

**United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities**  
**Course: TR 415 – Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender Cultural and Theological Voices**  
**Instructor: Chris Smith**  
**Term: Spring 2005**  
**Schedule: Friday Mornings, 8:15 – 11:30 a.m.**

## **SYLLABUS**

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The primary focus of this class will be a critical examination of L/G/B/T contemporary religious and theological voices. The course will invite and require constructive theologizing. Selected cultural literature will deepen an understanding of how L/G/B/T philosophy, social analysis, and community life influence our social and ecclesiastical lives. Even though this course may have particular relevance for L/G/B/T people, cultural and theological insights are critical for us all.

### **COURSE PURPOSES**

- (1) To become acquainted with selected L/G/B/T literature, and to develop a critical analysis of its theological method and content.
- (2) To read selected cultural literature for a greater understanding of the historical evolution of the L/G/B/T liberation movement, and a broader understanding of the diverse issues and concerns related to the lived experience of L/G/B/T people.
- (3) To deepen one's ability to name, articulate, and analyze the connections between heterosexism and the other forms of human injustice and oppression.
- (4) To construct new theological naming, meaning, and categories for religious leadership and ministry drawing upon class discussions, reading assignments, personal and professional experiences, and collegial work.

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

- (1) To do all readings and come to class prepared to participate in discussions.
- (2) To write five three-page reflection papers on selected books beginning the week of March 4.

These reflection papers are to be based on the readings for the five weeks we explore the explicit theological literature, and brought to class the day the book is to be discussed. We will draw upon these papers in our small discussion groups. After each class session you are free to take your reflection paper home, refine it, and turn it in the next week. Use these questions to help focus your reflections:

- a) What is the major assertion of the book, and what is the significance of the work for L/G/B/T lives?
- b) What new insights/learnings come from the reading?
- c) What distinctive contribution is the author claiming she/he is making to the theological and religious conversation about L/G/B/T experience?
- d) What specific critique would you offer in response?  
What is a major weakness of the book?  
What is missing in the author's argument?

**75% of class grade**

- (3) To participate in a learning team of three to four people who will meet weekly in order to reflect critically and constructively on the readings for the class.
- (4) To create a constructive project.

On **May 13** and **May 20** we will share group projects in class. In your small group you will be asked to select a critical issue for L/G/B/T people and create a project that could be used in a ministry setting. It is expected that the project will pull together insights from readings, discussions, films, and classroom experiences.

**Examples:**

- a) A group sermon and liturgy, with the theological and pastoral rationale.
- b) Extensive lesson plans for an adult four-week forum, with the theological and pastoral rationale.
- c) A major workshop focusing on your selected issue and the arts, with theological and pastoral rationale.
- d) Extensive plans for a multi-generational retreat for lesbians, gay men and their families.
- e) An artistic creation with theological and pastoral rationale.

**25% of class grade**

- (5) Opening Prayer/Reflection

Open one class session with prayer/reflection (including table décor) related to L/G/B/T lives. This will not be evaluated, but it is a requirement.

- (6) All work in this class is expected to follow the **Inclusive Language Policy** in the Student Handbook.

- (7) Extensions (4/28/99; Revised 1/17/01)

The work for a course is terminated at the end of the final class session. The performance in the course is evaluated on the basis of the work submitted by that time, unless an exception is made by the instructor, in which case a formal petition for extension must be approved by the instructor by the end of the final class session. Extensions (of course work) beyond the end of the semester will be approved only under extraordinary circumstances. Each instructor will include this policy on each course syllabus as well as the criteria by which she or he will grant such an extraordinary exception.

In the event such an exception is agreed to, the student shall complete the petition for extension form and the instructor shall file the extension form with the registrar by the date grades are due. The Student Review Committee shall monitor extensions. If no petition for extension is filed, a final grade will be submitted.

An extension may be granted for a period not to exceed six months from the end of the term. If the work is not completed by the date petitioned, a final grade will be submitted. Any renewal of an extension must be approved by the instructor and filed with the registrar prior to the due date on the original petition. No extension or its renewal will exceed six months from the end of the term in question.

## TEXTBOOKS

### Required Textbooks:

1. Richard Cleaver and Patricia Myers, editors. *A Certain Terror: Heterosexism, Militarism, Violence and Change*. Chicago: The Great Lakes Regional Office, American Friends Service Committee, 1993.
2. Elizabeth Stuart. *Gay and Lesbian Theologies: Repetitions with Critical Difference*. MPG Books Ltd., 2003.
3. Chris Glaser. *Coming Out As Sacrament*. Westminster/John Knox Press, 1998.

