

REL 426/526

Gender, the Body, and Sexuality in Early Christianity

MW, 14:00-15:20

Professor: Dr. Stephen Shoemaker

Office: 813 PLC ; Office Hours: MW 3:30-4:30 (or by appointment) Telephone: 346-4998; Email: sshoemak (at) uoregon (dot) edu

Course Description

The early Christians developed several highly sophisticated understandings of the body, each of which impacted and was impacted by certain constructions of gender and sexuality. The purpose of this class is to introduce students to the various notions of gender, the body, and sexuality found in the earliest Christian traditions. The course's main emphasis will be on the cultural construction of these three interrelated categories in early Christian literature. We will focus on how and why certain Christian texts sought to normalize certain constructions of gender, the body, and sexuality, and how these three discourses were constructed in close relation to one another. At the same time, we will also attempt to recover alternative constructions that have survived the establishment of dominant discourses, both in order to manifest the repressed diversity of the early Christian tradition and also to highlight the choices made as "orthodox" views of the body, gender, and sexuality were constructed.

Requirements

1. Preparation of reading assignments prior to class and active participation in seminar (30% of grade).
2. Each student will be responsible for initiating class discussion during one session. Students will be expected to summarize the main points of the readings for that class and raise specific issues from the material for class discussion (20% of grade).
3. A research paper or comparable project (ca. 8-10 pgs.; 12-15 pgs. for graduate credit) due 12/6, 1:00 PM. Topics to be chosen in consultation with the instructor (50% of grade).

Textbooks:

Required

- Ross Kraemer and Mary Rose D'Angelo, *Women and Christian Origins*. (Oxford Univ Press; ISBN: 0195103963)

- Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body*. (Yale University Press; ISBN: 0300081723)
 - Judith Perkins, *The Suffering Self: Pain and Narrative Representation in the Early Christian Era*. (Routledge; ISBN: 0415127068)
 - Peter Brown, *The Body and Society* (Columbia University Press: 0231061013)
- Numerous other items are to be found online. Please print them out and bring them to class.

Course Outline

Week 1

9/27 Introduction

- Peter Berger, “Religion as World Construction,” from *The Sacred Canopy* ([Blackboard](#))
- Selected Bible Passages ([MS Word](#)) ([HTML](#))

9/29 Gender, Body, and Sexuality in the Pre-Christian Mediterranean World

- Brown, ch. 1
- Martin, preface & ch. 1
- Perkins, Introduction

Week 2

10/4 Women and Gender in the Jesus Movement

- Kraemer, ch. 6 & 8
- [Matthew](#) 1-2, 27-28; [Mark](#) 5, 15-16; [Luke](#) 1-3, 10:38-42, 24; [John](#) 2, 4, 11:1-12:8, 19-20

10/6 Women and Gender in the Pauline Churches

- Kraemer, ch. 9 & 10
- [Romans](#) 16; [1 Corinthians](#) 7, 11:2-16, 14:26-40; [Galatians](#) 3; [Philippians](#) 4; [Philemon](#)

Week 3

10/11 Conflicts at Corinth: Hierarchy and the Resurrected Body

- Martin, ch. 2 (pp. 38-47), 3 (pp. 69-76), 5 & 6
- [1 Corinthians](#)

10/13 Conflicts at Corinth: Sex, Desire, and Pollution

- Martin, ch. 7, 8, & 9

Week 4

10/18 The Struggle for the Pauline Legacy

- Kraemer, ch. 11 & 13

- [*The Acts of Paul and Thecla*](#)
 - [1 Timothy](#)
- 10/20 Women, Sex, and Gender in the Apocryphal Acts
- Perkins, ch. 5
 - Andrew S. Jacobs, “A Family Affair: Marriage, Class, and Ethics in the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 7 (1999): 105-38 ([Blackboard](#))
 - [*The Acts of John*](#) (selections)
 - [*The Acts of Peter*](#) (selections)

Week 5

10/25 Feminine Images of the Divine in Gnostic Christianities

- Kraemer, 257-73
- Karen King, “Sophia and Christ in the *Apocryphon of John*,” *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism*, 158-76. ([Blackboard](#))
- [*Apocryphon of John*](#)
- [*The Reality of the Rulers \(Hypostasis of the Archons\)*](#)

10/27 Mary Magdalene and the “Gnostic Mary”

