

REL/WMS 180.J

REL/WMS 180.J: Marriage, Family, and Religious Values: A Multicultural Approach

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"The two edifices upon which God has founded a civilized society are, after all, property and marriage." - Merivale, *Summary Proclamation of Saint Etheldeveda's Festival*, 1873

Objectives

This class explores some of the fundamental presuppositions about and experiences of marriage in selected Western and nonWestern cultures. Many studies of marriage focus on prescriptive literatures, especially religious and legal documents which interpret marriage as a set of normative rules and attitudes to be pursued for the sake of such goals as legitimate property-transfer and social harmony. Other studies approach the subject of marriage more quantitatively, surveying attitudes and practices among various communities. This class draws upon these interpretative studies but takes the study of marriage in a somewhat different and more accessible direction. Rather than explore descriptions of marriage as an ideal or normative institution, this class will look at marriage from less normative perspectives. We will examine stories, and narrated explanations of life experiences in which the flaws and inequalities of the normative, idealized constructions of marriage are revealed as well as their enduring strengths.

Readings for Purchase:

Cushman, Karen. *Catherine, Called Birdy* (Clarion Books, 1994).
Brooks, Geraldine. *Nine Parts of Desire: The World of Islamic Women* (Doubleday, 1995).
Freeman, Judith. *Red Water: A Novel* (Pantheon Books, 2002).
Sullivan, Andrew. *Same-Sex Marriages, Pro and Con: A Reader* (Vintage, 1997).
Woodworth, Deborah. *Death of a Winter Shaker* (Avon Books, 1997)
REL/WMS 180.J Sourcebook (abbr =SB), available for purchase at the Oxford Copy Shop

Requirements, and how I will evaluate your work

Participation (10%) This is a judgment about your level of engagement based on the quality of (a) your comments in class and (b) your responses to the comments of others both in class and the form of postings to the class list-serve. Your participation will be evaluated at the end of the semester (with opinions from other members of the class being solicited through an anonymous procedure).

Homework (20%) I will assign a number of short writing assignments, sometimes in-class and sometimes out-of-class.

Research on Assigned Materials (30%) Present to the class what you have learned from your reading of assigned materials (on reserve) while leading discussion of shared reading materials. At least 24 hours before your presentation, you should post discussion questions to the list-serve.

Research on Nonassigned Materials (40%) Deliver at the end of the semester a presentation on nonassigned material. At the time of the presentation, you should distribute a bibliography of works consulted and an outline of your final paper. Your final paper should be informed by the work of the class in the following ways: (a) It should focus on an aspect of marriage in some culture that can be sufficiently documented, (b) It should be informed by the thoughts and bibliographic wisdom of other class members, where relevant. You should begin posting ideas about possible presentation topics early in the semester so that classmates and the instructor can help you assess the researchability of the topics you are considering.

How I would like you to evaluate my work As often and as actively as possible. That is to say that I'd like to hear your comments on the syllabus, the readings, the discussion, etc. throughout the semester and not just at the end of class, when you will fill out written evaluations of the class. I would encourage you use the list-serve as a place to comment on how the discussions are going and what would make them better, the quality and accessibility of the readings, etc. I won't take it personally if you have negative things to say. When students give me advice on how to make the class better, I'm *always* flattered that you care enough about the work of the class to comment on it.

Class Schedule

M 1-7 Introduction

W 1-9 Using the Class List-serve and Other Computer-based Research Tools: class meets for special session with Religion Librarian

READ: The first half of Cushman, *Catherine, Called Birdy*

Part 1: Marriage in the Service of Dominant Cultures

M 1-14 Marriage in Medieval Europe

READ: The second half of Cushman, *Catherine, Called Birdy*

- Come to class prepared to discuss the roles of various family members in decisions about whom Catherine will marry and when.

W 1-16 Marriage in Early Modern Europe

READ: SB 1

FILM: Kenneth Branagh's "Romeo and Juliet"

_____ TO REPORT ON: Ann Jennalie Cook, *Making a Match: Courtship in Shakespeare and His Society*, Ch. 4 (on reserve)

M 1-21 No classes: MLK Day

W 1-23 Pre-Islamic and Early Islamic Marital Customs

READ: Brooks, *Nine Parts of Desire*, pp. 1-54

_____ TO PREVIEW AND REPORT ON: "Warrior Marks" (Association for Women Students, 9-5122)

M 1-28 Polygamy and Other Islamic Marital Customs

READ: Brooks, *Nine Parts of Desire*, pp. 55-106

_____ TO REPORT ON: Judith Tucker, "The Arab Family in History" (on reserve)

_____ TO REPORT ON: Beth Baron, "The Making and Breaking of Marital bonds in Modern Egypt" (on reserve)

W 1-30 Contemporary Muslim Gender Codes

READ: Brooks, *Nine Parts of Desire*, pp. 107-118, 143-182

_____ TO PREVIEW AND REPORT ON: "A Veiled Revolution" V-039V

M 2-4 Contemporary Hindu Marriages

READ: SB 2

_____ TO REPORT ON: Susan Wadley, “Hindu Women’s Family and Household Rites in a North Indian Village” in *Unspoken Worlds: Women’s Religious Lives in NonWestern Cultures* (on reserve)

