Special Problems in Christian Thought:

Christian Theology in the Gay/Lesbian Community

Tuesdays 7:00-9:40pm

Instructor: Dr. Stephen V. Sprinkle. Please make appointments by speaking to Sandy Brandon in Room 208, or by calling 257-7580. Students are discouraged from seeking appointments on the night of the class period.

Prerequisites: None.

Course Description/Purpose/Objectives: This is a modified seminar class designed for ministers-in-training who will likely participate in conversations about homosexuality in their churches and communities, provide pastoral care to gay/lesbian persons, or assume leadership roles in hermeneutical/theological debates about homosexuality. Given this likelihood, this course seeks to equip ministers with a base of essential material about gay/lesbian experience, including literature and videography in the field, biblical criticism, and theological argument. While the issue of gay/lesbian inclusion continues to be a hotly debated matter in institutional Christianity, the purpose of this course is not to enter into such a debate. Since there are myriads of gay/lesbian people in every institutional church, not to mention the numbers of their families and friends, such a question is moot. Rather, the course intends to take gay/lesbian Christians at their word.

The objective for the students enrolling in this course will be to listen to the voices of gay/lesbian persons, consider biblical and theological sources, and to reflect critically about the theological and ecclesiological implications of these sources. Each student will be required to compose an original theological argument about gay/lesbian experience and culture with regard to what the church and its leaders are called to do.

Class Procedures: A modified seminar format with two required field trip experiences will constitute the class. The first is a visit to a homophile, gay/lesbian predominant, or open and affirming worshipping community. A list of approved communities will be provided to students (see below). The second will be a fieldtrip, to the Oak Lawn/Cedar Springs neighborhood of Dallas for the whole class. Lectures, video presentations, and guest speakers will be employed throughout the semester.

Requirements:

❖ Assigned readings and class attendance, and attendance at Martin Lecture on 11/30.

❖ Six reflection papers from readings (3-5 pages).
❖ One worship experience reflection paper (3-5 pages).

❖ One fieldtrip experience reflection paper (3-5 pages).

❖ One final constructive theology paper (15-20 pages).

Required Texts


Suggested Texts for Supplemental Study


Suggested Video for Supplemental Viewing

Grading Procedures:

10% Attendance and class participation, and Martin Lecture on 11/30.

30% Reflection papers from readings (3-5 pages).

10% Reflection paper from worship experience (3-5 pages).

10% Reflection paper from fieldtrip experience (3-5 pages).

40% Final constructive theology paper (15-20 pages).

Late papers submitted without the consent of the professor will receive a penalty of one letter-grade for each 24-hour period after the deadline. Non-submission of a paper will result in a zero (0). Deadlines for papers are at the beginning of class on the day they are due. I urge you not to test me on this provision.

Grading Scale: This course uses a modified 7-point scale.

A+ 100-99
A 98-95
A- 94-93
B+ 92-91
B 90-87
B- 86-85
C+ 84-83
C 82-79
C_ 78-77
D+ 76-75
D 74-71
D- 70-69
F 68 and below.

Attendance policy Since this is an elective upper-level course, students are expected to attend class. Lectures and discussions are a necessary part of the pedagogy upon which this seminar is founded. Therefore, any unexcused absence will result in the reduction of the student's final grade by 5 points. Excused absences do not affect grades.

Auditing Requirements

The 2000/2001 course catalogue for Brite Divinity School provides requirements for students who desire to audit courses (pp. 21-22): At Brite Divinity School occasional
visitation of classes by students is allowed with the consent of the instructor. In all cases, attendance of more than one-half of the class sessions requires official enrollment as an auditor. Interested returning students should consult the instructor and the Office of the Associate Dean. New students should consult the instructor, the Office of the Associate Dean, and Brite's Office of Admissions. An audit fee is charged, and permission of the instructor is required. Full-time Brite Divinity School students, however, as well as faculty spouses, are eligible for grants equivalent to the audit fee. Normally, no more than one course per semester may be audited under this grant provision. In order for "AU" to appear on the transcript, the instructor must certify at the end of the semester that the student has attended as an auditor. Classroom recitation and participation may be restricted at the discretion of the instructor, no grade is assigned and no credit is awarded. If credit is desired, the student must register for and repeat the regular course after paying regular tuition.

