Spring, 2015

[When a Library expels a book of mine and leaves an unexpurgated Bible lying around where unprotected youth and age can get hold of it, the deep unconscious irony of it delights me… (Mark Twain, Letter to Mrs. F. G. Whitmore, Feb. 7, 1907)]

JUDA 136/HINE 104

SEX IN THE BIBLE

Instructor:
Prof. William H. C. Propp. Office: 4012 Humanities and Social Sciences (H&SS) Building, Muir campus. Email: wpropp@ucsd.edu. Office phone (only during office hours): 858-534-6187. Office hours: Monday 3-5 pm or by appointment.

Course aim:
To explore ancient Israelite attitudes toward human sexuality through close reading of selected biblical texts. Also considered will be later developments in Judaism and Christianity. Topics include hetero-, homo- and transsexuality, androgyne, puberty, chastity, celibacy, modesty, monogamy, polygamy, (in)fertility, adultery, bastardy, impotency, sodomy, pornography, bestiality, voyeurism, exhibitionism, nudism, transvestitism, onanism, orgasm, phallic symbolism, menstruation, genital mutilation, masturbation, procreation, ejaculation, castration, prostitution, miscegenation, rape, incest, bondage, divine sex, the Oedipus Complex, coitus interruptus (a.k.a. the withdrawal method), aphrodisiacs and groping.

Required/recommended readings:
1. The New Oxford Annotated Bible (NOAB). (If you already own a Bible and prefer to use it, make sure it’s an accurate, reputable translation—definitely not the New International Version popular among American Protestants or any of several orthodox Jewish versions that incorporate traditional rabbinic interpretation and legend into the translation. Note: you will still be required to read the NOAB supplementary essays through course reserves; also note that, depending upon whether your Bible is published for Jews or Christians, citations in the syllabus may be off by a verse or two.)
2. E-reserves and other on-line materials; library e-reserves code wp136
3. Various course materials to be distributed in class

Field Trip:
On April 26, a bus will take those of us wishing to attend to the California Science Center Dead Sea Scrolls exhibition. (Highly recommended) See:

http://californiasciencecenter.org/exhibits/dead-sea-scrolls-the-exhibition

UCSD will cover the cost of transportation and admission!

Lecture Event
On May 21 at 5:00 pm, the co-curator of the CSS exhibit, Prof. Risa Levitt Kohn of San Diego State University, will give a lecture entitled “Jewish and Christian Origins as
Revealed by the Dead Sea Scrolls” at the UCSD Faculty Club (Required unless excused by me).

Course assignments/evaluation:

1. Two 6-10-page essays (ca. 1800-3000 words), each 35% of final grade. Pick a biblical passage dealing some aspect of human sexuality. (This may be one we have studied; if you pick another you must get my approval.) Summarize it briefly, read some commentaries in the library, analyze any details or ambiguities pertinent to your theme; then place the story/law/poem in its broader anthropological/psychological/sociological/literary/biblical context. With my approval you may also write about the later interpretation(s) of your passages. Requires citations (format up to you) and a bibliography. These papers are due on classes 16 (5/4) and 29 (6/5). You must submit, along with a paper copy of your final draft, a marked-up paper copy of your penultimate draft, so I can track your rewriting process.

N.B.: If you come to office hours, I will help you with your paper.

2. A final exam (20%). You will be asked to identify biblical characters we have met and comment briefly on passages discussed in class.

3. Class participation/pop quizzes/oral presentation (10%). There will be six pop quizzes; they should be quite easy, providing you’ve done the reading before class. If you take all six, only the top five scores count. During the last week, you will be asked to make a 5-10-minute oral presentation of an item in the news (or from fiction) and compare it to a biblical passage about sex. Frequent participation throughout the quarter will also add points to this component of your grade.

1. Introduction – why give this course? why take this course? 3/30

Reading for next class:


2. Nature and Culture - what is sexuality? 4/1

Reading for next class:


3. Homo-, hetero-, trans- and asexuality 4/3

Reading for next class:

*NOAB* pp. 2185-2193
4. What is (and isn’t) the “Bible”? 4/6

Reading for next class:

_NOAB_ pp. 2221-2226, 3-6 (pp. 2227-2234 optional)

5. What was (and wasn’t) the Bible? 4/8

Reading for next class:

Genesis chaps. 1-3; 2 Samuel 6:12-23


6. The Big Bang and the origin of sex 4/10

Reading for next class:

Genesis chap. 19; 24:1-3; Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; 2 Samuel 1:17-27


Ibid., “Homosexuality in the Ancient Near East, Beyond Egypt”  _http://epistle.us/hbarticles/neareast.html_


Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, _God’s Phallus_ (Beacon Press, 1994), 81-97

7. Friendship, transsexuality, homosexuality and hospitality 4/13

Reading for next class:


Roland de Vaux, _Ancient Israel_ (McGraw Hill, 1965), 7-8, 24-38, 53-55


8. Monogamy, concubinage and the perils of polygamy 4/15
Reading for next class:

Genesis chap. 39; Exodus 20:14; Leviticus 20:10; Numbers chap. 5; Deuteronomy 22:13-22; 23:2; 1 Samuel 11:1-12:23

9. This lesson is brought to you by the letter “A” 4/17

Reading for next class:


10. The “trophy wife” 4/20

Reading for next class:


http://bhporter.com/Porter%20PDF%20Files/Harlot%20as%20Heroine..pdf


11. The “oldest profession” 4/22

Reading for next class:

