QUEER CHRISTIAN THEOLOGIES
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Queer theory challenges feminist theory’s and gay and lesbian studies’ focus on tolerance and inclusion with radical deconstructive critiques of the institutions and practices that produce gender and sexuality norms to begin with. Theologies in dialogue with queer theory thus presuppose the full inclusion of LGBTQIA2+ people in the life and leadership of churches—rather than argue for it—to articulate constructive theological projects out of queer practices. In this course, students engage foundational texts in queer theology to begin constructing their own theological positions in a context that disrupts binary understandings of gender and heteronormative views of sexuality.

Foundational courses in theology required as pre-requisites. This course fulfills the Emmanuel College designated elective in Theology or Pastoral Studies.

Course Overview

Jan 8    Introes to the course and to each other

Jan 15   Introduction to Queer Theory
Required Readings: Meg-John Barker & Julia Scheele, Queer: A Graphic History
Doctoral: Michel Foucault, History of Sexuality, Pp. 1-50; 92-102
Susannah Cornwall, “What is Queer?” in Controversies in Queer Theology, 9-42.

Jan 22   Queer Theology: Beyond Apologetics
Required Readings: Linn Tonstad, Queer Theology, 1-103.
Doctoral: Judith Butler, Gender Trouble, Ch. 1 (Pp. 1-46)
** Apologetics assignment due

Jan 29   Queering the Bible
Doctoral: Butler, Gender Trouble, Ch. 2 (47-106)
Recommended: Cornwall, “Is the Bible Queer?” in Controversies, Pp. 114-146; Marcella Althaus-Reid, “Mark,” The Queer Bible Commentary, 517-525.
** Alternate “pastoral” assignment due (first sermon)

Feb 5  ** Queering Preaching and Worship  
** Required Readings:  
** Doctoral:  
Butler, *Gender Trouble*, Ch. 3 + Conclusion (107-203).

Feb 12  ** Intersectional Queer  
** Required Readings:  
** Doctoral:  

READING WEEK  
Catch up on the readings you’ve missed (especially doctoral students!)

Feb 26  ** Queering Doctrine 1  
** Required Readings:  
** Doctoral:  
*Feminist, Queer, Crip*, Pp. 69-128

March 4  ** Queering Doctrine 2  
** Required:  
** Doctoral:  

March 11  ** Kink  
** Required Readings:  

**March 18**  
**Indecent Theology 1**  
**Required Readings:** Althaus-Reid, *Indecent Theology*, 1-46; 87-124.  
**Doctrinal:** Halberstam, *Queer Art...*, Pp. 87-122

**March 25**  
**Indecent Theology 2**  
**Required Readings:** Indecent Theology, 125-200.  
**Doctrinal:** Halberstam, *Queer Art...*, Pp. 123-146.

**April 1**  
**(in)conclusions:**  
**Doctrinal:** Halberstam, *Queer Art...*, Pp. 147-188.  
**Recommended:** Cornwall, *Controversies*, ch. 6&7.

**BD Assignments**  
1. Reading responses  
   a. (3, lowest grade counts as 5%; others 10%)  
   b. Quote and explicate—deep read.  
2. Due week 3 – convincing apologetic and its critique  
3. Final Paper – using primarily course readings  
   OR pastoral alternative (2 of 3)  
4. Participation  
   25%  
   40%  
   10%

**AD Assignments**  
1. Small group leadership (plans/leadership/assessment)  
2. Apologetic/Critique paper  
3. Final Paper – own research paper  
4. Participation (informed by secondary readings)  
   25%  
   25%  
   40%  
   10%

**Reading Responses**  
Find a short quotation (i.e., less than 50 words) that captures the meaning of this week’s readings. When there are multiple readings, find a quotation that represents a common theme among them. Please include the quotation at the top of your page (though do not count it towards your word count). In 250 words or less demonstrate both your understanding of the quotation and how it captures the meaning of the reading/topic for the week. Please include in parentheses at the end of your paper the word count number (not including title, quotation, your name, etc.).
Papers must be submitted by email prior to the start of class.  

*No papers will be accepted after class has started.*

**Convincing Apologetic and its Critique**  
Choose the apologetic argument that you find most convincing from those Tonstad outlines on pg. 16-47. Demonstrate why you find that apologetic convincing, your understanding of its limitations in light of her argument, and any defense you would make against her claims. Finally, in light of this argument, articulate a constructive theological possibility you could imagine emerging from it.

Papers should be 4-6 pages in length (for both BD and AD students), and submitted by email prior to the start of class. Late papers will be penalized by a 1/3 of a letter grade per day.

**Final Paper**  
This paper provides students with the opportunity to connect the work of the course with their own academic and pastoral interests. Students will explore a question of their choosing related to the course topic and materials, and develop a thesis driven argument in response to that question. Papers should primarily engage course readings while drawing secondarily on further research. Course instructors are available throughout the course of the semester to consult regarding your paper topic.

Papers should be 10-12 pages long for BD students, and 20-25 pages long for AD students.