List of Approved Communities for Worship Visit

Fort Worth

Agapé Metropolitan Community Church, 4615 SE Loop 820, Fort Worth, (817) 535-5002. Celebration Community Church, 908 Pennsylvania Ave., Fort Worth, (817) 335-3222. Fellowship of Love Outreach, 711 West Gambrell, Fort Worth, (817) 921-5683. Westside Unitarian Church, 6901 McCart Ave., Fort Worth, (817) 292-3337.

Dallas


Denton

Harvest Metropolitan Community Church, Denton, (940) 321-2332. Call for directions.

Please Note: In most cases, churches will not mind visitors in their worship services. Since this is a formal class assignment, however, I encourage you to telephone the congregation ahead of time as a courtesy.

Class Schedule
8/29

Lecture: "What Homosexuality is For: The Argument Unfolds."

Readings: Begin reading Comstock.

9/5


Readings: Comstock (entire text).

Due: First Reflection Paper (3-5 pages) on Comstock.

9/12

Lecture: "What Rationality Didn't Put In, Rationality Can't Take Out."

Video Presentation: The Celluloid Closet.

9/19

Guest Lecture: Dr. Michal Anne Pepper.

Readings: Boswell, Parts I and II, pp. 3-166.

9/26

Lecture: "Brother and Lover: Saint Aelred of Rievaulx."


Due: Second Reflection Paper (3-5 pages) on Boswell.

10/10

Lecture: "The Bible Tells Me So?"

Readings: Balch: Read essays in this order: Gudorf (pp. 121-141), Jones/Yarhouse (pp. 73-120), Shoedel (pp. 43-72), Bird (pp. 142-176), Seitz (pp. 177-196), Fredrickson (pp. 197-222), Jewett (pp. 223-241).

Due: Third Reflection Paper (3-5 pages) on Fredrickson's essay.

10/17
Lecture: "Yes, Jesus Loves Me ... Why Can't You?"

Readings: Heyward (entire text).

Due: Response Paper (3-5 pages) from worship experience.

10/24

Lecture: "'Saint' Foucault, Harvey Milk, and Audre Lorde: Gay/Lesbian Hagiography and the Qu(e)erying of the Church."

Audio Presentations: Selections from The Naked Civil Servant by Quentin Crisp, and An Englishman In New York by Sting.

Video Presentation: Out of the Past.

Due: Waiver for Field Trip to Oaklawn in Dallas (Students who do not submit a waiver will not be allowed to attend the field trip, which will affect their final grade).

10/31

Field Trip to Oaklawn in Dallas (required). Meet in Brite parking lot for departure at 7:00pm sharp.

Due: TOPICS FOR FINAL PAPERS - MUST BE APPROVED BY PROFESSOR.

11/7

ELECTION DAY/NO CLASS (Assignment: Go vote. I'm serious.)

11/14

Lecture: "Invincible Communities: Friendship and Gay/Lesbian Theology."

Readings: Stuart (entire text).

Due: Response Paper on Field Trip experience (3-5 pages) and Fourth Reflection Paper (3-5 pages) on Stuart.

11/21

Lecture: "Sex: Being It or Doing It?"

Readings: Rudy (entire text).
Due: Fifth Reflection Paper (3-5 pages) on Rudy.

11/28


11/30

Guest Lecture: Dr. Dale Martin, Yale University, 11 a.m. Site to be announced.

12/5

READING WEEK/NO CLASS

12/12

FINAL PAPER DUE IN BDS 206 NO LATER THAN 7:00PM.