RLG235H1 – Religion, Gender and Sexuality
University of Toronto
Summer 2015
Lectures: Tuesdays and Thursdays 4-6 pm

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 3-4 pm, or by appointment

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will explore gender and sexuality cross-culturally in the historical and contemporary contexts of various religious traditions, both as they are conceived of and practiced on the ground by individuals, partners, families and communities. Divided into three thematic sub-sections and with the lenses of the major religious traditions (including First Nations), the course will explore such interwoven topics as women, choices to refrain from sex, control of sexuality/gender-relations, sacralized sexuality, gender fluidity, sexual health, and erotic imagery. Topical readings will consist of academic materials from fields such as anthropology, ethnography, sociology, as well as textual and health studies. As such, students both in the Humanities and the various Health Sciences will find this course of interest. Lectures will also include short excerpts from relevant primary sources in the form of religious texts.

Given the subject-matter of this course, students will read, listen, speak and write about religious, gendered and/or sexual identities, emotions and practices. No student will ever be required to reveal their own identities, orientations, emotions or practices, but such may well occur if someone so chooses. U of T as an institution and myself as an instructor and LGBTQ2S ally are committed to ensuring a safe learning environment for all students and,

as such, students in this class are required to treat diversity with respect and maturity. We are to objectively and critically analyze the topics at hand, not individuals.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES

Introducing students to various theoretical and methodological approaches to the studies of religion, gender and sexuality and their interrelationships.

Providing opportunities for students to reflect on how the intersecting conceptions and activities of religion, gender and sexuality operate in people's lives individually and as members of communities, families and partnerships.

Providing opportunities for students to reflect on how various types of power dynamics (personal, interpersonal, institutional) affect gender and sexuality among religious and cultural groups.

Providing opportunities for students to creatively develop critical analysis and writing skills.

III. METHODS OF EVALUATION

10% In-class written reflection
20% Mid-term test
10% Paper outline
20% Major paper
20% Video project
20% Exam
Extra credit opportunity (optional): Visit a local religious community space or event to observe gender as it plays out in administration, teaching, ritual, membership interactions etc. and write a 2 page report (up to 5% extra credit).

EVALUATION
Because everyone learns differently and have various styles of expression, I think it is important to similarly provide various means for performance evaluation, the result of which are numbered grades. I feel strongly that making any one method of evaluation extremely weighty may place an undue burden on students, and we all learn better with a relaxed mind. This is the logic behind having 6 evaluative tools, one of which not being in written format, as well as providing an opportunity to earn some extra points to make up for some loss of points elsewhere. This is not to diminish the importance of writing: as this is a 2nd year university course I expect all written assignments to be of high calibre with proper spelling, grammar, structure and citations. If you are at all concerned about your writing, I suggest accessing U of T's Writing Centre. They have opportunities for writing improvement and also offer editing assistance. I have utilized their services myself and highly recommend it for everyone because we can all improve our writing!

In-class written reflections (10 minutes per class):
During the last 10 minutes of each class, time will be spent writing a couple of paragraphs expressing your thoughts on the readings and lecture. Bring a writing utensil and paper to

each class (and clearly write your name and student number at the top). The topics of this course might be new to you (which is quite fine as I do not expect expertise in any area except writing) and this exercise will help you kickstart writing on the subject-matter at hand. *Highlight the key take-away points, issues you are fascinated or concerned with, and questions you may have.* I will take the 10 best scores out of 11 in lieu of a participation mark, and these in-class assignments will track attendance (there will be a sign-in sheet for the final class). In one of your written reflections I will ask you to write 1-2 sentences about your paper project (topic and thesis ideas) to get the ball rolling on your essay and to allow you to get some feedback.

Mid-term test (1 hour):
This will take place in-class for the 2nd hour after an hour-long lecture. It will consist of *multiple-choice and short-answers* and cover reading and lecture material up until the class prior to the test.

Paper outline (1-2 pages):
I suggest starting to think about your paper *right away* so that by the time the deadline for the paper outline comes around, a couple of weeks before the paper deadline, you have a very specific topic and a robust framework for the flow of the paper. This will help with both time-management and the quality of the essay. The outline will include your topic and some semblance of a thesis statement, as well as most (if not all) of your sources (at least 3). I will give elaborate feedback on all aspects of the outline, including approving the topic, and may well suggest a meeting with me during office hours if I feel that some in-person support with preparing for the paper would be helpful. In my experience, preparing an outline, receiving feedback and heeding advice for improvements ultimately makes for a stronger essay!

