that the eroding paradigm of sexual dimorphism presents to two different religions, and how, given their histories and teachings, they are likely to respond.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

POLICIES

Please review the FIU’s Policies webpage. The policies webpage contains essential information regarding guidelines relevant to all courses at FIU, as well as additional information about acceptable netiquette for online courses.

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS & SKILLS

One of the greatest barriers to taking an online course is a lack of basic computer literacy. By computer literacy we mean being able to manage and organize computer files efficiently, and learning to use your computer’s operating system and software quickly and easily. Keep in mind that this is not a computer literacy course; but students enrolled in online courses are expected to have moderate proficiency using a computer. Please go to the "What’s Required" webpage to find out more information on this subject.

Please visit our Technical Requirements webpage for additional information.
ACCESSIBILITY AND ACCOMMODATION

The Disability Resource Center collaborates with students, faculty, staff, and community members to create diverse learning environments that are usable, equitable, inclusive and sustainable. The DRC provides FIU students with disabilities the necessary support to successfully complete their education and participate in activities available to all students. If you have a diagnosed disability and plan to utilize academic accommodations, please contact the Center at 305-348-3532 or visit them at the Graham Center GC 190.

Please visit our ADA Compliance webpage for information about accessibility involving the tools used in this course.

Please visit Blackboard's Commitment Accessibility webpage for more information.

For additional assistance please contact FIU's Disability Resource Center.

COURSE PREREQUISITES

There are no prerequisites for this course.

TEXTBOOK

Good Sex
Jung, Hunt, and Balakrishnan
Rutgers University Press, 2000

ISBN 10: 0813528844

You may purchase your textbook online at the FIU Bookstore.

Notes

Other material will be provided by the instructor.

EXPECTATIONS OF THIS COURSE

This is an online course, which means most (if not all) of the course work will be conducted online. Expectations for performance in an online course are the same for a traditional course. In fact, online courses require a degree of self-motivation, self-discipline, and technology skills which can make these courses more demanding for some students.

Students are expected to:

• Review the how to get started information located in the course content
• **Introduce yourself to the class** during the first week by posting a self-introduction in the appropriate discussion forum
• **Take the practice quiz** to ensure that your computer is compatible with Blackboard
• **Interact** online with instructor/s and peers
• **Review** and follow the course calendar
• Log in to the course **at least three times** per week
• Respond to discussion boards with **four days**.
• Respond to emails within one to two days maximum.
• Submit assignments by the corresponding deadline

**The instructor will:**
• Log in to the course **five times** per week
• Respond to discussion boards, blogs, and journal postings within **two days**.
• Respond to emails within one to two days maximum.
• Grade assignments within two days of the assignment deadline

**TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF THIS COURSE**

- Follow up all on-line classes
- Read all the required reading for each class session.
- Present all required written papers on dead line.
- Take all quizzes and Exams Start your essays early
- Communicate with the instructor through Blackboard with any questions or concerns you have
- Utilize FIU’s academic resources and services; be proactive!
  - Library- [http://library.fiu.edu/](http://library.fiu.edu/)
  - Center for Excellence in Writing- [http://casgroup.fiu.edu/writingcenter/](http://casgroup.fiu.edu/writingcenter/)
  - Online writing resource- [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/)

**COURSE DETAIL**

**COURSE COMMUNICATION**

Communication in this course will take place via Email. Make sure to use the email provided on this syllabus: **SLOND006@FIU.EDU**

The Email feature is an external communication tool that allows users to send emails to users enrolled within the course. Emails are sent to the students’ FIU email on record. The Email tool is located on the Course Menu, on the left side of the course webpage.

Visit our [Writing Resources webpage](http://casgroup.fiu.edu/writingcenter/) for more information on professional writing and technical communication skills.

**DISCUSSION FORUMS**

Keep in mind that your discussion forum postings will likely be seen by other members of the course. Care should be taken when determining what to post.

**Discussion Forum Expectations:**
Discussions topics are listed for the semester. You are expected to post your initial response on Wednesday by 23:55 for the week listed; you should respond to at least 3 others posts by Sunday at 23:55 of the same week. (Possible total score, 10 points). Thus, by the end of the week you should have a total of four posts on your thread.

Students are encouraged to post current event articles or multimedia that they find relevant with the topic of the week to support their argument. This will ensure a better grade.

