Div 3067

Sexuality: Theology, Ethics, and Pastoral Practice

Fall 1999

Professor Karen Stroup 1:10-3:00 Tuesdays
Office hours: G-27

after class and
by appointment in my home office

Course description: Class will be conducted in seminar format; students who are able to participate in class discussion will do best. This course covers, first, the theology of sexuality, including choosing a method, the connection between sexuality and spirituality, gender relations, men’s and women’s experience, and gender orientation. From theology the course moves to ethics, including singleness, marriage, celibacy, disability, aging, HIV/AIDS, sexual violence, and pornography. Finally, the course moves to pastoral practice, or how to implement theology and ethics in a day-to-day setting. Students should leave the course with a sense of their theology of sexuality and a level of comfort with implementing this theology in a ministry setting.

Course requirements 1) Each week students will turn in a reflection paper, 1-2 pages. Sometimes the topic will be assigned; usually, it’s up to the student 2) A take-home midterm exam. 3) A research paper due at the end of the semester.

Grading:

Weekly reflection papers 10 percent
Attendance/preparation/participation 20 percent
Midterm 25 percent
Final paper 45 percent

Textbooks:


James B. Nelson and Sandra P. Longfellow. Sexuality and the Sacred Sources for Theological Reflection.


Peter Rutter. Sex in the Forbidden Zone: When Men in Power--Therapists, Doctors, Clergy, Teachers, and Others--Betray Women's Trust.
Alice Walker. By the Light of My Father's Smile.

Shape of the semester: We'll spend the first half of the semester on theology. This is also the time when you'll do the most reading. This is to prepare you for the midterm, which will involve watching a movie and responding to the following:

1) Outline the movie community's theology of sexuality. Don't worry about trying to accurately report this community's theology in "real life" -- I don't expect you to know anything you can't get from the movie itself. 2) Tell me how Sonia's theology of sexuality changes by the end of the movie. 3) Tell me your theology of sexuality. Don't forget to begin with your method. How do your contemporary author's ideas (from the reserve reading) fit with your own?

After that we'll have some fun during the ethics section. The reading load will be light and each time we meet we'll have a guest speaker who will represent a sexuality that will persuade you to think about the theological ethics involved, and may also challenge your chosen theology of sexuality. I'm planning to have someone to represent five of the following sexualities: celibacy; sado-masochism; prostitution; pedophilia; pornography; exotic dancing; and swinging. The speakers we end up with will depend on whether I can find someone to speak on a particular topic. Finally, we'll spend a couple of sessions where the rubber hits the road when we address pastoral practice.

The Rules (everybody has 'em — I'm just letting you know what mine are in advance.)

* Written work: Reflection papers should be typed, double-spaced, and stapled if they're more than one page. Use one-inch margins on all four sides, 12-point readable type and no "make-it-fit." I'm more interested in what you have to say than whether you have exactly the number of lines of type you think I want.

* Research papers: All of the above. PLUS: some consistent form of references, complete enough that I can find the text if I want to. Give me a bibliography, and if it's reasonably easy with your word processor, put notes at the bottom of the page.

* Plagiarism: Just don't do it. If you do and I figure it out, you're toast. If you don't know what it is, talk to me.

* Inclusive Language: for the human race, use it. This is non-negotiable. You may use gender-neutral language (it's ok to use "they" as the 3rd person singular pronoun) or alternate masculine and feminine language. For God, use feminine imagery and refer to God as "she." That applies to God as a whole and the first and third persons of the trinity.
See my article, "God Our Mother: A Call to Truly Inclusive God language" for my reasoning. You may refer to God in other ways (e.g., gender-neutral language, masculine/feminine language, even solely masculine language) IF AND ONLY IF you give me a written rationale equivalent to my own. Complain to each other about this policy all you want, but do realize that in a course on sexuality and theology, this is an important matter.

* The "Attendance?preparation/participation" part of your grade measures you against this ideal: You show up to all classes, on time, having read all the material on the syllabus, and engage the discussion with passion. (FYI: the professor's pet peeves shouldn't matter, but in real life they do. I really hate it when people come into class after we've already started. Let those who have ears, hear.)