- Kraemer, ch. 5 and pp. 273-82
- [John](#) 19 & 20
- [*The Gospel of Philip*](#)(selections)
- [*The Gospel according to Mary*](#)
- [*The Pistis Sophia*](#) (selections)

Week 6

11/1 Range of Early Christian Views on Marriage & Sex

- Clement, *On Marriage (Stromateis, III)*, ch. 1-10 (pp. 40-72) ([Blackboard](#))
- Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 26. ([Blackboard](#))
- Justin the Gnostic, *The Book Baruch*. ([Blackboard](#))
- Jorunn Jacobson Buckley, “Transcendence and Sexuality in *The Book Baruch*,” *Female Fault and Fulfilment in Gnosticism*, 3-19. ([Blackboard](#))
- Jorunn Jacobson Buckley, “Libertines or Not: Fruit, Bread, Semen, and Other Bodily Fluids in Gnosticism,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2 (1994): 15-31. ([Blackboard](#))

11/3 “Homosexuality” and the Bible

- John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*, 91-117 ([Blackboard](#))
- Dale B. Martin, “Heterosexism and the Interpretation of Romans 1:18-32,” *Biblical Interpretation* 3 (1995): 332-55 ([Blackboard](#))
- Dale B. Martin, “Arsenokoites and Malakos: Meanings and Consequences,” in *Biblical Ethics & Homosexuality: Listening to Scripture*, 117-36 ([Blackboard](#))
- J. Albert Harrill, “The Use of the New Testament in the American Slave Controversy: A Case History in the Hermeneutical Tension between Biblical Interpretation and Christian Moral Debate” and “Epilogue” in *Slaves in the New Testament: Literary, Social, and Moral Dimensions*, 165-96. ([Blackboard](#))

Week 7

11/8 “Homosexuality” and Early Christianity

- John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*, 119-69 ([Blackboard](#))
- Bernadette Brooten, *Love Between Women: Early Christian Responses to Female Homoeroticism*, 314-36 ([Blackboard](#))
- [The “Secret” Gospel of Mark](#)
- John Chrysostom, [Against the Opponents of Monastic Life 3](#)
- [Coptic Spell for a Man to Obtain a Male Lover](#)

Optional:

- Charles W. Hedrick, “[The Secret Gospel of Mark: Stalemate in the Academy](#),” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 11 (2003): 133-45.
- Gedaliahu A. G. Stroumsa, “[Comments on Charles Hedrick’s Article: A Testimony](#),” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 11 (2003): 147-53.
- Bart D. Ehrman, “[Response to Charles Hedrick’s Stalemate](#),” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 11 (2003): 155-63.

11/10 The Martyred Body

- [The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas](#)
- Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, [The Martyrdom of St. Domnina and Daughters](#)
- Perkins, ch. 1, 4, & 8

Week 8

11/15 The Body in the Desert

- Brown, ch. 11 & 12
- [Sophronius of Jerusalem: Life of our Holy Mother Mary of Egypt](#)
- Paphnutius of the Desert, [Life of St. Onnophrios](#)

11/17 Women & the Ascetic Life

- Brown, ch. 13
- Jerome, [Letter 54](#) & [Letter 108](#)
- Elizabeth A. Clark, “Ascetic Renunciation and Feminine Advancement: A Paradox of Late Ancient Christianity,” *Ascetic Piety and Women’s Faith*, 175-208. ([reserve](#))

Week 9

11/22 NO CLASS – Instructor attending AAR/SBL conference

11/24 NO CLASS – Thanksgiving

Week 10

11/29 Augustine & the Moderation of Ascetic Ideals

- Augustine Selections on Marriage and Sexuality ([Blackboard](#))
- Brown, ch. 19

12/1 Conclusion: Cultural Construction of Gender, the Body, and Sexuality

- Elizabeth A. Clark, "Ideology, History, and the Construction of Women in Late Ancient Christianity," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2 (1994): 155-184. ([Blackboard](#))
- Elizabeth Clark, "Holy Women, Holy Words: Early Christian Women, Social History, and the 'Linguistic Turn,'" *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6 (1998): 413-30 ([Blackboard](#))
- Kraemer, ch. 14
- Dale Martin, "Conclusion: The Space of Scripture, the Risk of Faith," in *Sex and the Single Savior*, 161-85 ([Blackboard](#))