QUEER BIBLE HERMENEUTICS (OT 8317)

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Division I: The Biblical Witness
Perkins School of Theology
Southern Methodist University
Spring 2016

Course Description from Perkins Course Catalog
Study of the historical, political, cultural, and religious-theological discourses about gender and sexuality in the context of the interpretation of the Hebrew Bible. Grounded in an interdisciplinary approach, the course develops self-critical perspectives about the influence of biblical meanings on hermeneutically dynamic, politically and religiously charged conversations over socio-cultural practices related to LGBTQ communities. Three term hours. Prerequisites: OT 6301 or OT 6302.

Class Meetings
W 6:30-8:50pm in 207 Pthro Hall

Office phone 214.768.2460
Email sscholz@smu.edu
Office Hours: By appointment

To learn more about your instructor, please visit http://www.smu.edu/theology/people/scholz.html

Please note that this course is eligible for credit toward the Graduate Certificate in Women’s and Gender Studies. If you are interested in having this course count toward this certificate, please speak with Dr. Evelyn Parker, Associate Dean of Academic Affairs at Perkins School of Theology (eparker@smu.edu; PH 214.768.2349). Also visit the Graduate Certificate website at: http://www.smu.edu/Dedman/Academics/Programs/WomGenStudies/AreasofStudy/GraduateCertificate

Goals and Learning Objectives

- Students come to understand the hermeneutical, theological, and cultural-political implications of reading the Bible as a queer text and its effects upon church, religion, and society at large.
- Students gain in-depth knowledge of an increasingly important research area in the academic field of biblical studies.
- Students develop biblical knowledge and understanding about exegetical methods “for proper and effective use of Scripture” (from Perkins’ Course Catalog) in light of the academic discourse of queer studies as well as in light of past and present debates on constructions of gender and sexuality.
- Students become “effective biblical interpreters” (from Perkins’ Course Catalog) in religious organizations in which LGBTQ issues are often referenced with biblical texts.
- Students come to understand references to Bible content, the range of exegetical methods, and the various genres of knowledge distribution produced in the field of biblical studies as significant contributions to socio-cultural practices and the debates on LGBTQ inclusion or exclusion.
• Students become experts in the critical understanding and appreciation of so-called diversity issues, especially as they relate to gender and sexuality, but also race, ethnicity, and class.
• Students become equipped to make positive contributions to the Protestant denomination to which our School and most of our students belong.
• Students learn to critically reflect on the hermeneutical and theological assumptions pertaining to the relationship of queer identities and biblical interpretation.
• Students learn to relate their notions about Christian ministry to the social contexts of today’s world and to engage the social, political, cultural, and theological implications of reading the Bible as part of contemporary debates on marriage-equality and the general mainstreaming of LGBTQ issues in Western societies.

Assignments
1. Regular and active class attendance and participation (15%).
2. Two reflection papers (3 full pages each) on the two films we are watching in the first couple of class meetings. They are “The New Black” (paper due on February 3) and “Outcast” (paper due on February 10) (each 10%)
3. One reflection paper (3 full pages) on one of our class meetings, the readings, and our class work (10%; no overlap with any other assignment) [see sign-up sheet]
4. One book review on a book that deals with our class topic of queer bible studies. The choice of book must be approved by the professor and the review is due on February 24 (15%).
5. One research paper (40%). More information on March 2. The due date of this paper will be on the day of our final exam scheduled by the Registrar’s Office (May 6-11, 2016). As soon as this date is communicated, you will be informed about it. No extensions available under any circumstances.

Required Books
1. Judith Butler, Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (London: Routledge, 2006; or any earlier or later edition)
5. Any Bible translation, preferably based on the standards of the NRSV. If you own only one other translation, consider buying the NRSV in any edition published by Oxford University Press or a similar publisher.
6. Several articles and book chapters in pdf-format that are uploaded onto this course’s Blackboard folder called “Document folder.” Please make sure you know how to access your BB account. Articles and book chapters available on Blackboard are marked with this abbreviated comment: “[on BB].”
7. Chicago Manual of Style; available online for free here: http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html (You are asked to use “Notes and Bibliography” for the research paper assigned in this course!)  

Recommended Books

Academic Integrity
The University places high importance on academic honesty. A website explains the details: http://smu.edu/catalogs/graduate/regulations.asp. The statement begins with this paragraph:

Intellectual integrity and academic honesty are concepts fundamental to the processes of learning and evaluating academic performance; without them, the process of inquiry is dismantled at its base and
further positive educational progress is almost certainly prevented. The maintenance of the highest level of academic integrity is the responsibility of all members of an educational institution. The inculcation of personal standards of honesty and integrity is a goal of education in all disciplines of the University.

In addition, Perkins School of Theology has its own “Academic Regulations” which include a statement on “Academic Responsibility.” For the entire statement, please visit http://smu.edu/theology/registrar/academic_regs.pdf.

SMU Disability Accommodations
Southern Methodist University provides reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you need academic accommodations for a disability, you must first contact Ms. Rebecca Marin, Coordinator, Services for Students with Disabilities (214-768-4557) to verify the disability and to establish eligibility for accommodations. They should then schedule an appointment with the professor to make appropriate arrangements. (See University Policy No. 2.4.)

Minority Concerns and the Perkins Curriculum
In 1975 the Perkins Senate passed resolutions which bear on the relation of the Perkins curriculum to this school’s common concern for the status of ethnic minority groups and of women both in education for ministry and in the ministry itself. The following statement summarizes these resolutions with respect to all courses except those in the area of Ministry.