* Manners: There is no political correctness in this class. You may say whatever you want as long as you back it up. NEVER try to figure what I want; it’s a waste of your time and makes me cranky. It’s fine to show emotion; we will all agree that feelings are facts." On the other hand, use language and show emotion in ways that are appropriate, i.e., that don’t hurt other people. For example, your voice may show anger, and you may say, "That makes me angry." but you may not shout, call people names, be verbally abusive, or act out physically. You may say, I think you're wrong but you have to give reasons. All this is particularly important when our speakers are here. Again, you may disagree with them, but you must do so with consideration and politeness. (For example: You may say, "My theological framework holds that stripping is demeaning to God's daughters." You may not say, "My God, you're a pervert.") This is excellent practice for your future ministry setting; screaming in the face of one of your parishioners/clients/students won't get you very far.

* Confidentiality: although you, in particular, are completely mature about matters of sexuality, there are some folks in the class who aren't wholly comfortable discussing such things. it will be easier for all of us if we agree that everything said among us remains among the members of the class. this is doubly important when we have speakers. they will be telling us information about themselves that could ruin their lives if it got around. Whatever your planned vocation, confidentiality is likely to be an important aspect of it. Start practicing now.

* And finally, the honor code is in effect at all times.

Class Schedule

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<th>Reading/Assignment</th>
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<td>And the Sacred</td>
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Tues, August 31
Welcome. getting started

Tues, September 7 Frymer-Kensky, pp. vii-IO7 3-27. 54-67,85-90,
Reflection paper #1 due 149-168

Tues. September 14
Reflection paper #2 due
Tues, September 21
Countryman, 1-123 115-148, 168-182

Ties, September 28
Reflection paper #3 due
Countryman, 124-267 183-228
Reflection paper #4 due
Tues, October 5  Walker (yes, ALL of it)
Reflection paper #5 due
Tues, October 12  150 pages or so from one of the books on reserve.
Write your Reflection paper #6 on it. You already know It will be on the midterm.
During class time, we’ll watch a movie for the midterm.
Ties. October 19  MIDTERM DUE! 231-255
Reflection paper #7 due
In class: Speaker
Tues, October 26
Reflection paper #8 due 256-281
In class Speaker

Tues, November 2
Reflection paper #9 due 282-325
In class: Speaker

Tues, November 9
Reflection paper #10 326-353
In class: Speaker

Tues, November 16
Reflection paper #11
In class: Speaker

Tues, November 23  NO CLASS FALL BREAK
Tues, November 30
Reflection paper #12 due 357-386
Rutter pp. 1-129

Tues, December 7
Reflection paper #13 due 387-401
Rutter pp. 130-266

Monday, Dec 13 TERM PAPER DUE!!!!!

You really don't want to be late on this one. Since I'm a mere adjunct professor, my perks end with the semester. I will grant incompletes in only the most extreme circumstances. And besides—do you want me grading your paper while I'm feeling crabby because my paychecks have long been cashed?

Books on Reserve

DIV BX 1795.S48 G83 1994


Feminist Catholic woman who suggests "pleasure" should be the basis for making ethical decisions about sexuality.

DIV BT 83.55 .W437 1995


British radical lesbian with tenuous relationship to Christianity. Upsets many "simple" solutions to contemporary issues.

DIV BT 708 .H49 1989


American lesbian Episcopalian. Suggests "the erotic" as the source of a theology of sexuality. NOTE that she has since changed her mind on some things, such as the acceptability of sado-masochism.

DIV HQ 12 .E47 1995

One of the writers much admired by the neo-pagan movement. You'll do best with pp. 244-405.

DIV BT708 .G674 1996


Focuses on the issue of gender—what it is, how it fits into a theology of sexuality.

DIV BT83.9 .D68 1999


She (or her publisher) writes good titles. Just what it says it is. She suggests the Black churches are reluctant to talk about sexuality because of the ways White culture has depicted Black sexuality. If you're White, it'll make you squirm—a very good reason to read it.

DIV BT708 .G72 1997


You probably don't want to read something "conservative," but remember: in your ministry you will meet many people (including those in the pews) whose points of view are much closer to Grenz's than the ethos of the VDS.

DIV HQ32 .E566 1996


A gay man approaches sexual ethics and theology from the perspective of justice.

DIV BT743 .N35 1992 c.1


Nelson is the grandfather of contemporary Christian theology of sexuality. Liberal rather than radical. In this book, he spends a good chunk of space on men's experience.
You MAY choose another source for this reading—just check with me first. I'll need to know author, title, publisher, year, and whatever synopsis you can get from amazon.com, book reviews, etc.

Contacting Me

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Fax: same

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Note that I'm a night owl. You're free to call as late as 2 a.m. Call before noon at your own peril.