



MA Christian Spirituality
(Validated by the University of Winchester)

Sexuality and Spirituality

December 2011

Aims

- To introduce students to the methodological tools required for an academic examination of the interface between sexuality and spirituality, particularly the historical, theological and psychological background required for the study of Sexuality and Spirituality.
- To examine how sexuality has been viewed in the Christian tradition and how these attitudes inform Christian spirituality today.
- To explore contemporary understanding of sexuality and the influence of psychological methodologies.
- To investigate psychological maps that can be brought to bear on this relationship.
- To consider particular examples of contemporary concern such as homosexuality, transgender and celibacy in relation to spirituality.

Credit Value

20 credits

Course Content

Debate on the relationship between sexuality and spirituality has exploded in recent years. Although living in a highly 'sexualised' society Christian denominations have largely entered this debate with reluctance if at all. Whilst issues relating to sexuality may present a challenge to traditional Christian views, the Christian tradition also has rich resources on which to draw in offering a vital contribution to contemporary debate.

This course examines how sexuality has been perceived within the western Christian tradition and how these attitudes continue to inform Christian spirituality today. We shall be asking what we mean by the terms 'sex', 'sexuality' and 'gender' and how they relate to 'spirituality'.

The course considers the psychological and philosophical developments of

the past century and asks how these developments have shaped contemporary views of sexuality. It considers what challenges they present to the traditional Christian understanding of the body and sexuality.

We shall be looking at various psychological maps that reveal our understanding of the self in its sexual context. We shall also consider the place of *eros* in the Christian mystical tradition and what a recovery of this tradition may bring to our understanding of the relationship between sexuality and spirituality.

Drawing on historical, theological and psychological methodologies the course analyses some specific issues such as homosexuality, transgender, celibacy and cultural representations of sexuality in relation to Christian spirituality.

Outline Structure

The course will be delivered through a combination of lectures with discussion and interactive, student-led seminars. Students will be provided with reading lists and tutorial support to enable them to continue with further personal study after the intensive and to prepare an essay for assessment. A pre-course reading list and selected articles will be available before the course commences.

Monday

4.00	Registration	
6.30	Supper	
7.15	What is Sexuality? What is Spirituality	AW
8.45	Informal social in bar	

Tuesday

9.15	Psychological Maps	AW
10.45	Break (coffee/tea)	
11.15	Gender, Sex and Sexuality	AWe
12.45	College Prayers (optional)	
1.00	LUNCH	
2.00	Transgender and Spirituality	AWe
3.30	Break (coffee/tea)	
3.45	Homosexuality and Christian Spirituality	AW
6.30	SUPPER (for residential participants)	

Wed

9.15	Theology, Diversity and Sexuality	BP
10.45	Break (tea/coffee)	
11.15	Quaker Spirituality, Sexuality and Equality	MH
12.45	College Prayers (optional)	
1.00	LUNCH	
2.00	Tutorials/Private Study	
3.30	Break (tea/coffee)	
4.00	Contemporary Cinematic Representations of Christian Sexuality	

	and Spirituality	BP
6.30	SUPPER (for residential participants)	
7.15	Film: Jesus of Montreal	BP

Thurs

9.15	The Genealogy of Eros: Virginity, Prophecy and the Male Gaze	
10.45	Break (coffee/tea)	
11.15	Erotic Strategies in the Christian Mystical Tradition	LN
12.45	College Prayers (optional)	
1.00	LUNCH	
2.00	Sexuality and Spirituality in the Early Modern Period	AB
3.30	Break	
4.00	Sexuality and Spirituality in the Early Modern Period (text seminar)	AB
5.30	Finish	

(Tutors: Anna Beer, Barnabas Palfrey, Michael Hutchinson, Louise Nelstrop, Andrew Walker, Alison Webster)

Learning Outcomes

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Having completed this module successfully students should be able to:

Knowledge and Understanding

- Critically appreciate the methodological tools required for an academic study of sexuality and spirituality.
- Understand how sexuality has been viewed in the Christian tradition and how this informs our present day perspectives on this issue.
- Appreciate the impact of twentieth and twenty-first century writers on our understanding of sexuality.
- Relate these conceptual insights to their own experiences and be able to 'map' them psychologically.
- Apply these methodological tools to areas of specific current concern in society.

Transferable skills

- To have acquired skills of interpretation and reflection.
- To have acquired the cognitive skills to reflect upon and discuss complex material and issues in rational and controlled way.
- To have demonstrated the personal skills to work under self-direction and self-organisation to accomplish tasks and to meet set deadlines.
- Selection, comprehension and interpretation of relevant primary and secondary literature.
- Criticism and analysis of primary and secondary literature.
- Written presentation.

Assessment

One essay of 5,000 words.

