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 LGBTQI identity and religion, such as understandings of family, marriage, and LGBTQI 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 Queer Studies Certificate by Women’s and Gender Studies Program.
Furthermore, 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 LGBTQI identities. Given the growing recognition of the rights of gay individuals, and the rejection of discrimination based upon sexuality—from the repeal of the military ban on open LGBTIQ service (DADT), the movement toward marriage-inclusiveness in many countries and 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* (2011) (required)
- Other selected readings provided online.

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: 60%**

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 February 6th). The second journal entry will be on some “historical” component of religion and queer theory (due Thursday March 15). Finally the third journal entry will be on the “marriage debate” from GLBTQ perspectives. (Due Thursday April 26th).

**Essay 1:** In the first part of the course we explored some of the components of Queer Theory and how Queer Theory is related to Religion and Religious Studies. In this essay, please: a) describe one major theoretical component of Queer Theory; 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 is due on February 6th.

**Essay 2:** In the second part of the course, we explored the history of sexuality, the history of “same-sex unions,” and the history of trans identities in some of the world’s religions. Please choose one of these three topics and: a) explore the topics relationship to the given religious tradition; b) chose an artifact within that tradition—which a piece of artwork or a pericope from a historical, religious text—that can be used to support non-heteronormative interpretations of the given tradition. This will be due Thursday, March 15th.

**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). This essay will be due on the date listed for our final, April 26th.

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 Presentation: 20%
In the second essay of the class, you highlighted a non-heteronormative artifact from a religious tradition. This presentation, during the last week of class April 17 and April 19, will be based upon that pericope, poem, painting, ritual, place and/or thing. The point of this is to present to the class the history of the artifact, and how it is used to deconstruct heteronormativity and/or to promote LGBTIQ identities within the tradition. Each student will have 5-7 minutes to present his/her artifact.

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 January 9/11: Introduction to Queer Theory and Religion I

T: Overview of syllabus
Th: Lecture

Reading: Queer Religion, “Introducing Queer Religion”
Bloomsbury, part 2, chapters 1-3

Week Two January 16/18: Introduction to Queer Theory and Religion Part II

T: Lecture
Th: Reading Discussions

Reading: Queer Religion, v II, Chapters 1 and 11
Bloomsbury, part 3, chapter 1-2.

Week Three January 23 /25: Introduction to Queer Theory and Religion Part III

T: Lecture
Th: Reading Discussion

Bloomsbury, part 1, chapter 1-2.

Week Four January 30 / February 1: Introduction to Queer Theory and Religion Part IV

T: Lecture
Th: Reading discussions

Reading: Queer Religion, v II, chapter 8
Online article.

History

Week Five February 6 and 8: Histories of Religion and Sexuality Part I
Week Six February 13 and 15: Histories of Religion and Sexuality Part II

T: Lecture
Th: Reading Discussion

Reading: Queer Religion, v. I, chapters 1-2
Bloomsbury, part 1, chapters 5 and 6; part 2, chapter 7

Week Seven February 20 and 22: Histories of Same-Sex Unions and Religious Responses Part I

T: Lecture
Th: Reading Discussion

Bloomsbury, part 2, chapter 8;

Week Eight February 27 and March 1: Histories of Same-Sex Unions and Religious Responses Part II

T: Lecture
Th: Reading discussions

Reading: Reading online.

Week Nine March 6 and 8: Trans, Third Genders, Third Spirits: Before and after Gender Dimorphism

T: Lecture
Th: Reading Discussion

Bloomsbury, part 3, chapter 5.

Week Ten March 13 and 15: Trans, Third Genders, Third Spirits: Before and After Gender Dimorphism

T: Lecture
Th: Lecture

Reading: Queer Religion, v II, chapter 9
Online reading.
Second Essay due on Thursday, March 15th

Contemporary Issues

Week Eleven March 20 and 22: Reconstructing “Family Values”: The Construction of the Modern Family
T: Lecture
Th: Reading Discussion

**Reading:** Ruether online

Week Twelve March 27 and 29: Reconstructing “Family Values”: The Great Marriage Debate
T: Lecture
Th: Reading Discussion

**Reading:** Ruether online.

Week Thirteen April 3/5: Contemporary, Global GLBTQ Spiritualties
T: Lecture
Th: Reading Discussion

**Reading:** *Queer Religion*, v I, chapters 9-12
Bloomsbury, part 2, chapter 6 and 9.

Week Fourteen April 10/12: Contemporary, Global GLBTQ Spiritualties
T: Lecture
Th: Reading discussions

**Reading:** *Queer Religion*, v II, chapters 3-5, and 12.
Bloomsbury, part 3, chapters 3, 7, and 8.

Week Fifteen: April 17/19 Final presentations in class
T: Final presentations
Th: Final presentations and course wrap up

No extra readings.

Week 16: Finals Week

**Final essays are due on Thursday, April 26th by 11:59pm.**