The approximate length of a response (100 words, 10 lines).

Grades will be available within two days of your final post on Sunday.

ASSESSMENTS

In order to mitigate any issues with your computer and online assessments, it is very important that you take the "Practice Quiz" from each computer you will be using to take your graded quizzes and exams. It is your responsibility to make sure your computer meets the minimum hardware requirements.

Assessments in this course are not compatible with mobile devices and should not be taken through a mobile phone or a tablet. If you need further assistance please contact FIU Online Support Services.

Quizzes

There will be a total of 13 quizzes. These quizzes won’t affect your grade, but are meant to help the students process the readings and study for the midterm and final. The questions for both exams will be drawn from the quizzes.

- Each quiz will have a total of 10 questions to be answered in a total of 15 minutes.
- The student can take the quiz for up to three times.
- The quizzes will be available every Friday at 10:00 AM until Monday 23:59.

Exams

Midterm and Final exam are both online, time-restricted examinations periods. Each exam will have a total of 20 objective questions based on the readings and videos. You will have 30 minutes to complete the exams. Exams will not be cumulative.

Answers will be available immediately after exam, showing all of the questions and answers.

In order to mitigate any issues with your computer and online assessments, it is very important that you take the “Online Learning Practice Quiz” from each computer you will be using to take your graded exams.

ASSIGNMENTS
There are two writing Assignments (Book Review and the Term Paper) that you must submit through Turnitin.

**Book Review**

The book review should be 3-4 double-spaced pages and no more than one half page should be devoted to detailing the content of the book. The review must be on one of the books in the following list. Secure your book now—in the library or a bookstore or online. Don’t wait until you have to take library leftovers.

- Rosemary Ruether, *Sexism and God Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (Beacon, 1983)
The term paper may be on any one of the following topics. I will also entertain student suggestions for term paper topics.

1. The bioethics debate around sexual morality: roles of genetics and reason.
2. The coming of modern democracy as the harbinger of changing sexual morality.
3. How artistic and popular culture portrayal of female divinity figures influence our understanding of gender relations.
4. Equality for women and the authority of scripture. (Focus on a particular religion.)
5. Christian theology and the quest for women’s equality.
6. The ends of sex in _____ and ______ (choose two well-known religious thinkers who have written extensively on the topic).
7. GLBQT members and ministers: analyze the current state of acceptance in two Christian denominations.
8. Judaism and homosexuality.
9. Islam: identifying the barriers to women’s religious, familial and social equality. (Best choose a particular Muslim nation or it can get too complicated.)

Use footnotes or endnotes, and identify the style manual you are using on the title page at the bottom. Papers should be 13-16 double-spaced pages, excluding notes.

Assignment Expectations:
All written work must be typed, double-spaced, and in 12-point font (written work submitted in large font will not be acceptable); and any citations should follow MLA format. These papers must be submitted by the deadline.

The Final Grade will be determined by a totally of points scored throughout the semester. These points will be converted into percentages [that is, Points scored by student/total number of points [200] x 100]. Please keep printed copies of all assignments and graded material. If you cannot produce your class material in a grade dispute, the grade recorded in the instructor's grade book will take precedent. Students are required and responsible for all assigned text readings and material from Canvas. Students are expected to check the Announcement and Assignment sections of Canvas for this class at least every other day. Students who take this course are expected to have the skills necessary to complete all assignments. Essay Assignments must not be sent as attachments to the professor. They must be posted through the Turnitin link. I will not grade them if you send them to me as attachments. If you have computer technology questions during the semester, you should contact the FIU Computer Help Desk.

- Provide clear guidance on the expectations and requirements
- Due dates are provided on the schedule below.
- Submit through Turnitin.com.
- Rubric for all written work (including instructions on how to write a book review) will be provided on content area.
- Grades for written work will be available within five days of due date.
- Review the detailed Turnitin instructions on how to submit your assignments and how to review the Grademark comments (feedback) from your professor.

**Late Papers:** Late papers will be penalized by the loss of one letter grade (e.g., A to A-) for every day late. This does not apply to serious illness, hospitalization, or death in the family, when supported by acceptable evidence. Talk to me before the due date.

