

REL 125

## **Religion and Sexuality**

Spring 2017

Tues/Thurs 12:30-1:50

Dai Newman

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Office Hour: Thursday 2-3pm and by appointment  
514 Hall of Languages

This course explores cases from around the contemporary world to raise questions about what kind of identities are possible when religion and sexuality overlap. While religion is often viewed as constraining sexuality, we will challenge this notion to consider the creative engagements various communities have adopted to cope with competing demands. We will look at and struggle through different ways of dividing or crossing the gender spectrum, various kinship structures, and religiously-motivated celibacy. In each unit we will come together to reshape our assumptions about both religion and sexuality. Our primary question is: What kind of life can a person live in light of their religious and sexual desires and demands?

### **Course Objectives**

Throughout the course, students will

- a. Explore how religion, sexuality, and gender intersect in the contemporary world
- b. Learn how distinct political, geographical, and cultural settings complicate and construct notions of “religion” and “sexuality”
- c. Develop critical skills for reading and thinking about difference and identity

### **Texts**

Baker, Elna. *The New York Regional Mormon Singles Halloween Dance*. Plume, 2010 (0452296498)

Popenoe, Rebecca. *Feeding Desire: Fatness, Beauty, and Sexuality Among a Saharan People*. Routledge, 2004 (0415280966)

Ramberg, Lucinda. *Given to the Goddess: South Indian Devadasis and the Sexuality of Religion*. Duke University Press, 2014 (9780822357247)

Stacey, Judith. *Unhitched: Love, Marriage, and Family Values from West Hollywood to Western China*. NYU Press, 2012 (0814737854)

Wolkomir, Michelle. *Be Not Deceived: The Sacred and Sexual Struggles of Gay and Ex-gay Christian Men*. Rutgers, 2006 (081353822X)

Young, Antonia. *Women who Become Men: Albanian Sworn Virgins*. Bloomsbury, 2001 (1859733409)

## Course assignments

### *Quizzes (20%)*

For each book, we will have a brief quiz on one of the days at the start of class. These will include around 6 multiple choice or short answers questions. The quiz dates will not be announced and cannot be made up. However, the lowest quiz score will be dropped.

### *Reading Logs and Questions (25%)*

For class dates with an asterisk, you will have a reading log due at the beginning of class. Bring a printed copy of your log to class. Each log entry should present your reflections on the reading for that date (about 250 words) and one or two questions the reading left you with. Reflections are not summaries, but rather what about the chapters challenged you, caused you to wonder, or otherwise seems noteworthy for shaping your thinking. The questions should not be fact-based and easily answered but more theoretical in nature. They should be the type of question that could spark discussion. I may ask you to share your questions to launch our class discussion.

### *Take home exams (40%)*

You will have two take home essay exams. These will test your ability to think critically and synthetically about the works we read. Each exam will have three essay questions, of which you must pick two and write approximately 750 words each (3 pages double spaced) for a total of 1500 words. Questions will be handed out in class on Tuesday and due the following Saturday by 12noon. They should be emailed to [dnewma03@syr.edu](mailto:dnewma03@syr.edu).

**Send your file as a pdf with the filename REL125\_YOURLASTNAME.**

### *Participation (15%)*

Attendance and active participation in class discussions are expected and required. More than two unexcused absences will result in a loss of 3 points per absence from your final grade. Please inform me as soon as possible if you have to miss class. There will be opportunities for large class discussions and smaller group discussions.

*Late work will be penalized 10% per day late and not accepted more than one week after it was originally due.*

Note: In a class dealing with sexuality, there is a possibility of readings and discussions that make you uncomfortable. Some discomfort is productive. Our conversations need to be open to following difficult trajectories but also aware of possible sensitivities. Please come speak with me if you feel we are not achieving an appropriate balance.

Your final grade will be assigned per the following scale.

A	93-100	B-	80-82	D	60-69
A-	90-92	C+	77-79	F	below 60
B+	87-89	C	73-76		
B	83-86	C-	70-72		

### **Use of Electronic Devices:**

I strongly prefer that any notes are taken by hand with paper and pen/pencil. However, students with an ODS accommodation or other prior approval may use a computer. If using a computer, you must sit in the assigned section. Inappropriate use will result in loss of privileges. There is never a reason for you to have your phone out during class time. Disregard for these rules will result in you being marked absent for the day.