**Alternative to Final Paper (for students taking course as a pastoral elective only)**  
Do one of the sermons and then either option #2 or #3

1. **Sermon** – you have a choice to submit a sermon in week 4, 7, 8 or 9. (20%)  
   Sermon should be approximately 12 minutes in length. Submit transcript and audio file of you preaching it. Also submit a single spaced, 1-2page write up outlining and defending the choices you made for your sermon, as well as any other relevant information you think the instructors should have as they grade it (e.g., the context you are imagining the sermon would occur, whether or not your sermon is being preached for an explicitly queer community or whether you are seeking more subtly to queer mainstream worship, etc). Submissions must be received by the start of class for the week you are submitting. No sermons for that week will be accepted after that date/time. Sermon topic choices are as follows:
   a. Week 4: Queering the Bible -- Choose one of the biblical texts/narratives under investigation for the week for your sermon. The sermon should demonstrate knowledge integrated from your Bible classes (i.e., you must do exegesis of the biblical text itself), but also be framed by and respond to particular theological and practical concerns.
   b. Week 7: Write a sermon for a baptism service. Choose an appropriate (though not, necessarily, obvious) biblical text that you exegete in your sermon. The baptism can be, but does not have to be, of a child who is intersex or whose
parents have chosen not to assign sex at birth. The sermon could also be for a traditional baptism service that you are seeking to queer.

c. Week 8: Write a sermon for a funeral service. Choose an appropriate (though not, necessarily, obvious) biblical text that you exegete in your sermon. The funeral can be for someone who identified as queer themselves or, again, for a traditional funeral service that you are seeking to queer.

d. Week 9: Write a sermon for a wedding or commitment ceremony for a polyamorous family OR a blessing ceremony for a Dom/sub relational agreement/contract. Choose an appropriate (though not, necessarily, obvious) biblical text that you exegete in your sermon.

2. Youth Group Sex Ed Plan (due same date as final paper) (20%)
This assignment gives you an opportunity to re-imagine sex ed within a church context in light of queer concerns for a youth group of your imagining. The assignment will consist of the plan itself (outline for meetings, powerpoint presentations if any, notes and activities that you would do with the youth, etc...). It will also include a 4-6 pages, double spaced paper that outlines a rationale for the plan, defends the decision-making process behind it, anticipates sticking points within it and potential course corrections, as well as any other information you think the instructors should have about it as they grade it.

3. Plan for walking a community through some kind of an Affirming Ministry process
Due same day as final paper (20%).
This assignment gives you the opportunity to imagine how you might help a community discern whether or not they want to become an Affirming Ministry. The assignment will consist of the plan itself, as well as a 4-6 pages, double spaced paper that outlines a rationale for the plan, defends the decision-making process behind it, anticipates sticking points within it and potential course corrections, and any other information you think the instructors should have about it as they grade it. Be sure to consult appropriate documents and guidelines from your tradition as you create your plan, and provide copies of these as necessary to the instructors.

**Classroom Teaching** (AD students only)
In the first meeting, each AD student will choose a week to teach. They will be responsible for 60-90 minutes of class time, and will need to make sure that students have (a) understood the readings for the day and (b) engaged with them generously, critically and creatively. AD students will submit their lesson plan electronically for feedback by Monday at 5pm in the week you are scheduled to teach (no exceptions and, obviously, the earlier you submit it, the more time you have to integrate my feedback). They will also write a short assessment of their teaching – what worked and what didn’t and why, and what they would do differently next time to be submitted with the revised lesson plan within one week of the class you taught. The assignment will be graded considering (a) the lesson plan, both the original one and how changes are integrated; (b) the teaching itself; and (c) your self-assessment. These components will not, however, necessarily be weighted evenly. Instead, the grade will reflect the growth and learning that is evident across the relationship of these artifacts.
**Participation**

A class like this one depends on full participation from all students for our shared learning. Participation grades will be determined not by the amount that a student speaks, however, but by how their speaking contributes to the classroom culture. Are you listening to, respecting and seeking to engage your colleagues? Are you treating your colleagues courteously, and seeking to help them explore their own ideas as well as your own? Are you willing to admit what you don’t understand and seek the help of your colleagues to find understanding? Have you read the text(s) for the day closely, generously, and critically, and are you trying to take us into deeper understanding of them rather than using them to pursue your own agendas? Good participation does not equate to always being right; good participation demonstrates your desire to contribute to the group’s shared exploration and learning.

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**Course Outcomes**

(A) IN RESPECT OF GENERAL ACADEMIC SKILLS (BD) and “Research” (AD)
- Ability to read difficult texts closely and deeply for understanding
- Ability to write reflection papers that reveal understanding of a text’s core issues
- Ability to converse about complex theological and social issues
- Ability to write thesis-driven/argument papers

(B) IN RESPECT OF THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE CONTENT OF ONE OR MORE THEOLOGICAL DISCIPLINES (BD)
- Ability to integrate deconstruction of gender/sexuality norms with theological thinking
- Increased facility with constructing theologies that question and disrupt traditional and liberal norms of gender and sexuality
- Ability to articulate own understanding of God, Jesus Christ and salvation in light of core issues in queer theory

(C) IN RESPECT OF PERSONAL AND SPIRITUAL FORMATION (BD)
- Increased knowledge about how gender and sexuality shape Christian beliefs and practices
- Ability to draw connections between own identified gender/sexuality and spirituality

(D) IN RESPECT OF MINISTERIAL AND PUBLIC LEADERSHIP (BD)
- Increased ability to respond to engage conversations around and educate people regarding complex issues of sexuality and theology
• Increased ability to engage conversations around and educate people regarding the impact of race, class, gender and heterosexism on sexuality issues in ministry and life

(E) With regards to Teaching (AD)
• Increased ability to synthesize complex material for accessible teaching with BD level students
• Increased ability to teach material in creative formats
• Increased ability to work collaboratively in team teaching context (also relevant for “Service”)