

RELI/WGST 424 – Gender Theory in the Study of Religion

Instructor: Alejandro Escalante

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Time: Tuesday and Thursday, 9:30am–10:45am

More information: <https://tinyurl.com/y5otzewb>



Figure 1. *The Last Supper* by Max Koo (featuring the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence)

Course description

This course examines the intersection between religion and gender. We will consider how religion shapes certain understandings of gender and, in turn, how religious people experience, negotiate, and even upend those understandings. Given how complex this subject matter is, we will focus on three areas, primarily. Part I of the course outlines the general premise of the class: both gender and religion are fundamentally anthropological categories and must be studied as such. Part II of the course is an overview of intertwined relationship between gender and religion. Each week, gender theories will be paired with how those same theories are taken up to talk about religion and religious practices. Lastly, Part III of the class focuses on how religious people experience and contend with gender. Like with Part II, this section will feature a theoretical piece paired with another text. The texts in this section will be ethnographic and thus focus more on how religion and gender are practiced. Themes and topics we will investigate will include: masculinity in evangelical Christianity, trans*ness and religion, Black feminist spirituality, women's subjectivity in Islam, bodily configurations in Cuban Santería, and much more. **Ged Ed:** PH.

Required textbooks

• bell hooks, *Feminism is for Everybody* (New York: Routledge, 2014). ISBN: 978-1138821620 (available through UNC library: <https://catalog.lib.unc.edu/catalog/UNCb8625272>)

Class Schedule

Part I: Introduction

Week 1 – Studying Religion and Gender

Thursday, January 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduction to class, material, each other• Introductory lecture on the history of the study of gender and religion
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Week 2 – Studying “Religion”

Tuesday, January 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Talal Asad, “Religion as an Anthropological Category,” pp. 27–54.
Thursday, January 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Simon Coleman and Anna Stewart, “Contributions from Anthropology,” pp. 105–116.

Week 3 – Studying “Gender”

Tuesday, January 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Michel Foucault, “We ‘Other Victorians’,” pp. 3–13.
Thursday, January 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Judith Butler, “Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire,” pp. 1–18• Judith Butler, “Gender is Burning,” pp. 81–97.

Part II: Theories and Methodologies

Week 4 – Feminism and Feminist Theories

Tuesday, January 28	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• bell hooks, <i>Feminism is for Everybody</i>, selections
Thursday, January 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Audre Lorde, “The Uses of the Erotic,” pp. 87–91 and “An Open Letter to Mary Daly,” pp. 90–93• bell hooks, “Feminist Spirituality,” pp. 105–109

Week 5 – Black Feminism and Intersectionality

Tuesday, February 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, “What is Intersectionality,” pp. 1–21.• Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, “The Structural and Political Dimensions of Intersectional Oppression,” pp. 16–22.
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Thursday, February 6	• Grace Ji-Sun Kim and Susan Shaw, “Intersectionality as Theological Method,” pp. 41–64.
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Week 6 – Queer Theory

Tuesday, February 11	• Eve Sedgwick, “Queer and Now,” pp. 1–19.
Thursday, February 13	• Stephen D. Moore, Kent L. Brintnall, and Joseph A. Marchal. “Queer Disorientations,” pp. 1–44.

Week 7 – Trans* Theory

Tuesday, February 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jack Halberstam, “Trans*: What’s in a Name?” pp. 1–21. • Susan Stryker. “Transgender Studies: Queer Theory’s Evil Twin.” <i>GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies</i> 10, no. 2 (2004): 212-215
Thursday, February 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Max Strassfeld. “Transing Religious Studies.” <i>Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion</i> 34, no. 1 (Spring 2018): 37-53. • Robyn Henderson-Espinoza – “Transing Religion: Moving Beyond the Logic of the (Hetero)Norm of Binaries.” <i>Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion</i> 34, no. 1 (2018), 88–92 • Melissa M. Wilcox – “Religion Is Already Transed; Religious Studies Is Not (Yet) Listening.” <i>Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion</i> 34, no. 1 (2018), 84–88.

Week 8 – Beyond Intersectionality

Tuesday, February 25	• Jennifer Nash, “Feeling Black Feminism,” pp. 1–32.
Thursday, February 27	• Jasbir Puar, “I Would Rather be a Cyborg than a Goddess,” pp. 49–66.

Part III: Ethnographies of Gender and Religion

Week 9 – Religion from the Bottom(s)

Tuesday, March 3	• Burlas, “The Qur’an, Sex/Gender, and Sexuality,” pp. 129–166
Thursday, March 5	• Saba Mahmood, “The Subject of Freedom,” pp. 1–39.

*** SPRING BREAK – March 6-15th ***

Week 10 – Affect, Gender, Religion

Tuesday, March 17	• John Corrigan, “How Do We Study Religion and Emotion?” pp. 1–21.
Thursday, March 19	• Jessica Johnson, “Arousing Empire,” pp. 44–75.

Week 11 – Femme and Femininity

Tuesday, March 24	• L. H. Stallings, introduction to <i>Funk the Erotic</i> , pp. 1–28.
Thursday, March 26	• Aisha M Beliso-De Jesús, “Scent of Empire,” pp. 147–182.

Week 12 – Men and Masculinity

Tuesday, March 31	• Jack Halberstam, “Drag Kings: Masculinity and Performance,” pp. 231–266.
Thursday, April 2	• Helena Hansen, “The New Masculinity,” pp. 92–111.

Week 13 – Decoloniality, Gender, Religion

Tuesday, April 7	• Mayra Rivera Rivera, “Thinking Bodies,” pp. 202–225.
Thursday, April 9	• Gloria Anzaldúa, “Putting Coyolxauhqui Together,” pp. 95–116.

Week 14 – Gender, Food, Religion

Tuesday, April 14	• Kim Q. Hall, “Toward A Queer Crip Feminist Politics of Food,” pp. 177–196
Thursday, April 16	• Elizabeth Pérez, “Gendering the Kitchen,” pp. 111–140.

Week 15 – Where do we go from here?

Tuesday, April 23	• Jasbir K. Puar, “Postscript,” pp. 223–241.
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