

STH TT 889 Theologies of Sexual Identities
Spring 2012

Instructor: Robert Neville
Office: STH 334
Office Hours: Tues., 8:30-9:30; Wed. 10-11

Tuesdays 9:30-12:30
Class in STH Room 319

The purpose of this course is to examine issues of sexual identity from several theological perspectives. Sexual identity became an important theological problem with the rise of feminist critiques of the dominance of male sexual identity, and the distinguishing of male from female identity. Subsequent discussion has shown that there exist many sexual identities, both male and female. Controversies over gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transsexual identities within society and the churches mark some of the sharpest battles in the culture wars of our time. The development of heterosexual sexual identities is equally complicated, as is the understanding of celibacy.

This course will consider why sexual identity is a problem, what the Bible says about sexual identities and the relevant kinds of authority the Bible has in these matters, how sexual identities have been shaped in Christian history, and how the argument that certain sexual identities or acts are “natural” or “unnatural” has developed. It will examine some of the controversies over the ordaining of women in some denominations, and the issues of same-sex marriage. The course will examine some of the scientific findings about sexual identities, how social roles define sexual identities, and how sexual identities combine both gender identity (what one thinks about one’s own sexuality) and sexual orientation (the kinds of people that are attractive to one). The issue of why people’s feelings are so strong about sexual identity will be examined. And then a particular theological position will be developed, in dialogue with others, about the roles sexuality plays in spiritual life and about how the sacred itself involves or determines sexuality.

Requirements:

- Regular attendance and participation in class discussion.
- At least one seminar presentation on the readings for one week.
- A 20 page research paper on one of the topics of the course.

Students with Disabilities—Any students in this course who have a disability that might prevent them from fully demonstrating their abilities should meet with the instructor as soon as possible to initiate disability verification and discuss accommodations that might be necessary to ensure your full participation in the successful completion of course requirements.

The STH Academic Code of Conduct may be found on the STH website at

www.bu.edu/sth/academic-conduct. All students are required to familiarize themselves with this code, its definitions of misconduct, and its sanctions. Students should especially familiarize themselves with the section on plagiarism.

Please acquire the following books, which have been ordered at Barnes and Noble:

Brooten, Bernadette J. *Love Between Women: Early Christian Responses to Female Homoeroticism*. University of Chicago P.

Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Routledge.

Corvino, John, editor. *Same Sex: Debating the Ethics, Science, and Culture of Homosexuality*. Roman and Littlefield.

Creech, Jimmy. *Adam's Gift*. Duke University Press.

Jennings, Theodore W. *The Man Jesus Loved: Homoerotic Narratives from the New Testament*. Pilgrim.

Jordan, Mark D. *The Ethics of Sex*. Blackwell.

Knust, Jennifer. *Unprotected Texts*. Harper

Nelson, James B. and Sandra P. Longfellow, editors. *Sexuality and the Sacred: Sources for Theological Reflection*. Westminster/John/Knox Press.

Rogers, Eugene F., Jr., editor. *Theology and Sexuality*. Blackwell.

Other materials will be circulated electronically.

Please organize the assignments according to the following schedule:

- 1/17 Introduction. No reading
- 1/24 Knust, *Unprotected Texts*, entire
- 1/31 Brooten, *Love between Women*, Introduction and Part I
- 2/7 Brooten, *Love between Women*, Part II
- 2/14 Jordan, *The Ethics of Sex*, entire.
- 2/21 Monday class schedule; no class.
- 2/28 Jennings, *The Man Jesus Loved*, entire

- 3/6 Corvino, *Same Sex*, chapters 9-13, 18-19; circulated material
- 3/13 Spring break
- 3/20 Butler, *Gender Trouble*, entire
- 3/27 Corvino, *Same Sex*, chapters 14-17; Rogers, *Theology and Sexuality*, chapters 1-2; Nelson & Longfellow, chapter 1.
- 4/3 Rogers, *Theology and Sexuality*, chapters 28, 1-2, 18-23; Nelson and Longfellow, chapters 19-22; Corvino, *Same Sex*, chapters 24-26.
- 4/10 Nelson and Longfellow, chapters 6-16; Rogers, *Theology and Sexuality*, chapters 16-17.
- 4/17 Creech, *Adam's Gift*, chapters 1-10
- 4/24 Creech, *Adam's Gift*, chapters 11 to end; Corvino, *Same Sex*, chapters 20-24.
- 5/1 Neville, "Images of God in Sexual Embodiment," to be distributed electronically.

Incompletes will not be given except in extreme emergency; follow the STH registrar's procedures for incompletes.

Do not plagiarize. If you do not understand this, study the information on plagiarism available in the library.