Masculinities in Christianity and Judaism

Syllabus for Religious Studies Course  
Björn Krondorfer, Professor of Religious Studies  
(s SAMPLE)

In Christianity and Judaism, men have struggled with their male identity and have experimented with various notions of masculinity. We trace some of these developments from late antiquity to post-modernity. Along the way, we will meet martyrs & desert fathers, rabbis & soldiers of Christ, celibates & eunuchs, tough Jews & muscular Christians, gay & straight, "menstruating" men & health enthusiasts. Does it matter that the Christian savior was incarnated (became flesh) in a male body? How did men interpret the call to imitate Christ (imitatio Christi)? Did the Rabbis embrace or reject asceticism? What are the links between virility, virtue and sexuality? How did Rabbinic Judaism influence male self-understandings? The seminar introduces students to the new research that is being done in the field of critical men’s studies in religion, which is part of the larger field of gender and religion. We will study ideals, images, constructions and representations of men in the Christian and Jewish traditions. We will read selected primary and secondary literature, providing students with a good introductory overview of the issues involved in such a study.

I. Introduction
1/19  
Introduction  
R: Krondorfer/Culbertson, “Men’ Studies in Religion” (Encyclopedia of World Religions)

1/24  
R: Krondorfer: Introduction

II. Ideals of Masculinity in Late Antiquity
1/26  
Jewish Ethos of Sexuality  
R: David Biale, Eros and the Jews (Excerpts)

1/31  
Roman Ethos of Sexuality  
R: Peter Brown, "Body and City" (in ibid. Body and Society, ch. 1)
Christian Ethos of Sexuality  
R: Peter Brown, “From Apostle to Apologist” (*Body and Society*, ch 2)  

On Pain and Lust: Martyrs and Ascetics  
R: Colleen Conway, “Behold the Man: Masculine Christology and the Fourth Gospel” (*New Testament Masculinities*)  
R: Primary Texts: handouts  

Rabbinic Ideals  
R: Michael Satlow, “Try to be a Man”: *Rabbinic Construction of Masculinity* (19)  

Gnostics and Incarnationalists  
R: Primary Texts: handouts (including “Life of Paul of Thebes”)  

Critical Interlude  
R: Mary Daly, *The Final Cause* (1)  
R: James Newton Poling, *The Cross and Male Violence* (34)  

On Pollution  
R: David Brakke, *Problematization of Nocturnal Emissions in Early Christianity* (24)  

Miles Christi  
R: Mathew Kuefler, *Soldiers of Christ: Christian Masculinity & Militarism* (18)  

Drying out the Body: Desert Fathers  
R: Krondorfer, “Christianity” (*Encyclopedia of Men and Masculinities*)  
R: Primary Texts: *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*  

III. Medieval Ages: From Monasticism to Penitentials  

Monasticism and Confessions  
R: Michel Foucault, *The Battle for Chastity* (3)  
R: Primary Text (handout): John Cassian, *The Conferences* (Excerpts)  

Scholasticism and the Body  
R: Corey Barnes, “Thomas Aquinas on the Body” (*The Embrace of Eros*)  

Penitentials: Of Sodomy and Its Penances  
R: Mark Jordan, *The Discovery of Sodom* (21)  
R: *Medieval Handbook of Penance* (Excerpts)  

SPRING BREAK  

Maimonides on Circumcision  
R: Shaye Cohen, *Why aren’t Jewish Women Circumcised?* (chs. 1 & 6)  
R: Kline Silverman, “Circumcision and Masculinity” (excerpts)  
R: Harry Brod, *Circumcision and the Erection of Patriarchy* (25)  

IV. Humanizing the Imagined Christ: Renaissance and Beyond  

The Sexuality of Christ I: Art History  
R: Leo Steinberg, *The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and in Modern*
### 3/28
Sexuality of Christ II: Exegesis and Hermeneutics  
R: Dale Martin, *Sex and the Single Savior* (15)  
Filmic Vision: *Jesus of Montreal* (Arcand)

### 3/30
Theoretical Interlude  
R: Laurel Schneider, *Homosexuality, Queer Theory, and Christian Theology* (7)  
R: Philip Culbertson, *Designing Men: Reading the Male Body as Text* (10)

### 4/4
The Gay Gaze: Iconography and Saints  
R: Donald Boisvert, *Sanctity and Male Desire: Sebastian and Tarcisius* (29)

### 4/6
**Film: The Passion of the Christ** (Mel Gibson)

#### V. Into Modernity: Modern Anxieties

### 4/11
Voyeurism and Muscular Christianity  
R: Culbertson, “Christian Men’s Movements” (*Encyclopedia of Men and Masculinities*)  
R: Krondorfer, “A Male Passion for Violence” (in *CrossCurrents*)

### 4/13
Remasculinizing Christianity  
R: Sean Gill, *Christian Manliness Unmanned* (22)  
R: Charles Lippy, *Miles to Go: Promise Keepers in Context* (23)

### 4/18
Orthodox Men and Tough Jews  
R: David Landau, *Piety and Power* (Excerpts)  
R: Warren Rosenberg, *Legacy of Rage* (Excerpts)  
R: Paul Breines, *Tough Jews* (Excerpts)

### 4/20
Sissy Boys  
R: Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct* (8)

### 4/25
Receptivity and Its Anxieties  
R: Scott Haldeman, *Receptivity and Revelation* (27)

### 4/27
Conclusion  
R: Krondorfer, *Who’s Afraid of Gay Theology?* (30)

### 4/7
Final Meeting time: Saturday, 9-11:15, **Final essays due**