

## RELI 30143: Love and Sex in the Biblical World

Spring 2007, Tuesday 3:30–6:10, Beasley Hall 109

UCR: Critical Inquiry (CI); Writing Emphasis (W); Women's Studies

Instructor: David Gunn

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Class web site: E-College at [www.tcuglobal.edu](http://www.tcuglobal.edu)



### Course Description

A study of human relationships in the Bible, in the ancient social world in which the Bible was composed, and in present day society in the United States. Among questions to be asked:

- ❑ What is “love” and what does it have to do with “sex”?  
Does the Bible connect these two experiences in the same way we do today?
- ❑ Why do we have the particular kinds of sexual controls (morality) we do? How do I decide what’s right and wrong?  
Which aspects of our sexual morality come from the Bible and what have we changed to fit our changed circumstances?
- ❑ What else besides sex does our sexual morality control?  
What does the Bible tell us about gender relationships, and how do we relate to its views?
- ❑ What is working – and what is not working – about the way we practice love, sex, and gender relations? What needs to change in order to have a society that is just and equal for men and women?  
What role does (or might) the Bible play in our striving for loving relationships in a just society?

### Course objectives

- ❑ To understand the connection of ideas about “love” and “sex” to larger issues of gender relations.
- ❑ To understand the interaction of gender relations with other cultural factors in a given society; specifically, to understand why the Bible presents sexuality in the way it does.
- ❑ To learn to analyze critically the Bible’s varied literary and religious characterizations of women, women’s social roles, and women’s sexuality.
- ❑ To reflect critically on the significance of the Bible for sexual norms in gender relationships today.
- ❑ To engage with the critical perspectives offered by feminist biblical scholarship regarding the preceding issues.
- ❑ To develop the art of writing a synopsis and critical analysis of assigned reading and oral discussion.

## Course assessment

- ❑ An **electronic journal**, posted on the class E-College website. **Before the class:** (A) Write a succinct descriptive summary of the assigned reading and viewing (biblical texts, book chapters, articles, films, etc.) [length: about 300 words; worth 25% of journal grade]; (B) Write a preliminary critical analysis of the assigned material; include two or three questions about methods or values arising from the analysis [length: about 500 words; worth 50% of journal grade]. **After the class:** (C) Offer a brief review of the class discussion as a whole or of one or two issues discussed which were significant for the student [length: about 250 words; worth 25% of journal grade]. [The total journal grade is worth 55% of the final grade]
  - ❑ Pre-class entries must be completed before class and no later than 8:00am Tuesday.
  - ❑ Post-class entries must be completed no later than noon Friday of the same week.
  - ❑ The writing style may be informal, but not careless. Proper paragraphing and complete sentences should be used and care taken with spelling. Points should be made clearly and succinctly. The separate Journal Grading Guide details how the journals are graded. Late entries will be graded on a lower scale. Entries more than one week late will not normally be accepted.
- ❑ A **midterm assignment** (about 1,200 words). This is a formal essay on a topic relating to the first half of the course, chosen in consultation with the instructor. It should set out an important question and show how it can be approached critically, with careful attention paid to competing arguments. [Worth 15% of the final grade]
  - To be posted on the web site by noon, Friday, March 2.
- ❑ A **workshop** (designed in consultation with instructor), involving shared responsibility in a small team for teaching the class for one hour. The group may use various methods to engage the interest and participation of the whole class: these might include oral presentation, structured discussion, and powerpoint, film, or other visual presentation; the distribution of written reports or documentation; visual art, poetry, dance, music, or dramatic sketch. Creativity is encouraged. [Worth 15% of the final grade]
  - Groups will conduct their workshops on either April 24 or May 1.
- ❑ A **critical review** (about 1,200 words) of central issues raised in the class over the semester. [Worth 15% of the final grade]
  - To be posted on the web site by noon, Monday, May 7.
- ❑ **Class participation**, including attendance, will be taken into account when determining a final grade (e.g., in borderline cases). This class cannot work well without sustained participation.

## Required Reading

Selected biblical texts and secondary sources (drawn from books, articles, and films) will be assigned for each class. Keeping up with this schedule of reading/viewing will be essential for satisfactory progress in the class. Arrangements will be made in class for obtaining assigned reading and viewing videos (which will be viewed

outside class times). Required books are:

- L. William Countryman, *Dirt, Greed, and Sex: Sexual Ethics in the New Testament and their Implications for Today* (Fortress Press, 1990) (=DGS). In bookstore.
- A Bible (Revised Standard Version, New Revised Standard Version, JPS Tanakh, or New International Version).

## Further Information

A student with a disability which may affect class performance should inform me during the first week of class. Important information about university policies concerning disabilities, attendance, and/or academic misconduct is found in the appropriate sections at [www.studentaffairs.tcu.edu](http://www.studentaffairs.tcu.edu). Also, please note the definition of plagiarism and the University's policy concerning the unacknowledged use of sources. Finally, please feel free to see me after class or in my office (Beasley Hall 207). You may contact me by phone or email (see above), or through my research assistant, Donia Pelton ([d.pelton@tcu.edu](mailto:d.pelton@tcu.edu)), at the same phone number. She is located in Beasley Hall 221.

