

WHEATON COLLEGE

Student-Initiated Connection Proposal

Connections Learning Outcomes: As a result of connections students will be able to:

1. Understand how different academic disciplines analyze topics and solve problems
2. Apply methods or concepts from more than one discipline when analyzing topics or solving problems
3. Communicate using more than one different disciplinary perspective
4. Identify other disciplinary connections both in and outside the classroom

DIRECTIONS for structuring and submitting a Self-Initiated Connection Proposal:

The final date to submit the proposal is the "last day to drop a course without record" deadline of the semester in which you plan to take the last course of the Connection. Refer to the academic calendar on the Web for the specific date this semester.

- > A proposed two-course Connection must link courses from at least two different Areas, a three-course Connection must link courses from three areas. **The six areas are:** History (ARHS), Creative Arts (ARCA), Humanities (ARHM), Social Sciences (ARSS), Natural Sciences (ARNS), Math/CS (ARMC).
- > One single course cannot be used in two Connections.
- > You cannot use English 101, Writing, or First Year Seminar, in a Self-Initiated Connection.
- > When including an Independent Study in your proposal, you must also submit a statement that includes a full description of the Independent Study, plus the reading list. *It is the responsibility of the student to provide this information.*
- > **Attention Seniors:** Proposals may not be submitted in your final semester.

Student Name: _____

Date: _____

Wheaton ID: _____

Class Year: _____

Title of Your Proposed Connection: Gender, Sex and the Bible

1. Attach the syllabi from all courses included in this Connection.
2. In a brief essay, identify the inter-connection you have found among these courses. Your essay should address the **Connections Learning Outcomes** found at the top of this page.
3. The faculty teaching each course must read your essay and approve this proposed Connection in the box below.
4. Submit this form, the accompanying essay, and the syllabi to the Committee on Educational Policy, care of the Office of the Provost, Park Hall.

Course #	Course Title	Area	Semester Taken	Faculty Approval
<i>(Example)</i> SOC 230	<i>(Follow this format when filling out your proposal.)</i> Race and Ethnicity	ARSS	Fall 2014	Please print your name and sign below.
WGS 398	Queer Theory		Fall 17	"I have read this proposal and approve it." Print Name: Katherine Mason Signature: <i>Kat Mason</i>
Rel. 298	Gender and Violence in the Bible		Fall 17	"I have read this proposal and approve it." Print Name: Jonathan Brumberg-Kraus Signature: <i>Jonathan Brumberg-Kraus</i>
				"I have read this proposal and approve it." Print Name: Signature:

Approved _____

Date _____

Chair, Committee on Educational Policy

cc: Registrar

revised 08/2015

Gender, Sex and the Bible

I am proposing a two-course connection between the classes, Gender and Violence in the Bible, a Religion studies course, and Queer Theory, a Women and Gender Studies course. The approaches of Gender and Violence in the Bible include analyzing the Hebrew Bible and the way its interpretations have evolved into the modern day. The sacred text the class examines show literary and visual depictions of sexual violence, power dichotomies, and gender normativity -- which continue to impact our present cultural understandings of bodies and their identities. Queer Theory, in contrast, applies a *theoretical* framework to the ways in which the queer community has been oppressed by the normalization of heterosexual structures. However, Queer Theory connects to Gender and Violence in the Bible because it helps understand the questions of what, why, and how the oppressive heteronormative structure has kept the LGBTQ community excluded, shamed, and powerless. The sacred Biblical texts in Gender and Violence in the Bible complements this theoretical perspective by focusing on where these historically oppressive structures come from and what they mean for minority groups in the peripherals of normalized sexualities.

Gender and Violence in the Bible, taught by Professor Brumberg-Kraus has provided discussion and analyses of such Biblical readings from Genesis, the Apostles, and modern day analyses from biblical scholars such as Jennifer Knust, author of, "Unprotected Texts: The Bible's Surprising Contradictions about Sex and Desire." Our class focuses on themes of power hierarchies between men and women as well as the

strict guidelines each must follow to be considered “normal” within their gender confines. For example, readings from Genesis represent sexuality in terms of marriage and fertility and the roles men and women have in its myth of the origins of humankind. In other Biblical stories and laws, heterosexual marriage is accepted, homosexual marriage is indulgent and sinful (though with some important exceptions Knust points out). Marriage prevails as a widely heterosexual structure only recently challenged by the introduction of gay marriage laws. Also, in many of the Biblical stories, women, LGBTQ people, infertile women, women of “alien nations,” and different sexualities or ambiguous sexes are considered abnormal and sinful to the constructed notions of marriage. These ideas, projected through Jewish and Christian traditions, have thus continued to construct society’s values and beliefs on such social systems as marriage. The discussion of marriage, as an example, leaves our class with historical as well as present day interpretations on how and on what terms marriage, familial relationships, one’s gender and sexual roles should comply by in daily life. The Bible and its interpretations help us to reflect on the values and beliefs that socially normalize certain acts within systems as marriage and place excluded acts in a category of abnormal nature.

Queer Theory, taught by Professor Mason pushes the class to deeply reflect, question, and apply the Queer and Feminist theories we dissect. Many of the theories address what is considered to be “normal” or apart of the “majority” such as being heterosexual, a white male and cisgender, or complying with the gender norms of dress, hair style, manner etc. These structures normalize heterosexual identities and practices while inherently oppressing identities included in the LGBTQ+ community. The theorists we read not only discuss these challenges of being part of a minority group in the face of

heteronormative structures, but also challenge these normative values to revolutionize a way of thinking that is inclusive to all gender, sex, and sexual non-conforming or conforming identities. One theory, from Feminist theorist Audre Lorde, asks her readers to find the core of their shame and use it as a liberating power in the face of those who wish to use that shame as an suppressive tool. This exemplifies the ideas proposed to challenge the oppressive majority discourse. Using the theoretical strategies from the first couple of weeks of class, we then dissect modern day perspectives of the varying Queer identities in order to challenge the normalization and exclusion of certain identities over others.

Where Gender and Violence in the Bible gives historical interpretations of sacred Biblical texts and their understandings throughout time, Queer Theory uses a theoretical framework to challenge the constricting and normalizing societal structures of gender, sex and sexuality. Both classes have differing approaches to analyzing and questioning the structures of sex, sexuality, and gender though they come together to deconstruct the constricting views and representations of male versus female, heterosexual versus homosexual -- which begin to produce exclusive meanings of “good” versus “bad”, and “normal” versus “abnormal”. By connecting the two classes, I have the opportunity to apply the Queer theory in practice. Thus I have discussed particular assignments with Professors Mason and Brumberg-Kraus in which I will write papers that use Queer theory to interpret specific Biblical passages that represent gender and sexuality. Thus, I gain an overall understanding to the questions of how these concrete beliefs and values on gender, sex and sexuality come from, how they are performed, what utilizations are crafted to keep them this way, and why they have prevailed. Thus, I can use the

theoretical strategies learned in Queer Theory to understand and analyze the readings in the Bible, where examples of normalized societal systems within Biblical texts can help me to answer origin questions in Queer Theory.