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)

Course aim:

To explore ancient Israelite attitudes toward human sexuality through a close reading of selected biblical texts. Also, we will delve into later rabbinic interpretations of selected texts to ascertain how Jewish views on sexuality have developed over the centuries. Finally, we will examine selected social issues today in light of established Jewish tradition.

Required Readings:

Students are required to purchases and bring to class a Hebrew Bible, also known as The Holy Scriptures. The recommended version is The Tanakh (Jewish Publication Society, 1985) in any size. All readings will be from the English translation; a reading knowledge of Biblical Hebrew is NOT required for this course. All citations will be from the Tanakh so if you use a different Bible, your verses may be not be accurate. Available at the bookstore and from Amazon.com. ISBN: 0827603665.

There will also be extensive supplementary readings posted on Google Docs or Blackboard for this class. Please read them as they are posted. The instructor will email you as to their availability.
A word about language:

Since we are discussing sexuality, we will, of necessity, be speaking of men and women and all of their body parts. In addition, sexuality implies relationships. While the Bible often speaks in direct language, its sensibilities may not always be suitable for our time.

It is our job to recognize that the Bible may at times infuriate us with its positions regarding men, women and relationships. These are grounds for legitimate discussion during class and for your essays and exam.

However, at no time can students or the instructor violate the University Code of Conduct or modern standards of decency when discussing these matters. We must take great care and use objective language when discussing the human body and relationships and never intentionally use derogatory language. Repeated use of derogatory language, shaming or other demeaning activity in speech or in print may lead to disciplinary action.

Course assignments/evaluation:

1. Course attendance 10% There will be a weekly sign-in sheet. More than two unexcused absences will reduce your grade by a full letter value. Excused absences (illness with doctor’s note, out of town with copy of airline ticket, etc.) must be sent to the instructor in advance, whenever possible.
2. Three short papers 30% Each paper (3-5 pages) will be on a specific topic taken from class lectures, notes and readings.
3. Pop quiz 10% Given at a time of the instructor’s discretion.
4. Final exam 50% This will be a comprehensive, essay exam.

Special Accommodation

The Department of Philosophy and Religion Studies at the University of North Texas cooperates with the Office of Disability Accommodation to make reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities, to provide quality educational access. Any person with special circumstances covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act should register with the Office of Disability Accommodation, 1167 Union Circle, Sage Hall, Suite 167 Denton, TX 76203, Voice: (940) 565-4323 Fax: (940) 369-7969, and also inform the instructor of this class.
SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

Note: Reading assignments are due on the date listed.

August 27, 2015

Introduction to the class

• Why give this class?
• Why take this class?
• Review of syllabus
• Small group breakout sessions: What is sexuality?
• Genesis 1-2: Is God a sexual being?
• The first commandment: Be fruitful and multiply.

September 3, 2015

• Is sex a part of creation?
• Are man and woman created equal?
• What are the differences between the creation of man/woman in Genesis 2.1 and the Garden of Eden? Prior to the expulsion, what is the woman’s role vis a vis the man?
• Why were the two trees forbidden?
• What does the serpent represent (Hint: NOT Satan!)?
• Why do they don fig leaves? What is God’s reaction?
• How do the roles of the man and woman change after the expulsion?
• Was Eve pregnant in the Garden of Eden?

Reading assignment: Genesis 1.1 – 4.1

Paper #1: Compare and contrast the two creation stories found in Genesis vis a vis their views of human sexuality. Is there an ideal found in either of these stories? Does the expulsion from Eden change that ideal in any way? Feel free to use outside sources (3-5 pages) Paper due on September 17, 2015.

September 10, 2015

• Did sex cause The Flood?
• Noah: The first drunk
  o Curse of Ham and Canaan
• The covenant of circumcision

Reading assignment: Genesis 6.1- 13; 9.1-28; 17.1-27; Exodus 4.24-26; Joshua 5.1-15
September 17, 2015

The wife as sister and the unwed woman

- Sister-wives
- Rape of Dinah
- Sodom and Gomorrah: The women

Reading Assignment: Genesis 11.26-30; 12.1-20; 20.1-18; 18.16-19.38; 34

Paper #1 Due

September 24, 2015

Friendship and homosexuality in ancient Israel

- Sodom and Gomorrah: The men
- Laws concerning homosexuality
- David and Jonathan

Reading assignment: Genesis 19; Leviticus 18; Leviticus 20.13; 1 Samuel 20; II Samuel 1.17-27

October 1, 2015

Monogamy, concubines and polygamy

- Cain and Abel
- Sarai and Hagar
- Birth of Isaac
- Jacob, Leah and Rachel
- Female servants and captives
- A woman of valor

Reading assignment: Genesis 4; 16; 21.1-21; 24; 29.1-30; 31.13-18; 37.