Major paper (5-7 pages):
Choose any ONE religious tradition, even one not covered in the readings, and a specific issue of focus related to gender or sexuality. You may also choose up to TWO religious traditions for comparison on your issue of interest, but this might be more challenging in achieving depth in the allotted space. Choose a **unique argument** for your thesis-statement. As this is a research paper, this means taking a stand and demonstrating a clear position based on your reading. Choosing to write on "Religion, Gender and Sexuality in X" is unacceptable. Having no citations is also unacceptable. You *must* utilize 5 secondary academic sources, meaning **journal articles** or **books** (many/most of which can easily be accessed digitally). If you use primary sources, such as religious scriptures, they can only be *in addition* to the 5 secondary sources. Web pages, encyclopedias and textbooks are not to be used as sources. I will discuss citations and formatting in-class but it is required to use one of these two Humanities citation/formatting-styles according to U of T standards:
(1) Traditional Endnotes or Footnotes with Superscript Numbers
http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/documentation
(2) MLA System: Parenthetical Author-Page References
http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/documentation?start=1
Please do not include extra pieces of paper for a title page or a blank end page as this wastes paper. Please also do not use colour or graphics as this wastes ink and distracts from marking.

Video/Images project: (**3-5 minutes**):
This assignment is meant to be taken seriously with students spending some thought, time and effort on its creation, but it also involves much creativity and enjoyment! Using either video or static images (or a combination of both), students will create a unique montage using at most 5 borrowed images lasting no more than 25% of the presentation time, with the rest being video or photography done by yourselves. This visual micro-essay should have a clear beginning, middle and end and attempt to demonstrate a particular point of interest in the intersection of Religion, Gender and Sexuality. For those that do not have video-editing software, a PowerPoint presentation is also acceptable. Sound is not required, but can be added to the presentation if desired. Students may work on the project individually or in groups of 2 or 3 maximum. For group-work, each member will have to submit a few sentences attesting to the extent of each student's participation in the project (including their own) and this will be taken into consideration in the grading. We will view the presentations as a class on the last day and attendance is mandatory.

V. COURSE TEXTS

All readings will be available in PDF format on Blackboard.

VI. PRELIMINARY SCHEDULE OF LECTURES & READINGS

PART I: Empowerment and Disempowerment

WEEK 1: Introduction & Women in Religion

Class 1: Tues. May 12
Introduction: What are Religion, Gender and Sexuality?
No readings.

Please watch these 5 short videos before the first class (total length: 27:24):
Religion
"Introduction to Religious Studies" 11:32
Prof. Lloyd Pietersen (Professor, Theology)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nWEwtPkPSEo
Gender
 "Your Behaviour Creates Your Gender." 3:01
Prof. Judith Butler (Philosopher, Gender Theorist)
 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bo7o2LYATDc
Sexuality
"Human Sexuality is Complicated..." 3:49
A fun video by the Vlogbrothers
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xXAoG8vAyzI
"How does cultural discourse influence homosexuality?" 1:06
(This is the question posed to Prof. Butler…
the actual title of the video is misleading, I feel…)
Prof. Judith Butler (Philosopher, Gender Theorist)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3VqvCndtYCg

Scene with Al Pacino as Roy Cohn in "Angels in America" 7:56
(Adapted from Tony Kushner's award-winning plays about social, sexual, religious and other
issues facing 1980s America as the AIDS crisis gains momentum)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=98fBiOVEcyI

Class 2: Thurs. May 14
Ordination and Education of Women

1) Tomalin, Emma. "Buddhist Feminist Transnational Networks, Female Ordination and
Women's Empowerment." *Oxford Development Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 2, June 2009: 81-
100.

2) Abukari, Abdulai. "Education of Women in Islam: A Critical Islamic Interpretation of the
Quran." *Religious Education* Volume 109 (Issue1) 2014: 4-23

PART II: Austerity and Subversion

WEEK 2 Religiously Motivated Choices to Refrain from Sex

Class 3: Tues. May 19
Celibacy

1) Dorr, Donal. "Celibacy." *The Furrow* Vol. 55, No. 3 (Mar., 2004): 138-144.

2) Olivelle, Patrick. "Celibacy in Classical Hinduism." In *Celibacy and Religious Traditions*
Carl Olson (Ed.). Oxford Scholarship Online, 2007: 1-13.

Class 4: Thurs. May 21
Abstinence

1) Browning, Melissa. "Acting Out Abstinence, Acting Out Gender: Adolescent Moral
Agency and Abstinence Education." *Theology & Sexuality* 16.2 (2010): 143-161.

2) Bersamin, Melina M. PhD et al. "Promising to Wait: Virginity Pledges and Adolescent
Sexual Behavior." *Journal of Adolescent Health* Volume 36, Issue 5 (2005): 428-436.

3) Landor, Antoinette and Leslie Simons. "Why Virginity Pledges Succeed or Fail: The
Moderating Effect of Religious Commitment Versus Religious Participation." *Journal
of Child and Family Studies* Volume 23 (Issue 6) 2014: 1102-1113.

WEEK 3 Religious Control of Sexuality/Gender-relations and Sacralized Sexuality

Class 5: Tues. May 26
Marriage & Homosexuality

1) Lehmann, David and Batia Siebzehner. "Power, Boundaries and Institutions: Marriage
in Ultra-Orthodox Judaism." European Journal of Sociology / Archives
Européennes de Sociologie, Volume 50, Issue 2 (2009): 273-308.
(Just Read: 273-277, 284-291, 298-306)

2) Hodge, David R. "Epistemological Frameworks, Homosexuality, and Religion: How
People of Faith Understand the Intersection between Homosexuality and Religion."
Social Work 50.3 (Jul 2005): 207-18.