Indicative Bibliography

General

- Brown, P. *The Body and Society*, London: Faber and Faber 1989
- Foucault, M. *The History of Sexuality*, London: Penguin 1998
- Hayes, M., W. Porter & D. Tombs *Religion & Sexuality*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998
- Percy, E. M. *Intimate Affairs. Sexuality and Spirituality in Perspective*, London: DLT 1998
- Sheldrake, P. *Befriending our Desires*, London: DLT 2001
- Selling, E. J. *Embracing Sexuality*, Aldershot: Ashgate 2001
- Taylor, T. *The Prehistory of Sex. Four Million Years of Human Sexual Culture*, London: Bantam 1997

Celibacy, Feminist Perspectives, Transgender

- Althaus-Reid, M. *Indecent Theology*, London: Routledge 2001
- Althaus-Reid, M. *The Queer God*, London: Routledge 2003
- Cornwall, Susannah, *Sex and Uncertainty in the Body of Christ: Intersex Conditions and Christian Theology* (Equinox 2010).
- Eisler, R. *Sacred Pleasure. Sex, Myth and the Politics of the Body- New Paths to Power & Love*, San Francisco: Harper Collins 1997
- Graham Elaine *Making the Difference: Gender, Personhood and Theology* (Mowbray, 1995).
- Heyward, C. *Touching Our Strength*, San Francisco: HarperCollins 1989
- Isherwood, L. & E. Stuart *Introducing Body Theology*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 1998
- Isherwood, L. & M. Althaus-Reid *The Sexual Theologian: Essays in Sex, God and Politics*, London: T&T Clark 2005

- Isherwood, L. (ed) *The Good News of the Body*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 2000
- Isherwood, L. *Erotic Celibacy*, London: T&T Clark 2005
- Isherwood, L. & M. Althaus-Reid *Trans/Formations. Controversies in Transgendered Theology*, SCM 2009
- Linzey A. & Kirker R. (eds) *Gays & the Future of Anglicanism*, Ropley: John Hunt Publishing 2005
- Mollenkott, V. *Omnigender. A trans-religious Approach*, Cleveland: Pilgrim Press 2001
- Rambuss, R. *Closet Devotions*, Duke University Press 1998
- Petra Ramet, S. (ed) *Gender Reversals & Gender Cultures. Anthropological & Historical Perspectives*, London: Routledge 1996
- Stuart, E. *Gay & Lesbian Theologies. Repetitions with Critical Difference*, Aldershot: Ashgate 2002
- Tessier, L.J. *Dancing After the Whirlwind. Feminist Reflections on Sex, Denial and Spiritual Transformation*, Boston: Beacon 1997

Theology, Sexuality and Diversity

- Alison, J. *Undergoing God*. London: Continuum 2006
- Dunn, G. & C. Ambridge (eds) *Living Together in the Church*. Toronto: Anglican Book Shop 2004

Quaker Spirituality, Sexuality and Equality

- A Group of Friends *Towards a Quaker View of Sex* London: Friends Home Service Committee 1963
- Billett, Colin 'Committed Relationships and Equality – An Introduction'. BYM 2009
- Britain Yearly Meeting 'Minutes on Committed Relationships' BYM 2009
- Britain Yearly Meeting 'Close Relationships' in *Quaker, Faith and Practice* ch.22 BYM 2009
- Britain Yearly Meeting 'We are but Witnesses: Marriage equality and the decision of Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends to recognise same sex marriages'. BYM 2009

Spirituality and Film

- Anker, R. M. *Catching Light: Looking for God in the Movies*. Eerdmans 2004.
- Marsh, Clive *Cinema and Sentiment: Film's Challenge to Theology*. Paternoster Press 2004.
- Gerard Loughlin, *Alien Sex: The Body and Desire in Cinema and Theology* (Challenges in Contemporary Theology) (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004)
- Jolyon Mitchell and S. Brent Plate, eds., *The Religion and Film Reader* (New York & London: Routledge, 2007)
- Johnston, Robert K. *Reel Spirituality: Theology & Film in Dialogue*. Baker Press, 2000.

Eros and the Mystical Tradition

- Freud, S. 'Civilisation and its Discontents' in *Penguin Freud Library Vol 12: Civilisation, Society and Religion*, London: Penguin 2000.
- Gerson, J. *Jean Gerson: Early Works*. Trans B. McGuire. New York: Paulist 1998
- Marcuse, H. *Eros and Civilisation: A Philosophical Enquiry after Freud*. London: Routledge 1956
- McNamara, W. *Mystical Passion: The Art of Christian Loving*, Shaftesbury: Element 1977
- John of the Cross *The Collected Works of St John of the Cross*
Trans K. Kavanaugh and O. Rodriguez
Washington: Institute of Carmelite Studies 1979
- Origen 'The Prologue to the Commentary on The Song of Songs' in *Origen: An Exhortation to Martyrdom, Prayer and Selected Works* (London: SPCK, 1979)
- Teresa of Avila *The Collected Works of St Teresa of Avila*.

Trans K. Kavanaugh and O. Rodriguez. 3 Vols.
Vol. 1: 2nd ed.; Vols 2 & 3; 1st ed. Washington:
Institute of Carmelite Studies 1980 -87

Turner, Denys

*Eros and Allegory: Medieval Exegesis on The
Song of Songs* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian
Publications, 1995)

Pseudo-Dionysius

Pseudo Dionysius: The Complete Works
Trans C. Luibheid and P. Rorem. New York:
Paulist 1987

Psychological Maps

Ferrucci, P.

What We May Be. New York: Tatcher/Putnam
1982

Firman, J. and A. Gila

The Primal Wound. New York: SUNY 1997

Hardy, J.

*A Psychology with a Soul: Psychosynthesis in
Evolutionary Perspective*. London: Routledge 1987

Homosexuality

Bates, S.

A Church at War: Anglicans and Homosexuality.
London: I.B. Taurus 2004

Empereur, J.

Spiritual Direction and the Gay Person. London:
Cassell 1998

Helminiak, D.

What the Bible really says about Homosexuality.
New Mexico: Alamo Square Press 2000

Moore, G.

*A Question of Truth: Christianity and
Homosexuality*. London & New York: Continuum
2003