### GRADING

**Notes about grading...**

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Module 1- Human Sexuality and Religion

March January 8-14

Supports Learning Objectives:

- Understanding the course procedure and basic theoretical concept of the study of sexuality and religion.
- Methods, sources and concepts to study sexuality from a religious studies perspective.
- Discussion on key concepts to understand sexuality as separate constructed concept from sex.
- Establish and recognize major methodological challenges in the study of sexuality and religion.

Tasks:

- Read Chapter one “Perspectives on sexuality; Sex research: methods and problems; Gender issues in Our Sexuality, Crooks and Baur.
- Read Rosemary Ruether Ch 4, in Sexism and God Talk.
- **Discussion Board:** First post due on Wednesday at 23:59. Second part of your posts due Friday 23:59.
  - **A. Introduce yourself on Discussion board.** It is important to create a strong community so please share with us a little about your background.
  - Include a picture of you.
  - Major and academic interests.
  - Something interesting about you outside of academia (this can be a hobby, a trip, a talent, etc.)
  - What are your expectations for the class? Let us know if you have a particular curiosity about the topic that you are looking forward to exploring.
The U.S. is a country that is obsessed with religion and sexuality, yet, paradoxically, there is rampant illiteracy on both topics. Taking this into consideration amid current events, discuss why it is important to recognize the intricate relationship between religion and sexuality. Give an example of how our society has been affected by maintaining religion and sexuality a taboo subject.

- Quiz 1 available Friday
- Video Clip:
  - The Body- Art through time: A Global view Click here- content available on FIU online Library

Module 2- Religious and Cultural Interpretation of Sexuality

January 15 -21

Supports Learning Objectives:

- Understanding a) the symbiotic dynamic between religion and culture. B) How the values and believes shape our approach to sexuality
- Identify the consequences of Medieval Catholic thought on women and sexuality.
- Recognize the role of feminist readings of Catholicism as a transformational force toward human rights.

Tasks:

- Read Chapter 11- Good Sex- Hunt
- Recommended: Cutrara,“Sex and religion on screen” in Wicked Cinema
- Discussion board: First post due on Wednesday at 23:59. Second part of your posts due Friday 23:59.
  - Discuss some of the theological and biological justifications that rendered men as logical and spiritual and women as inferior transgressors of the flesh and pleasure. How influential is this rhetoric today in different cultures? What kind of arguments have feminists used to challenge this view?
- Quiz 2 available Friday
- Video Clip:
  - Alma Lopez- Our Lady of Controversy (Chicana Art of Guadalupe)
  - Recommended film – The Sound of Music 1965
Module 3- Construction of Sexuality: Identity and Social Relationship/ Responsibility
January 22 -28
Supports Learning Objectives:

- Evaluate the role sexuality and religion in the shaping of social relations and its consequences today.
- The complex relationship between the Christian construct of sexuality and ethics.
- Intimate ethics and its reflection on social ethics.

Tasks:


  - Discussion board: First post due on Wednesday at 23:59. Second part of your posts due Friday 23:59.
    - Discuss why sexuality needs to be reconstructed from a religious perspective before there can be a meaningful cultural and political transformation? Cite an argument that can make the sacralizing of responsible sexual ethics possible?

- Quiz 3 available Friday

- Video Clip:
  - "Like a Girl" - Always – 2014
  - How movies teach manhood - TED
  - “Yes, God, Yes” – Short Film by Karen Maine

Module 4- The [Assigned] Functions of Sexuality
January 22 -28
Supports Learning Objectives:

- Recognize the propagation of reproduction as the ultimate goal for sexuality.
- Identify the official Catholic position on the religious value of procreation.

Tasks:

- Read Gudorf, "Ending Procreationism" (Chapter Two in Body, Sex and Pleasure: Reconstructing Christian Sexual Ethics (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1994).
- Patricia Miller, “Playing Politics” (Chapter 9, Good Catholics: Abortion in the Catholic Church)
Discussion board: First post due on Wednesday at 23:59. Second part of your posts due Friday 23:59.

- From the readings and your own experience, analyze the impact that the religious functional argument has had on women and families? What role should religious organizations and the state play in defining the purpose of sexuality?