Class 6: Thurs. May 28 (1 hr Mid-term test after lecture)
Tantra

Biernacki, Loriliai. "Sex Talk and Gender Rites: Women and the Tantric Rite of Sexual
Union." *Renowned Goddess of Desire: Women, Sex, and Speech in Tantra.* Oxford
University Press, 2007: 61-91.

PART III: Normativity and Performativity

WEEK 4 Bending Gender in Religion

Class 7: Tues. June 2
Gender Fluidity

1) Torjesen, Karen Jo. "Martyrs, Ascetics and Gnostics: Gender-crossing in Early
Christianity." *Gender Reversals and Gender Cultures: Anthropological and Historical
Perspectives.* Ramet, Sabrina P. (Ed.) London: Routledge, 1996: 79-91.

2) Humes, Cynthia Ann. "Becoming Male: Salvation Through Gender Modification in
Hinduism and Buddhism." *Gender Reversals and Gender Cultures: Anthropological and
Historical Perspectives.* Ramet, Sabrina P. (Ed.) London: Routledge, 1996: 123-137.

Class 8: Thurs. June 4 (paper outlines due)
Third Gender

1) d'Anglure, Bernard. "The 'Third Gender' of the Inuit." *Diogenes* Volume 52 (Issue 4)
2005: 134-144.

2) Hossain, Adnan. "Beyond Emasculation: Being Muslim and Becoming Hijra in South
Asia." *Asian Studies Review* 36.4 (2012): 1-13.

WEEK 5 Sexual Health & Religion

Class 9: Tues. June 9
Sex Reassignment

1) Bucar, Elizabeth and Faegheh Shirazi. "The 'Invention' of Lesbian Acts in Iran: Interpretative Moves, Hidden Assumptions, and Emerging Categories of Sexuality." *Journal of Lesbian Studies* Volume 16, Issue 4: 416-434.

2) Ishak, Mohd and Sayed Haneef. "Sex Reassignment Technology: The Dilemma of Transsexuals in Islam and Christianity." *Journal of Religion and Health* Volume 53 (Issue 2) 2014: 520-537.

Class 10: Thurs June 11 (papers due)
Reproduction

Bhattacharyya, Swasti. *Magical Progeny, Modern Technology: A Hindu Bioethics of Assisted Reproductive Technology.* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2006. (Read Ch. 2 & 3, pages 29-62)

WEEK 6 Erotic imagery

Class 11: Tues. June 16
Erotic Religious Art

Alles, Gregory D. "A Fitting Approach to God: On Entering the Western Temples at Khajurāho." *History of Religions* Vol. 33, No. 2 (1993): 161-186.

Class 12: Thurs. June 18 (final class!)
Video Presentations

IV. COURSE POLICIES

Assignment Submission and Deadlines

All assignments (except informal writing exercises undertaken in class) are to be submitted both in hardcopy form in-class and electronically via Blackboard. Late assignments will be penalized by 3% per day, and will not be accepted beyond a week after the assignment deadline.

Students petitioning for extensions due to illness will be required to submit a University of Toronto "Verification of Student Illness or Injury" Form (see below).
http://www.illnessverification.utoronto.ca/

Extenuating circumstances leading to disruptions in attendance or coursework must be discussed with the instructor as soon as possible after they arise.

Email

When communicating with the course instructor or teaching assistants by email, please make sure to:

- carefully inspect Blackboard and the course syllabus to verify that the answer to your query isn't already readily available
- use your utoronto email account (to ensure your email isn't misidentified as junk mail)
- include the course code in your subject heading
- allow up to 48 hours for a responses

Accessibility

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. Please feel free to approach the instructor or Accessibility Services so we can assist you in achieving academic success. Students requiring accommodation for accessibility purposes should make sure to register with Accessibility Services as soon as possible to facilitate the accommodation process.

Accessibility Services:

http://www.accessibility.utoronto.ca/

Other resources for student support include:

Arts and Science Writing Centres:

http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/writing-centres/arts-and-science

Academic Success Centre:

http://www.asc.utoronto.ca/

Counselling and Psychological Services:

http://www.caps.utoronto.ca/

Academic integrity

Academic integrity is essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarship in a university, and to ensure that a degree from the University of Toronto is a strong signal of each student's individual academic achievement. As a result, the University treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. The University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (http://www.governingcouncil. utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm) outlines the behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty and the processes for addressing academic

offences. Potential offences include, but are not limited to the following:

IN PAPERS AND ASSIGNMENTS: Using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement. Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor. Making up sources or facts. Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment.

ON TESTS AND EXAMS: Using or possessing unauthorized aids. Looking at someone else's answers during an exam or test. Misrepresenting your identity.

IN ACADEMIC WORK: Falsifying institutional documents or grades. Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including (but not limited to) doctor's notes.

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following procedures outlined in the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters. If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or appropriate research and citation methods, you are expected to seek out additional information on academic integrity from your instructor or from other institutional resources.

(see http://www.utoronto.ca/academicintegrity/resourcesfor students.html).

Turnitin Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to Turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site.