



Teaching Sexuality and Religion in Higher Education: Embodied Learning, Trauma Sensitive Pedagogy, and Perspective Transformation

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It is difficult to find comprehensive courses, much less texts in Christian, Jewish, or Muslim studies, about sexuality and religion. When theologians do teach sexuality to students preparing for the ministry it is often a special course offering. Traditionally the subject of sexuality has been avoided, and when students are asked whether they have heard a leader address sexuality directly—in worship, a sermon, a class, or a camp training—most answer “never.” However, through a *via negativa* of sorts, sexuality has been taught from the pulpit;

in schools of training; in religious institutions that teach history, scripture, and pastoral care; and through theology itself as it issues prohibitions, affirms world views, negates people’s humanity, and silences or forces submission (or outright rejection) of people who do not fit the accepted norm.

For those of us who do teach sexuality in both liberal arts and theological settings, not teaching sexuality is the problem. Avoiding how human sexuality has been interpreted by the church through time has led to a crisis of institutional and larger faith proportions. Avoiding ethical problems related to abuse of power, sexual abuse, domestic violence, sexual hierarchies of power divided by gender and sexuality, and other issues related to sexual violence has not prepared pastors and faculty well for their work. Whether part of a worshiping community or a teaching institution, all need to confront the denial of human sexuality as a central ethical topic that theologians must address.

This text offers a range of voices and techniques to use in the classroom. It is an anthology that addresses both methods of teaching sexuality and experience-based, theoretical approaches about what students need to learn. The text is divided into four sections. The first section describes the larger methodological approaches of embodiment-, trauma-, and transformational-informed pedagogies. The methods, in a way, are also goals for students of theology and ministry to incorporate into their repertoires of pastoral approaches to people. Section Two is centered on religious studies and addresses a variety of approaches and perspectives including transnational, colonial assumptions, critical teaching about Islam, the erotic, queer studies, and cross-cultural approaches to abortion and religion. Section Three is about religious institutions and theological training itself and includes spirituality and interactive digital pedagogy, role play in Jewish pastoral care, equipping teachers of sexual ethics, and critical fidelity or pastoral confidentiality in the classroom. The last section includes two detailed models of how to approach sexual ethics as a subject in theological education and how to train faculty to teach sexuality and religion. The chapters in this anthology are extremely helpful and needed in the theological academy and in our houses of worship alike.