Quiz 4 available Friday

Video Clip:
- Article – Mother Jones- How the Vatican Almost Embraced Birth Control
- In a Just World: Contraception, Abortion, and Family Planning
- TED- A history of Marriage
- Recommended Series: The Handmaid's Tale

Module 5- Religions and Homosexuality
February 5-11
Supports Learning Objectives:
- Understand the role of religions in legitimizing the normative view of sexuality as binary.
- Recognize the inherent fluidity of sexuality and its multiple expressions in welcoming and/or oppressive settings.

Tasks:
- Elizabeth Bucar, “Bodies at the Margins: The Case of Transsexuality in Catholic and Shia Ethics.”
- Silvia Marcos, “Beyond Binary Categories, Mesoamerican Religious Sexuality,” Chapter four, In Religion and Sexuality in Cross-Cultural Perspective)

Discussion board: First post due on Wednesday at 23:59. Second part of your posts due Friday 23:59.

- Considering the readings, how do policies and boundaries on gender as either “male” OR “female,” affect social and religious integration of the LGBTQ communities into the mainstream society? What are some alternative views from which the U.S. can benefit from?

Quiz 5 available Friday

Video Clip:
God and the Gay Christian: The Biblical Case in Support of Same-Sex Relationships- Vines

Recommended Film – Eyes Wide Open 2009

- **Module 6- Sexual Development and Sexual Pleasure**
  February 12-18
  Supports Learning Objectives:
  - Identify how androcentric religious views affect the idea and practice of sexual pleasure.
  - Understand the conflict between the experiential and the theoretical religious proscriptions for good sex.

  Tasks:
  - Read Good sex, Chapters 1,6.
  - **Discussion board:** First post due on Wednesday at 23:59. Second part of your posts due Friday 23:59.
    - Discuss how the devaluation of sexual pleasure affect women more than men? How are Christianity and Islam similar and/or different in this regard?
  - Quiz 6 available Friday

  - **Video Clip:**
    - TED- 10 Things you didn't know about orgasm
    - TED- What young women believe about their own sexual pleasure

  - **Assignment Due:** Book Review/ February 18th, at 23:59.

- **Module 7- Sex in Hinduism/Gender**
  February 19-25
  Supports Learning Objectives:
  - Understand the paradoxes of sensuality and sexuality within Hinduism.
  - Recognize the use of the sacred as a justification for seclusion and exclusion from the public sphere.
  - Compare the pious view of the goddess versus the cultural view of womanhood.

  Tasks:
  - Read Anantananand Rambachan, "A Hindu Perspective.” from John C. Raines and Daniel Maguire, Eds. What Men Owe to Women: Men’s Voices from World Religions
• **Discussion board:** First post due on Wednesday at 23:59. Second part of your posts due Friday 23:59.
  
  o Analyze how the paradoxical attitudes toward women in Hinduism help buttress her exclusion from the public sphere by “enshrining” her? How does the author’s interpretation of Hindu scriptures help unveil the intrinsic value of Indian women?

• **Quiz 7 available Friday**

• **Video Clip:**
  
  o Meet the Patels – View introductory clip (Available on Netflix)
    
  
  o Article – Aljazeera 'Bruised goddesses' hurt Indian feminists
  
  o Article – NYT Missing: 50 million Indian girls

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**Module 8- Midterm**

February 26- March 4

Tasks:

• Midterm – This online exam covers material from week one to week 7. **You will be answering 20 objective questions in 30 minutes.**

• The exam will be available on assessments from Thursday, March 1 at 23:59, until Sunday March 4th at 23:59.

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**Module 9- Sexual Abuse and Commercial Sex**

March 5-11

Supports Learning Objectives:

• Understanding a) women’s bodies as imaginary geographies where cultures negotiate ideas of purity and defilement. And b) the religious challenge to present women as inherently valuable members of society beyond their desirability and reproductive abilities.

Tasks:

• Read Good Sex, Chapter 10

• Rosemary Ruether, excerpt from Sexism and God Talk in Course content.
• **Discussion board**: First post due on Wednesday at 23:59. Second part of your posts due Friday 23:59.
  - Analyze how the romanticized commercial presentation of female bodies as fragmented parts make women more vulnerable toward sexual abuse? How is this predicament present in the Chinese culture?