October 8, 2015

Adultery

- Joseph in Potiphar’s house
- Thou shalt not commit adultery!
- The Holiness Code
The Sotah and the non-virginal wife
David and Bathsheba

**Reading assignment:** Genesis 39; Exodus 20.14; Leviticus 20.10; Numbers 5; Deuteronomy 22.13-22; 23.2, II Samuel 11.1-12.25.

**Paper #2:** Many attempts have been made to explain and/or whitewash David’s seduction of Bathsheba. Using the rabbinical commentaries provided to you (and any Jewish online sources that you can find), explain the rationale for justifying David’s behavior in light of today’s heightened awareness regarding relationships between a male power figure and a woman. Then consider how this paradigm did or did not apply in the Biblical era. (3-5 pages) Due on October 22, 2015.

**October 15, 2015**

The role of the wife

- Sarai before Pharaoh and Abimelech
- Rebekah before Abimelech!
- Acquiring Leah and Rachel, Part 2
- Moses’ mother
- David and Michal (And Avner and Ish-bosheth as well)
- Absalom and David’s concubines
- Adonijah and Abishag
- Solomon’s 700 wives and 200 concubines!

**Reading Assignment:** Genesis 12.10-20; 20; 26.1-16; 29.1-18; Exodus.2; I Samuel 18.17-29; II Samuel 3.1-16; 12.7-12; 15.1-16; 16.20-22; I Kings 1.1-8; 2.12-25; 11.3.

**October 22, 2015**

Prostitution

- Laws of harlotry
- Rahab
- Jephthah
- Solomon and the child
- Harlotry as lust?
- Song of the harlot

**Reading Assignment:** Leviticus 19.29; 21; Deuteronomy 23.17-18; Joshua 2; Judges 11.1-2; I Kings 3.16-28; Proverbs 6.25-27; 7; 29.3; Isaiah 23.

**Paper #2 Due.**
October 29, 2015

The Biblical JDate

- Rebekah
- Rachel and Leah
- Judah and Tamar
- Moses’ mother
- Male ejaculation and woman’s menstruation
- Ruth and Boaz

Reading Assignment: Genesis 24; 29.10-20; 38; Exodus 2; Leviticus 15; Ruth (entire book).

Paper #3: Trace the ancestry of both Ruth and Boaz. (You will be amazed at who their original Biblical ancestors were!) Knowing what the Bible says about their most famous descendendent, please describe what it means for Jewish messianism that King David is descended from such ignoble ancestors. (3-5 pages) Due November 12, 2015.

November 5, 2015

Did women rule the Bible?

- Sarah and Hagar
- Jacob and Rebekah
- Moses’ mother (redux)
- Bridegroom of Blood
- Song of the Sea
- Deborah
- Esther
- Ruth and Tamar (again!)

Reading Assignment: Genesis 21.1-21; 27.1-44; 31.19, 33-35; Exodus 2; 4.24-26; 15. 20-21; Judges 4.4 – 5.31; Esther (entire book).

November 12, 2015

Divine Sex and Biblical Love Poetry

- Let US make man
- Sons of God/Daughters of Man
- Nephilim
- Asherah and Baal
- The Song of Songs
Reading Assignment: Genesis 1.26; 6.1-8; Numbers 13. 21-28, 32-33; Deuteronomy 16.21; Judges 6.25; I Kings 15.13; 16.33; 18.19; II Kings 17.16; Song of Songs (entire Book).

Paper #3 due

November 19, 2016

Marriage, Divorce and Property Rights

- Laws of Marriage
- Levirite Marriage
- Dowry
- Laws of Divorce
- Daughters of Zelophehad

Reading Assignment: Genesis 2.21-25; 3:16; Leviticus 18.8; Genesis 38.6-10; Deuteronomy 25.5-10; Leviticus 20.21; Genesis 4.19; 16.3; Exodus 21.10; Deuteronomy 17.14-17; 21.15-17; I Kings 11.1-3; Exodus 20.14; Genesis 12.14-16; 24.51-53; 29.18-30; Exodus 22.15-16; Deuteronomy 21.10-14; 22.13-21, 28-29; 24.1-5; Numbers 27.1-11; 26.1-13; Joshua 17.1-6.

Note: Please read these verses in the prescribed order as they pertain to the list of topics.

November 26, 2015  NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

December 3, 2015

Biblical Foundations of Today’s Social Issues
Review for Final Exam

- Abortion
- Infertility
- Homosexuality
- Incest


Note: Please read these verses in the prescribed order as they pertain to the list of topics.

December 10, 2015  FINAL EXAM