### Textbooks From Which You Will Make Choices

1. Mel White. *Stranger At the Gate: To Be Gay and Christian in America*. Plume, 1995.
2. Leanne McCall Tigert. *Coming Out While Staying In: Struggles and Celebrations of Lesbians, Gays, and Bisexuals in the Church*. United Church Press, 1996.
3. Gary David Comstock. *Gay Theology Without Apology*. Pilgrim Press, 1995.
4. Nancy Wilson. *Our Tribe: Queer Folks, God, Jesus, and the Bible*. Harper, 1995.
5. Leslie Feinberg. *Transgendered Warriors*. Beacon Press, 1996.
6. Debora R. Kolodny. *Blessed BiSpirit: Bisexual People of Faith*. Continuum, 2000.
7. Richard Cleaver. *Know My Name: A Gay Liberation Theology*. Westminster/John Knox Press, 1995.
8. Melanie Morrison. *The Grace of Coming Home: Spirituality, Sexuality, and the Struggle for Justice*. Pilgrim Press, 1995.
9. Marilyn Bennett Alexander and James Preston. *We Were Baptized Too: Claiming God's Grace for Lesbians and Gays*. Westminster/John Knox Press, 1996.
10. Melissa M. Wilcox. *Coming Out in Christianity: Religion, Identity, & Community*. Indiana University Press, 2003.
11. Robert E. Goss and Mona West, editors. *Take Back The Word: A Queer Reading of the Bible*. The Pilgrim Press, 2000.
12. Ken Stone, editor. *Queer Commentary And The Hebrew Bible*. The Pilgrim Press, 2001.
13. Marcella Althaus-Reid. *The Queer God*. Routledge, 2003.
14. Robert E. Goss. *Queering Christ: Beyond Jesus Acted Up*. The Pilgrim Press, 2002.
15. Virginia Ramey Mollenkott. *Omingender*. The Pilgrim Press, 2001.
16. Justin Tanis and the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies in Religion and Ministry. *Transgendered: Theology, Ministry, and Communities of Faith*. The Pilgrim Press, 2003.
17. Leanne McCall Tigert and Maren C. Tirabassi, editors. *Transgendering Faith: Identity, Sexuality, and Spirituality*. The Pilgrim Press, 2004.
18. William L. Countryman and M.R. Ritley. *Gifted By Otherness: Gay and Lesbian Christians in the Church*. Morsehouse Publishing, 2001.
19. Sue-Ellen Jacobs, Wesley Thomas, and Sabine Lang. *Two Spirit People: Native American Gender Identity, Sexuality, and Spirituality*. University of Illinois Press, 1997.
20. Vanessa Sheridan. *Crossing Over: Liberating the Transgendered Christian*. The Pilgrim Press, 2001.

### Supplemental Reading

1. Eric Brandt. *Dangerous Liaisons: Black Gays and the Struggle for Equality*. The New Press, 1999.
2. Kittredge Cherry and Zalmon Sherwood, editors. *Equal Rites: Lesbian and Gay Worship, Ceremonies, and Celebrations*. Westminster/John Knox Press, 1995.
3. Carlo Trujillo, editor. *Chicana Lesbians: The Girls Our Mothers Warned Us About*. Third Woman Press, 1991.

## CLASS SCHEDULE

- February 11**            **Introduction**  
Course Purposes and Readings  
Foundations For Our Work Together  
Moving From Personal Experience to Theological Naming  
  
**Movie:** *"Before Stonewall"*
- February 18**            **Understanding the Gay and Lesbian Liberation Movement**  
Identifying Key Cultural and Social issues  
  
**Movie:** *"After Stonewall"*  
  
**Required Reading:**  
Elizabeth Stuart. *Gay and Lesbian Theologies: Repetitions with Critical Difference.*
- February 25**            **Connecting Heterosexism to Other Systems of Oppression**  
Homophobia  
Class and Ethnicity  
Violence and Militarism  
  
**Required Reading:**  
Richard Cleaver and Patricia Myser, editors. *A Certain Terror: Heterosexism, Militarism, Violence and Change.*
- March 4**                **Gender Issues/Sexuality Issues**  
  
