

840:346 Sexuality in the Western Religious Traditions
Fall, 2010
TTh6

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Shape of the course: This course is designed to explore the central ideas and problems in the main line of the western Christian (Catholic and Protestant) and Jewish normative traditions on sexuality. At the same time, the course is also meant to provide a view, from the particular perspective offered by the ethics of sex, into how these major western religious traditions deal with ethics in general.

About two-thirds of the course will follow the development of the core traditions from their biblical and classical beginnings up to now. The final third will take up several special problems posed by conflict between the traditions and contemporary culture. There will be an exam in the form of what I call a directed paper (you can think of it as a take-home essay test) at the one-third mark, September 23, and at the two-thirds mark, October 26. A third directed paper will be assigned the last week of class and be due during the final exam period (December 22) in lieu of a final exam. It will cover the last third of the course as well as reflecting the course as a whole.

All SAS faculty have been asked to remind their students of the University policy on academic integrity. These papers are to be your own work, based on the readings assigned for the course and on class lectures and discussions. There are serious sanctions for cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty. The full policy on academic integrity is available at <http://TeachX.rutgers.edu/integrity/index.html>.

Readings for the course: You should buy the following books, which have been ordered at the University Bookstore in Ferren Mall: Rachel Biale, Women and Jewish Law; Lisa Sowle Cahill, Between the Sexes; and Thomas C. Fox, Sexuality and Catholicism, as well as the coursepak containing other assigned readings for the course.

A day-by-day schedule of topics and readings follows on the next two pages.

Part I: Early Shaping of the Western Religious Traditions on Sexuality

9/2: First day of classes. Orientation to the course. The biblical roots of the traditions on sexuality. Read: excerpts from Genesis (Coursepak).

9/7: Sources and shape of the Jewish tradition. Read: Feldman, Chapter 1 (Coursepak).

9/9: The Christian tradition: questions of interpretation.
Read: Cahill, Chapters 1, 2.

9/14: The Jewish and Christian traditions: interpreting the biblical record.
Read: Cahill, Chapters 3-4, Fuchs, Chapter III (Coursepak), Biale, Introduction and Chapter 1.

9/16: Biblical vs. classical concepts of love and their relation to sexuality. Read: Nygren, Part One, Chapter One, I, Chapter Two, II (Coursepak).

9/12: Early Christian treatments of sexuality. Read: Fuchs, Chapter IV, pp. 86-128 (Coursepak).

9/23-28: Augustine's synthesis: the coalescence of a fundamental attitude. Read: Ramsey, "Human Sexuality in the History of Redemption" (Coursepak). First directed paper assigned 9/23, due 9/30.

Part II: Paradigms and Challenges from the Medieval to the Modern Periods

9/30: The Middle Ages: Christian tradition. Read: Cahill, Chapter 6. First directed paper due.

10/5: The Middle Ages: Judaism. Read: Guberman, "'To Walk in All His Ways': A Kabbalistic Sexual Ethic," and Maimonides, Code, The Book of Women, selections (both in Coursepak).

10/7: The impact of the Reformation on Christian understandings of sexuality: 1) early and general. Read: Fuchs, Chapter IV, pp. 135-71 (Coursepak); Cahill, Chapter 7.

10/12: The impact of the Reformation: 2) The Puritan movement and debate over the nature of marriage and human sexual relations. Read: Johnson, Chapter I (Coursepak).

10/14: The stabilizing of the paradigm: alternative versions. Judaism. Read: Feldman, Chapters 3-5 (Coursepak); Biale, Chapters 2-3.

10/19: The stabilizing of the paradigm: alternative versions. Protestantism. Read: Fuchs, Chapter V (Coursepak).

10/21: The stabilizing of the paradigm: alternative versions. Catholicism. Read: Pius XI, Christian Marriage (Casti Connubii), Parts I and II (Coursepak).

10/26: Working within the normative paradigms. Read: Cahill, Chapter 8; Biale, Chapter 5.
Second directed paper assigned, due 11/4.

Part III: Applying and Challenging the Normative Paradigms
in Contemporary Culture. Several Problem Areas.

10/28-11/4: Divorce and remarriage. Read: Biale, Chapter 3; Fox, 299-310; Christian Marriage, 27-33, Documents of Vatican II, “Fostering the Nobility of Marriage and the Family,” and Thielicke, Chapter III D (last three in Coursepak). Contemporary counterpoint: to be distributed (TBD below).

No class 11/2. Second directed paper due 11/4.

11/9-11: Contraception. Read: Thielicke, Chapter IV A (Coursepak); Biale, Chapter 8, or Feldman, Chapter 12 (Coursepak); Fox, Chapter 3.

11/16-18: Abortion. Read: Biale, Chapter 9, or Feldman, Chapters 14-15 (Coursepak); Thielicke, Chapter IV B (Coursepak); Fox, Chapter 4.

11/23-25: No class.

11/30-12/2: Homosexuality. Read: Fuchs, pp. 215-19 or Thielicke, Chapter IV D (both in Coursepak); Biale, Chapter 7; Fox, Chapter 5.

12/7: New reproductive technologies. Read: Cahill, Sex, Gender, and Christian Ethics, Chapter 7, and Spitz, “Through Her I Too Shall Bear a Child,” Journal of Religious Ethics vol. 24.1 (Spring 1996), pp. 65-97 (both in Coursepak).

12/9: Last class day. Reprise and review as needed. Third directed paper assigned, due no later than the period of the final exam for this course as per the course schedule—December 19, between 8:00 and 11:00. This paper should be sent as an e-mail attachment to jtj@rci.rutgers.edu. Please send the paper as a Word (*.doc), WordPerfect (*.wpd), or RTF (*.rtf) file. If you use another word processor than Word or WordPerfect, please save and send your paper in one of the listed formats, or I won't be able to open it.