

RELIGION 632A/2 - AA
Love, Sex and Marriage: Jewish Ethical Arguments

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Wednesday 8:25 - 10:30

Office hours: Wednesdays 2:00 - 4:00
Thursdays 1:30 - 2:30 or by appointment

Description:

Jewish responses to the issues of Love, Sexuality and Marriage will be explored in this graduate seminar. Jews are command to love God and their neighbors. How can we understand that obligation in the context of the modern construct of erotic and romantic love. Marriage considered both an obligation and a blessing, has three purposes. Human sexuality was deemed to have two "proper" purposes in Jewish law. Classical sources, thus, presupposed a restricted framework, but an unrestricted notion of affect and pleasure. The readings will explore the classical and legal sources in framing the Jewish world view on the issue of human sexuality and its consequences. The class will also attempt to understand contemporary Jewish thinking on the subject. To that end, we will discuss the writings of major Orthodox, Reform and Conservative thinkers on the topic. In focusing on the types of arguments used, the recourse to law, tradition, consensus, and universal standards, we will hopefully clarify some issues and get a better understanding of contemporary Judaism and its different interpreters.

Required Texts:

Biale, Rachel. Women and Jewish Law.
Rosner, Fred. Sexual Ethics in the Writings of Moses Maimonides.
Cohen, Seymour (ed. and tr.). The Holy Letters: A Study in Medieval Jewish Sexual Morality.
Bible.

Recommended Texts:

Feldman, David. Marital Relations, Birth Control and Abortion in Jewish Law.
Eilberg-Schwartz, Howard. People of the Body.
Biale, David. Eros & the Jews.
Plaskow, Judith. Standing Again at Siniai.
Borowitz, E. Choosing a Sex Ethic.
Gordis, R. Love and Sex.
Lamm, N. A Hedge of Roses.
Lamm, M. The Jewish Way in Love and Marriage.
Gittelsohn, R. Love, Sex and Marriage.
_____. Consecrated Unto Me.

Requirements:

Class Assignment	30% (3 written critiques of selected readings)
*Research Paper	50%
Class Presentation	20%

*If you wish this work returned you must hand in a stamped, self-addressed envelope with it.

Classes cancelled on Wednesday, October 4, and November 15.

Class will be rescheduled.

OUTLINE

I. Introduction

Purpose of course and parameters of discussion. Brief introduction to Jewish Law and contemporary denominational divisions.

Background reading:

David Feldman ch. I.

J. Neusner, "Torah in America: Movements in American Judaism" in The Life of Torah 1974.

II. Bible: Source & Resource

Read:

a) Gen: 1-3, 20; Exodus 20, 21:1-17.

Leviticus 18,20.

b) Gary Anderson, "The Garden of Eden & Sexuality" in People of the Body.
Phyllis Trible, God & The Rhetoric of Sexuality, ch. 4.

III. Love: of God & of Humans Metaphors

Read:

Hosea

Sons of Songs

Phyllis Trible, ch. 5.

Steven Harvey, "Love" in Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought.

IV. Eros: Embodied Love

Read:

Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, "The Problem of the Body for the People of the Book."

David Biale, "Eros: Sex & Body".

Louis Epstein, "Moral Foundations of Sex Control" in Sex, Laws & Customs.

V. Marriage: Obligation & Blessing

Read:

R. Biale, ch. 5.

Feldman, ch. 4.

M. Lamm, ch. 2, 4-6, 9.

VI. Two Medieval Views

Maimonides & Manuals

Read:

Rosner, Sex Ethics

S. Cohen, The Holy Letter

VII. Sexual Pleasure a Procreation

Read:

Biale, ch. 8.

Feldman, ch. 3-5.

Lamm, ch. 3.

VIII. Sexual Abstentions

Read:

Biale, ch. 6.

R. Adler, "Tumah & Taharah"

Eilberg-Schwartz, Body, ch. 4,12.

Eilberg-Schwartz, Savage, ch. 7.

IX. Some Prohibitions: Adultery, Incest & Rape

Read:

Biale, ch. 7,10.

X. Non Marital Heterosexual Relations

Read:

Borowitz, Choosing a Sex Ethic.

Plus handout.

XI. Non Hetero: Gay & Lesbian Sexuality

Read:

Eilberg-Schwartz, Body, ch. 14.

N. Lamm, "Homosexuality".

E. Dorff, "Report on Sexuality".

Plus ...

XII. Moral Suasion, Denomination Patterns, Future Developments.