**Required Reading:**  
Choose one the following  
1. Leslie Feinberg, *Transgender Warriors*  
2. Debra Kolodny, *Blessed BiSpirit*  
3. Vanessa Sheridan, *Crossing Over*  
4. Sue-Ellen Jacobs, Wesley Thomas, and Sabine Lang, *Two-Spirit People*  
5. Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, *Omnigender*  
  
**Bring paper to class.**
- March 11**                **Coming Out I: Its Personal, Social, and Theological Implications**  
  
**Movie:** *"Not All Parents Are Straight"*  
  
**Required Reading:**  
Chris Glaser, *Coming Out As Sacrament*  
Urvashi Vaid, "Virtual Equality" in Virtual Equality, pp. 1-34. (**On Reserve**)  
  
**Bring paper to class.**
- March 14-18**            **NO CLASS – READING WEEK**
- March 25**                **NO CLASS – GOOD FRIDAY**

April 1

**Coming Out II: Its Personal, Social, and Theological Implications**

**Reading:**

Continue reading literature on "coming out."

**Readings on Reserve:**

Beam, Joseph. *In the Life*. Introduction

Cherry, Kittredge. *Hide and Speak:*

*How to Free Ourselves From Our Secrets*

Cleaver & Myers, *A Certain Terror*, pp. 264-265, 374-377

Cruikshank, *The Gay and Lesbian Movement*, pp. 46-49, 172-173

Heyward, *Our Passion for Justice*, pp. 75-82

Heyward, *Touching Our Strength*, pp. 20-36

O'Neill, Craig and Ritter, Kathleen. *Coming Out Within:*

*Stages of Spiritual Awakening for Lesbians and Gay Men*

Penelope, Julie and Wolfe, Susan J.

*The Coming Out Stories*, pp. 1-12

Silvera, *Piece of My Heart*, pp. 1-61

Thompson, *Gay Spirit*, pp. 237-254, 259

Please come to this class prepared to reflect upon the nature and meaning of "coming out." Think about the spiritual, social, personal, theological, significance of this process in the lives of L/G/B/T people.

**No paper.**

April 8

**Constructing Theology From a L/G/B/T Perspective - I**

Struggling With the Christian Church

**Required Reading:**

Choose one of the following:

1. Mel White, *Stranger At the Gate*

2. Leanne McCall Tigert, *Coming Out While Staying In*

3. Leanne McCall Tigert and Maren C. Tirabassi, eds., *Transgendering Faith: Identity, Sexuality, and Spirituality*

4. Melissa M. Wilcox, *Coming Out in Christianity*

5. William Countryman and M.R. Ritley, *Gifted By Otherness*

**Bring paper to class.**

April 15

**Constructing Theology From a L/G/B/T Perspective - II**

The Formation of a People

**Required Reading:**

Choose one of the following:

1. Gary David Comstock, *Gay Theology Without Apology*

2. Nancy Wilson, *Our Tribe*

3. Richard Cleaver, *Know My Name*

4. Justin Tanis and the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies in Religion and Ministry, *Transgendered: Theology, Ministry, and Communities of Faith*

**Bring paper to class.**

April 22

**Constructing Theology From a L/G/B/T Perspective - III**  
The Bible

**Required Reading:**

Choose one of the following:

1. Robert E. Goss and Mona West, editors, *Take Back The Word*
2. Ken Stone, editor, *Queer Commentary And The Hebrew Bible*

**Bring paper to class.**

April 29

**Constructing Theology From a L/G/B/T Perspective - IV**  
Jesus - God

**Required Reading:**

Choose one of the following:

1. Robert Goss, *Queering Christ*
2. Marcella Althaus-Reid, *The Queer God*

**Bring paper to class.**

May 6

**Constructing Theology From a L/G/B/T Perspective - V**  
Grace - Baptism

**Required Reading:**

Choose one of the following:

1. Marilyn Alexander and James Preston, *We Were Baptized Too*
2. Melanie Morrison, *The Grace of Coming Home*

**Bring paper to class.**

May 13

Group Projects  
**Implications for Ministry**

May 20

Group Projects  
**Implications for Ministry**  
Reflection and Evaluation

TR415 – LESBIAN/GAY/BISEXUAL/TRANSGENDER  
CULTURAL AND THEOLOGICAL VOICES  
UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY OF THE TWIN CITIES  
Spring Term, 2005

**OPENING WORSHIP SCHEDULE**

February 18

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February 25

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March 4

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March 11

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April 1

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April 8

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April 15

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April 22

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April 29

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May 6

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May 13

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May 20

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