### **Reorientations**

#### Week 1

1/17 Tues: Introduction, syllabus

1/19 Thurs: Fausto-Sterling, "Dueling Dualism"

#### Week 2

1/24 Tues: Foucault, "Scientia Sexualis"

1/26 Thurs: Sedgwick, "Queer and Now"

### **Modes of Marriage and Kinship**

#### Week 3 *Given to the Goddess*

1/31 Tues: Introduction, 1

\*2/2 Thurs: 2-3

#### Week 4: *Given to the Goddess* (cont)

2/7 Tues: 4-5

2/9 Thurs: 6

#### Week 5: *Unhitched*

2/14 Tues: Intro, 1-2

\*2/16 Thurs: 3-4

#### Week 6: *Unhitched* (cont.)

2/21 Tues: 5 & conclusion

2/23 Thurs: "A Marriage of Necessity: The Return of Polygamy to Central Asia in the Aftermath of Democratization."

### **Sex Lives of Celibates**

#### Week 7: *Be Not Deceived*

2/28 Tues: BND, 1-3

\*3/2 Thurs: BND, 4-5

#### Week 8: *Be Not Deceived* (cont.)

3/7 Tues: BND, 6-7

*take home questions distributed*

3/9 Thurs: BND, 8-9

**Take Home Exam due by Sat Mar 12 by noon**

### ***Spring Break (Mar 12-19)***

Week 10: *The New York Regional Mormon Singles Halloween Dance*

3/21 Tues: up to 142

3/23 Thurs: to end

### **Making & Remaking Bodies**

Week 11: *Feeding Desire*

3/28 Tues: Prologue, 1-2

\*3/30 Thurs: 3-4

Week 12: *Feeding Desire* (cont.)

4/4 Tues: 5-7

4/6 Thurs: 8-9

Week 13: Intro, *Women Who Become Men*

4/11 Tues: Butler, "Doing Justice to Someone"

4/13 Thurs: WWBM, preface, 1-2

Week 14: *Women Who Become Men* (cont.)

\*4/18 Tues: WWMB, 3-5

4/20 Thurs: WWMB, 6-8

Week 15: *Be Like Others* (documentary viewed in class)

4/25 Tues

4/27 Thurs

Week 16: Wrap up

5/2 Tues

*take home questions distributed*

**Take Home Exam due by Sat May 6 at noon**

### **Academic Integrity Policy**

Syracuse University's academic integrity policy reflects the high value that we, as a university community, place on honesty in academic work. The policy defines our expectations for academic honesty and holds students accountable for the integrity of all work they submit. Students should understand that it is their responsibility to learn about course-specific expectations, as well as about university-wide academic integrity expectations. The university policy governs appropriate citation and use of sources, the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments, and the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verification of participation in class activities. The policy also prohibits students from submitting the same written work in more than one class without receiving written authorization in advance from both instructors. The presumptive penalty for a first instance of academic dishonesty by an undergraduate student is course failure, accompanied by a transcript notation indicating that the failure resulted from a violation of academic integrity policy. The presumptive penalty for a first instance of academic dishonesty by a graduate student is suspension or expulsion. SU students are required to read an online summary of the university's academic integrity expectations and provide an electronic signature agreeing to abide by them twice a year during pre-term check-in on MySlice. For more information and the complete policy, see <http://academicintegrity.syr.edu/>.

### **Disability-Related Accommodations**

If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), <http://disabilityservices.syr.edu>, located in Room 309 of 804 University Avenue, or call (315) 443-4498, TDD: (315) 443-1371 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. ODS is responsible for coordinating disability-related accommodations and will issue students with documented Disabilities Accommodation Authorization Letters, as appropriate. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact ODS as soon as possible.

### **Religious Observances Notification and Policy**

SU religious observances notification and policy, found at <http://hendricks.syr.edu/spiritual-life/index.html>, recognizes the diversity of faiths represented among the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holidays according to their tradition. Under the policy, students are provided an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance provided they notify their instructors before the end of the second week of classes for regular session classes and by the submission deadline for flexibly formatted classes.