1. Instructors and students alike are urged to use inclusive language, images and metaphors that will give full and positive value to both the past contributions and the future prospects of ethnic minorities and women in the church and in society at large.

2. Instructors and students alike are urged to give sensitive consideration to the role of images from a predominantly white and male culture in shaping both the language and concepts of Christian theology and the models and methods of Christian ministry that are widely current today.

3. Instructors are urged to make every effort to provide—in the syllabi, assignments and formats of their courses—opportunities for women students and students from ethnic minority groups (1) to study the functions of ministry with particular reference to their own status or tradition in the life of the church, (2) to practice the functions of ministry (when practice is an element in a course) in settings which reflect or, if possible, arise from their own status or tradition in the life of the church, (3) to receive evaluation of their practice of the functions of ministry from persons who are not only knowledgeable about and skilled in those functions, but also share their special status or tradition in the life of the church, and (4) to observe the practice of persons who, as women or as members of ethnic minority groups, provide models of effective ministry which are immediately relevant to the special status or tradition of women or members of ethic minority groups in the church.

Perkins regulations regarding Incompletes
The grade of Incomplete is granted only in rare cases when a student is prevented by extraordinary circumstances of illness or other severe hardship, from completing some major portion of the required course work before the deadline for submission of grades for the term. Requests for a grade of Incomplete must be submitted in writing to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs no later than [insert date for submission of all written work from the academic calendar]. For more information, see the Perkins Catalog, p. [46].

Writing Center
Good writing and clear communication are important for graduate school and for ministry. If you would like help with your writing, contact the writing center at 214-768-4253, visit them on the web at http://www.smu.edu/alec/wc.html, or drop by their office (Suite 202) in The Paul B. Loyd Center which is "attached to the northwest corner of Ford Stadium" which is across the street from Highland Park United Methodist Church.
Religious Observance
Religiously observant students wishing to be absent on holidays that require missing class should notify their professors in writing at the beginning of the semester, and should discuss with them, in advance, acceptable ways of making up any work missed because of the absence. (See University Policy No. 1.9.)

Excused Absences for University Extracurricular Activities
Students participating in an officially sanctioned, scheduled University extracurricular activity should be given the opportunity to make up class assignments or other graded assignments missed as a result of their participation. It is the responsibility of the student to make arrangements with the instructor prior to any missed scheduled examination or other missed assignment for making up the work. (University Undergraduate Catalogue)

Grade Computation System

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<td>87-89</td>
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Valuable online resources on the Hebrew Bible:
http://sacred-texts.com/index.htm
http://www.codex-sinaiticus.net/en/
http://www.sbl-site.org/educational/bibleandcommentary.aspx
http://www.devotions.net/bible/00bible.htm
http://www.lectio.unibe.ch/e/infos.htm
http://www.mhs.no/article_204.shtml and http://www.mhs.no/article_533.shtml
http://www.theologyinafrica.com/articles/categorizes/bible.php
http://unbound.biola.edu/

Valuable online resources for "Queer Theory" and related terminologies:
http://internationalspectrum.umich.edu/life/definitions

Please note: If you find other links that you think might fit into our course, please let me know so that we can plan on sharing them with the class.
TENTATIVE COURSE OUTLINE

1. WHY QUEER STUDIES? ON THE HISTORY AND POLITICS OF A FIELD

(1) W/January 27  
Introduction to the Course and Introduction of Class Members
Terminology, History, and Issues of Queer Bible Hermeneutics

Readings

Recommended:

Film
“The New Black” directed by Yoruba Richen (http://video.pbs.org/video/2365253465/) (See also http://www.newblackfilm.com/the-film/; available on netflix.com)

(2) W/February 3  
Queer Theories: Introduction
Understanding and Discussing the Various Positions

Readings
1. Butler, Gender Trouble, vii-46

Recommended:

→Your reflection paper on “The New Black” is due today!

Film
(3) W/February 10  
More on Queer Theories

Readings

Recommended:

»Your reflection paper on “Outcast” is due today!

2. FROM “WOMAN” TO “LGBTQ”:
INVESTIGATIONS ON THE TURN FROM FEMINIST TO QUEER BIBLICAL STUDIES

(4) W/February 17  
Gender and Sexuality in Religious Studies and Theological Studies

Readings

Recommended:
From Women's to Feminist Bible Studies?

Readings

Recommended:

→ Your book review is due today!

From Feminist Bible Studies To Queer Bible Studies?

Readings

Recommended:

Going Beyond a Queer Bible Hermeneutics: Intersectional Issues of Race, Class, and Geopolitics in Biblical Interpretation

Theoretical Considerations
Readings


**Recommended:**


**(9) W/March 23**

**Queer-Postcolonial Perspectives about Rahab in Joshua 2**

**Readings**


**Readings**


4. **READING A QUEER BIBLE: THREE CASE STUDIES**

**(11) W/April 6**

**Case One: Leviticus 18:22; 20:13**

**Readings**

1. Choose two Leviticus commentaries on the two passages and prepare to talk about them in class regarding their hermeneutical, methodological, epistemological, cultural, political, and theological assumptions


**(12) W/April 13 Case Two: Judges 3**

6:30-7:30 pm
7:45-8:50 pm

**Readings**

**(13) W/April 20 Case Three: “Marriage” in Ancient Israel**

**Readings**

**(14) W/April 27 Toward a Future of Queer Bible Hermeneutics**

**Readings**

**READING AND EXAM SCHEDULE**
- May 2-5: Reading and Writing Period
- May 6-11: Final Examination Week

Your research paper will be due on the day and time of the final exam scheduled for our course by the Registrar’s Office. Please plan accordingly. No make-up or date change will be available.