W 2-6 Mythic Paradigms for Hindu Marriage

READ: SB 3

_____ and _____ TO COLLABORATE IN REPORT ON: Julia Leslie, “Suttee or Sati? Victim or Victor?” (on reserve)

_____ TO REPORT ON: Holly Baker Reynolds, “The Auspicious Married Woman”

M 2-11 Marriage in China

READ: SB 4

_____ TO REPORT ON: Nancy Riley, “Interwoven Lives: Parents, Marriage, and Guanxi in China” *Journal of Marriage and the Family*

Part 2: Celibacy and the Creation of Counter-Cultures

W 2-13 Buddhist Depictions of Marriage as a ‘Man-Trap’

READ: SB 5

_____ TO REPORT ON: Susan Murcott, *The First Buddhist Women: Translations and Commentary on the Therigatha*, pp. 3-56 (on reserve)

M 2-18 Presidents Day, no classes

T 2-19 Class meets on Tuesday because this Tuesday is secretly a Monday

Celibate Christians in the Early Church

READ: SB 6

_____ TO REPORT ON: Elizabeth A. Clark, “Ascetic Renunciation and Feminine Advancement: A Paradox of Late Ancient Christianity” (on reserve)

W 2-20 No class (in exchange for attending the research symposium)

Start reading *Death of a Winter Shaker*

Friday February 22nd, attend at least one panel session at the *Race, Gender, Class, Sexuality: The Power of Intersectionality* research symposium

M 2-25 Shaker Celibacy

READ: SB 7 and *Death of a Winter Shaker*

_____ TO REPORT ON: Louis Kern, *An Ordered Love*, Chapter 5 (on reserve)

Part 3: Marriage in the Service of NonMainstream Religious Groups

W 2-27 Marriage in the International Society of Krishna Consciousness

READ: SB 8

_____ TO REPORT ON: Burke Rochford, "Family Formation, Culture, and Change in the Hare Krishna Movement" ISKCON Communications Journal 5 (1997) and "Women in ISKCON," ISKCON Communications Journal 8 (2000) (on reserve)

_____ TO REPORT ON: According to Religious Principles: A Guide to Sexual Relations in a Krishna Conscious Marriage (ISKCON Education, 1994) and Burke Rochford and Jennifer Heindlin, "Child Abuse in the Hare Krishna Movement" ISKCON Communications Journal 6 (1998) (on reserve)

M 3-4 Marriage in the Rev. Moon's Unification Church

READ: SB 9

_____ and _____ and _____ TO COLLABORATE IN REPORT ON: Nansook Hong, *In the Shadow of the Moons: My Life in the Reverend Sun Myung Moon's Family* (on reserve)

W 3-6 Mormon Marriages

READING: Freeman, *Red Water*, pp. 3-149

_____ TO REPORT ON: Raymond Lee Muncy, *Sex and Marriage in Utopian Communities*, Ch 9 (on reserve)

_____ TO REPORT ON: Jessie Embry, *Mormon Polygamous Families*, Chs 6, 9, and 10 (on reserve)

3-11 through 3-15 no classes due to SPRING BREAK

M 3-18 Mormon Marriages

READING: Freeman, *Red Water*, pp. 263-324

_____ TO REPORT ON: Kern, *An Ordered Love*, Ch. 9 and Julie Dunfey, "Living the Principle of Plural Marriage," *Feminist Studies* 10 (1984) (on reserve)

_____ TO REPORT ON: Lawrence Foster, "Puritan Polygamy: Brigham Young and the Institutionalization of Mormon Polygamy, 1844-1852" (on reserve)

_____ TO REPORT ON: Daniel K. Judd, "Commitment Making: Mate Selection Processes among Active Mormon American Couples," *The Mormons and the Law: the Polygamy Cases* (on reserve)

W 3-20 Oneida Complex Marriages

READ: SB 10

_____ TO REPORT ON: Kern, *An Ordered Love*, Chs. 11-12 (on reserve)

M 3-25 Same-Sex Marriage

READ: Sullivan, *Same-Sex Marriages*, pp. 3-45

_____ and _____ TO COLLABORATE IN REPORT ON: Paula Jackson, "What Does the Bible Say About Being Gay?" (on reserve)

W 3-27 Same-Sex Marriage

READ: Sullivan, *Same-Sex Marriages*, pp. 46-85

_____ TO REPORT ON: Jim Hanges, "The Problem of Homosexuality and the Church: A Presentation of One Church's Struggle with the Issue" (on reserve)

_____ TO REPORT ON: Sullivan, *Same-Sex Marriages*, pp. 273-94

M 4-1

Final Reports