## Class Schedule

- January 16     *A. Introduction to the course*  
                  *B. Ways of Reading the Bible*
  
- January 23     *Love and sex: the Song of Songs*  
Text: The Song of Songs (also called "The Song of Solomon" or "Canticles")  
Ann Matter: "Song of Songs, Book of" in *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation* (5pp.)  
Ariel and Chana Bloch: "In the Garden of Delights" (33pp.)
  
- January 30     *Love and loyalty: the Book of Ruth*  
Text: The Book of Ruth  
Katherine Doob Sakenfeld: "Love (OT)" in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (7pp.)  
Amy-Jill Levine: "Ruth" in *The Women's Bible Commentary* (7pp.)  
DGS ch. 8: "Women and Children as Property in the Ancient Mediterranean World" (20pp.)
  
- February 6     *Marriage and household: the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament*  
Texts: Genesis 11:27-23:20; 24-36  
Danna Nolan Fewell and David Gunn: "Keeping the Promise," pp. 39-47, "The Way of Women," pp. 68-87, and "The Subject of the Law," pp. 94-105, in *Gender, Power, and Promise* (40pp.)  
Film: "The Handmaid's Tale"

- February 13 *Marriage and household: the New Testament – The Gospels and Paul*  
 Texts: Matthew 5:31-32; Mark 10:2-12; 1 Corinthians 7:1-39, 11:1-16, 13:1-13; Ephesians 5:1-6:9; Colossians 3:1-4:1;  
 Karl Donfried, in *HarperCollins Bible Dictionary*: “Love” (3pp.)  
 DGS ch. 9: “Family and Sexual Property in the Gospels” (22pp.)  
 DGS ch 10: “Paul and Sexual Property” (30pp.)
- February 20 *Marriage and household: the New Testament – The Household Codes*  
 Texts: 1 Timothy 2:1-15; 1 Peter 2:11-3:12  
 Clarice Martin: “The *Haustafeln* (Household Codes) in African-American Biblical Interpretation: ‘Free Slaves’ and ‘Subordinate Women’” (25pp.)  
 DGS ch. 11: “The New Testament on Sexual Property” (13pp.)
- February 27 *Man and woman: In the Garden*  
 Text: Genesis 1-3  
 Alice Ogden Bellis: “The Story of Eve,” pp. 45-63 in *Helpmates, Harlots, Heroes* (19pp.)
- March 2 Midterm assignment due, to be posted on the website by noon, FRIDAY, March 2
- March 6 *Wise women and strange women*  
 Text: Proverbs 1-9, 31  
 Claudia Camp: “Woman Wisdom and the Strange Woman,” pp. 86-94 (9pp.)  
 Gail Corrington Streete, “Introduction,” pp. 1-19, in *The Strange Woman: Power and Sex in the Bible* (19pp.)
- March 13 SPRING BREAK
- March 20 *Marriage, sex, and violence*  
 Text: Jeremiah 2-3; Ezekiel 16 and 23; Hosea 2  
 Danna Nolan Fewell and David Gunn: “The Subject of the Law,” pp. 108-116 (on the marriage metaphor) in *Gender, Power, and Promise* (8pp.)  
 Renita Weems, “Prophets, Audiences, and Expectations,” pp. 64-67, and “The World of Romance and Rape,” pp. 84-119, in *Battered Love: Marriage, Sex, and Violence in the Hebrew Prophets* (40pp.)  
 DGS ch. 12: “New Testament Sexual Ethics and Today’s World” (30pp.)
- March 27 *Purity, gender, and homosexuality: Hebrew Bible/Old Testament*  
 Text: Genesis 18-19; Leviticus 18  
 GPP ch. 5: “The Subject of the Law,” pp. 105-108 (4pp.)  
 DGS ch. 1: “What is Purity?” (9pp.)  
 DGS ch. 2: “Israel’s Basic Purity Law” (25pp.)  
 Nancy Duff: “How to Discuss Moral Issues Surrounding Homosexuality When You Know You Are Right” (14pp)

April 3

*Purity, gender, and homosexuality: New Testament*

Texts: Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; 1 Corinthians 11:13-15; Galatians 5:16-25;  
1 Timothy 1:8-11

DGS ch. 6: “Paul and Purity” (27pp.)

David Balch: “The Gospel versus Greek Biological and Political Theories of Living ‘According to Nature’ ” (10pp.)

Richard Hays, “Awaiting the Redemption of Our Bodies: The Witness of Scripture Concerning Homosexuality” (14pp.)

Victor Paul Furnish, “The Bible and Homosexuality: Reading the Texts in Context” (15pp.)

Film: “Priest”

April 10

*Review*

DGS ch. 12: “New Testament Sexual Ethics and Today’s World” (30pp.)

Phil Zuckerman and Christel Manning, “Sex and Religion: An Introduction,” in *Sex and Religion* (17pp.)

April 17

*Workshop planning*

April 24

*Workshop I*

May 1

*Workshop II* [Last class]

May 7

Final review due, to be posted on the website by noon, MONDAY, May 7

