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

• 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*

**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](#))

11/3 “Homosexuality” and the Bible
- John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality,* 91-117 ([Blackboard](#))
- Dale B. Martin, “Arsenokoites and Malakos: Meanings and Consequences,” in *Biblical Ethics & Homosexuality: Listening to Scripture,* 117-36 ([Blackboard](#))
Week 7

11/8 “Homosexuality” and Early Christianity
- John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*, 119-69 (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:


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

- Kraemer, ch. 14
- Dale Martin, “Conclusion: The Space of Scripture, the Risk of Faith,” in *Sex and the Single Savior*, 161-85 ([Blackboard](Blackboard))