• **Quiz 8 available Friday**

• **Video Clip**:
  - Missrepresentation – (also available on Netflix)
  - NPR- On Point - #metoo
  - Rape: It's your Fault (AIB)

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**Module 10- Spring Break**
March 12-18

University not open. No classes

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**Module 11- Sexual Problems / Sex in Judaism**
March 19-25

**Supports Learning Objectives**:
- Understand the relationship between patriarchy in the heavens and patriarchy on earth.
- Analyze the reasons for female exclusion from religious leadership positions.
- Identify the transformations catapulted by feminist movements within Judaism and its growing momentum today.

**Tasks**:
- Read Good Sex, Chapters 9

• **Discussion board**: First post due on Wednesday at 23:59. Second part of your posts due Friday 23:59.
  - Considering the Abrahamic patriarchal paradigm, what kind of challenges does a female rabbi represent? Can we trace the marginalization of women in politics back to the marginalization of women from leadership positions in the sacred space?

• **Quiz 9 available Friday**

• **Video Clip**:
Module 12- Motherhood and Parenthood
March 26- April 1

Supports Learning Objectives:

- Identify the many ways in which motherhood is a pillar of identity for women.
- Explore the role of nurturing and care as central sacred experiences among women.

Tasks:

- Good Sex chapter 7
- Susan Sered, "Maternity and Meaning" (Chapter 3, Susan Starr Sered, Priestess, Mother, Sacred Sister: Religions Dominated by Women. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.)

Discussion board: First post due on Wednesday at 23:59. Second part of your posts due Friday 23:59.

- Based on the readings, discuss the significance of motherhood as the means for power and powerlessness for women. Choose an example from one of the traditions presented by the author.

- Quiz 10 available Friday
- Video Clip:
  - The pill - between religion and politics
Module 13- Sex as Distracting/Sex as Spiritual Training
April 2-8

Supports Learning Objectives:
- Understand the Buddhism position toward sexuality as both, the means and obstruction toward liberation.
- Explore the broad connections between sexuality and the gendered notions of salvation.

Tasks:
- Read Good Sex, Chapters 8

- Discussion board: First post due on Wednesday at 23:59. Second part of your posts due Friday 23:59.
  - How does Buddhism’s open canon inform its ambivalent views on sexuality and enlightenment? Based on this ambivalence toward sexuality, give an example of the potentials and disadvantages for Buddhist nuns and lay women seeking enlightenment.

- Quiz 11 available Friday

Module 14- Sex in Islam
April 9-15

Supports Learning Objectives:
- Understand the process and authorities of Islamic interpretation of the Qur’an.
- Identify how fundamentalists religious views are fueled by the demonization of sexuality, and how women’s bodies and garments become the primordial target to enforce puritan rules.
- Recognize egalitarian religious education as an essential pillar toward healthy sexual ethics.

Tasks:
- Read Ziba Mir Hosseini, "The Construction of Gender in Islamic Legal Thought"
- Good Sex, Chapters 2

- Discussion board: First post due on Wednesday at 23:59. Second part of your posts due Friday 23:59.
  - What role does sexuality play in the fundamentalist social paradigm? Cite an example of how Islam provides for an egalitarian view of the sexes that challenges the unsustainable fundamentalists stance.

- Term Paper Due- Sunday, April 8 23:59 through turnitin.
Module 15- The Present-Future of Religion and Sexuality
April 16-22

Supports Learning Objectives:

- Understanding the weight of the history of sexuality within the different religious contexts,
- And specifically, the place of women in receiving and challenging the ethics framed by patriarchal traditions
- Identify the body as an instrument of bonding and of destructive sexual believes and practices.

Tasks:

- Read Gudorf, “Mutuality in Sexual Pleasure as Normative” (Chapter Five of Body, Sex and Pleasure) in Course content.

- Discussion board: First post due on Wednesday at 23:59. Second part of your posts due Friday 23:59.
  - As your final remarks, in what ways can the feminist theological arguments on sexuality advance the cause of egalitarianism in our society? Lastly, how has the course changed your ideas and attitude toward sexuality?

- Quiz 13 available Friday
Module 16- Final Exam
April 23-29

Tasks:

• Complete final exam online. You will be answering 20 objective questions in 30 minutes. This exam is not cumulative and it will cover material from week 9 onward.
  
o Exams will be available on the assessment section on canvas from Monday, April 23rd until Wednesday, April 25th at 23:59.

Grades available Wednesday, May 2nd/ 2018.