Genesis chap. 24; 29:1-20; chap. 38; Exodus chap. 2; Leviticus chap. 15; Deuteronomy 23:10; Ruth (whole book)


12. Single woman desperately seeking husband, or, How to land your man 4/24

Reading for next class:


http://jot.sagepub.com/content/20/67/87.full.pdf+html

13. **Rape - a matter between men 4/27**

Reading for next class:


Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, *God’s Phallus* (Beacon Press, 1994), 128-134

14. **Good breeding vs. inbreeding, or, My sister, my bride 4/29**

Reading for next class:


Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, *The Savage in Judaism* (Indiana University Press, 1990), 177-194


(Optional: Propp, “Physics for Prophets – An Ancient Israelite Delivers a TED Talk” [http://www.bibleinterp.com/PDFs/Propp4.pdf](http://www.bibleinterp.com/PDFs/Propp4.pdf) is a lighter presentation of ideas from the previous reading, developing the nuclear power plant analogy to its logical conclusion--and beyond!)

15. **The “yuck factor” - sexuality and purity 5/1**

Reading for next class:

Exodus 22:19; 31:12-17; Leviticus 19:19; Deuteronomy 7:1-11; 22:5, 9-11; Ezekiel 1:1-14

Leviticus 18:23; 20:15-16; Deuteronomy 27:21; 2 Samuel chap. 12; Ezekiel 23:1-20

Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, *The Savage in Judaism* (Indiana University Press, 1990), 115-140

Simon B. Parker, ed., *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry* (Scholars Press, 1997), 1-5, 148, 181-196

[http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=acls;idno=heb07779](http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=acls;idno=heb07779)

16. Fun with animals 5/4

Reading for next class:


The Book of Enoch chaps. 6-9

http://www.ccel.org/c/charles/otpseudepig/enoch/ENOCH_1.HTM


17. More fun with gods and angels 5/6

Reading for next class:

Song of Songs (whole book)


18. Flirtation and wet dreams 5/8

Reading for next class:


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19. Love ya, Mom 5/13

Reading for next class:

Genesis 19:1-18; Exodus chap. 2; Psalm 45

Simon B. Parker, Ugaritic Narrative Poetry (Scholars Press, 1997), 49-62, 205-214

http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=acls;idno=heb07779

William Propp, Exodus 1-18 (Random House, 1999), 155-158, 174-175

20. **If you search long and hard enough, they’re everywhere - “Freudian” symbols in the Bible 5/15**

Reading for next class:

Genesis chap. 4; Deuteronomy 22:5; Judges chaps. 13-16; 1 Samuel chaps. 9-20, 24, 26; 2 Samuel 1:17-27 (pay attention to sexual symbolism in reference to the masculinity of Samson, Saul, Jonathan and David)

Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, God's Phallus (Beacon Press, 1994), 110-116

21. **Butch and femme: biblical gender-bending 5/18**

Reading for next class:


22. **You want us to cut off the ends of our what?! 5/20**

Reading for next class:


Kathryn M. Ringrose, “Eunuchs in Historical Perspective,” History Compass 5 (207): 495-506

Esther (whole book)


23. Castration, impotence and farce, or, Esther: a biblical sitcom 5/22

Reading for next class:

Deuteronomy 16:21; Judges 6:25; 1 Kings 15:13; 16:33; 18:19; 2 Kings 17:16
Exodus 34:11-16; Numbers chap. 25; 1 Kings 11:1-13; Hosea chaps. 1-3; Jeremiah chaps. 2-3, Ezekiel chaps. 16 and 23
Phyllis Bird, “‘To Play the Harlot’: An Inquiry into an Old Testament Metaphor,” *Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel* (ed. Peggy L. Day; Augsburg Fortress, 1989), 75-94

24. God’s wife (?) and God’s gay lover (!), or, Worship vs. whoreship 5/25

Reading for next class:

NT Matthew 5:27-32; 19:1-26; Mark 12:18-25; Romans 1:14-32; 1 Corinthians chap. 5; 6:9-20; chap. 7; Galatians chap. 5; Colossians 3:1-7; 1 Timothy 1:8-10; Jude 1:7; 1 John 2:12-17; Revelation 14:1-5; 17:1-6
Robert A. Nye, ed., *Sexuality* (Oxford University Press, 1999), 31-66

25. Eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven: sex in the Christian tradition 5/27

Reading for next class:

David Biale, *Eros and the Jews* (University of California Press, 1997), chap. 2
http://publishing.cdlib.org/ucpressebooks/view?docId=ft2489n812&brand=ucpress

26. It’s not just a good idea, it’s the law: sexuality in rabbinic Judaism 5/29

Reading for next class:

http://publishing.cdlib.org/ucpressebooks/view?docId=ft2489n812&brand=ucpress

27. Kabbalistic sex – don’t try this at home 6/1

28. Presentations I 6/3
29. Presentations II 6/5

FINAL EXAM Friday, June 12, 3-6 pm.

Additional Bibliography (Bible)


Esther Fuchs, *Sexual Politics in the Biblical Narrative: Reading the Hebrew Bible as a Woman* (Sheffield Academic Press, 2000)


Susanne Scholz, *Sacred Witness: Rape in the Hebrew Bible* (Fortress, 2010)

Additional Bibliography (sex)


J. H. Geer & W. T. O'Donohue (Eds.), *Theories of Human Sexuality* (pp.335-362). New York: Plenum Press.

