SYLLABUS: LGBTQ Jewish Thinking

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Overview

This course aims to provide an overview of LGBTQ Jewish thinking to prepare pluralistic rabbinical students to understand both traditional and progressive approaches to working with LGBTQ Jews, and to begin to formulate their own theology and rabbinical approach. We will discuss Torah and rabbinic sources, along with contemporary queer theory, before addressing perspectives of current Jewish scholars, rabbis and organizations. An overview of pastoral dynamics and ritual considerations will also be explored, in order to prepare students to identify their own rabbinic approach and perspective.

Learning Objectives

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Explain common pastoral concerns facing LGBTQ Jews and their loved ones
- Identify contemporary social justice concerns facing LGBTQ Jews and their loved ones
- Identify the traditional Torah and rabbinic texts relevant to LGBTQ Jewish thinking
- Identify several queer-positive approaches to understanding these traditional texts
- Define relevant terms and concepts from contemporary queer theory
- Identify halachic responses to LGBTQ contemporary concerns
- Identify progressive Jewish responses to LGBTQ contemporary concerns
- Identify community resources and approaches to ritual that can help LGBTQ Jews and their loved ones
- Begin to articulate one's own rabbinic approach to dealing with the unique pastoral needs of LGBTQ Jews and their families

Readings and Texts

Address, R. F., Kushner, J. L. & Mitelman, G. (2007) *Kulanu: All of Us- A Program and Resources Guide for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and transgender Inclusion, A Handbook for UAHC Congregations*, UAHC Task Force on Lesbian and Gay Inclusion

Balka, C. & Rose, A. Eds. (1989): *Twice Blessed: On Being Lesbian, Gay and Jewish,*

Barker, M. J., & Scheele, J. (2016). *Queer, A Graphic History*. Icon Books Ltd.: London, UK

Kaufman, G. (1996) *Coming out of Shame: Transforming Gay and Lesbian Lives*, Doubleday press

Plaskow, J (2005) 'Dismantling the Gender Binary within Judaism' in *The Coming of Lilith: Essays on Feminism, Judaism and Sexual Ethics 1972–2003*, Boston

Gluck, R. (1993) *Homosexuality and Judaism: A Reconstructionist Workshop Series,* http://www.jrf.org/pub/cat-papers.html

Readings that are provided

Adler, R. (2016). Queer Jews Talking Their Way in, *European Judaism, 49*(2), 6-13. Retrieved: //www.berghahnjournals.com/view/journals/european-judaism/49/2/ej490203.xml

Boyarin, D. (2009) "Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and Jewish Masculinity," in Björn Krondorfer, Ed., *Men and Masculinities in Christianity and Judaism: A Critical Reader* SCM: London, 79–95 (photocopy provided)

Butler, J. (1990) "Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity", Linda J. Nicholson, Ed. *Thinking Gender*, Routledge: NY (photocopy provided)

Conley, C. & Siritsky, N. (2019) An Investigation of Differences between Jewish and Christian Parents' Concerns about Having Gay or Lesbian Children, *Forthcoming*, (photocopy provided)

Dershowitz, I. (2018) The Secret History of Leviticus, *New York Times,* (photocopy provided): https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/21/opinion/sunday/bible-prohibit-gay-sex.html

Dorff, E. N., Nevins, D. S. & Reisner, A. I. (2005) "Homosexuality, Human Dignity and Halakhah: A Combined Responsum for the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards," *Committee on Jewish Law and Standards,* www.rabbinicalassembly.org (photocopy provided)

Freeman-Coppadge, D. J. (2019) *From Conflict to Thriving: Well-Being at the Intersection of Sexual Orientation, Gender and Spiritual Identities,* 6th Annual Interprofessional Forum on Ethics and Religion in Healthcare (photocopy provided) (https://www.nursing.umaryland.edu/media/son/academics/professional-education/Intersectionality-of-Sexuality-Gender-and-Religion-Spirituality-ONLINE.pdf)

Keshet "Overview of textual sources" www.keshetonline.org (photocopy provided)

Kukla, E. (2006) "A Created Being of Its Own: Toward a Jewish Liberation Theology for Men, Women and Everyone Else", *Transtorah.org* (photocopy provided)

http://ijso.huc.edu/jhvrc/resources.html

Kukla, E. and Zellman, R. (2007) Making your Jewish community trans-friendly, *Transtorah.org* (photocopy provided)

Lappe, B. (2003) "Educating rabbis to be traditional radicals… once again", www.svara.org, (photocopy provided)

Lappe, B. (2006) "The New Rabbis: A Postscript", *Postscript for Torah Queeries*, www.svara.org, (photocopy provided)

Lappe, B. (2013) "Find your Queer" www.svara.org, (photocopy provided)

Rich, A. (1980) "Compulsory Heterosexuality and the Lesbian Existence" in *Signs 5:4 Women: Sex and Sexuality*, 631-660 (photocopy provided)

Rynhold, D. (2005) "Compassion and Halakhic Limits*: A Review of Judaism and Homosexuality: An Authentic Orthodox View* by Chaim Rapoport, *The Edah Journal* 5:1 (photocopy provided)

Scales:
Heterosexual privilege scale (photocopy provided)

Additional Resources:
Keshet Reading List and Keshet Overview of textual sources (provided)

www.transtorah.org

https://www.reconstructingjudaism.org/cause/lgbtq
https://svara.org/tedx/

Religious Action Center and Keshet (2015) *Trans Inclusion Guide for Congregations* (rac.org) (photocopy provided)

Institute for Judaism and Sexual Orientation Resource List, Hebrew Union College_ Jewish Institute of Religion, (provided)

Course Outline

Session #1
Introduction to the class
Overview of Torah and rabbinic texts

Session #2
Common pastoral concerns of LGBTQ Jews
Common social justice concerns facing LGBTQ individuals
Pastoral counseling interventions

Session #3
Introduction to Queer Theory
Overview of terms and concepts
The difference between gender and sexuality
Issues of identity

Session #4
Queering Jewish Texts: Revisiting the hermeneutics of interpretation
Using queer theory to "darshan" the Torah
Queering your own theology and rabbinate

Session #5
Contemporary traditional halachic responses
Denominational responses

Community resources

Session #6
Beginning to define your own theology
The different between espoused and operational theology
Practical rabbinic implications
Rituals and synagogue policies and more…

Assignments and Assessments

Each class will be followed by a short quiz, and students will be encouraged to read and watch videos, as well as to begin preparing their own rabbinic portfolio to include sample rituals, ceremonies and sermons on the topic

Reading Assignments for each class:

Session 1 and 2- Syllabus and class content, Overview of textual sources, Coming out of Shame and Twice Blessed; From Conflict to Thriving, Heterosexual Privilege Scale and COLPAG scale

Session 3 and 4- Queer: A Graphic History, Adler, Plaskow, Boyarin, Butler, Dershowitz, Rich, Lappe

Session 5 and 6- Gluck, Dorff, Rynhold, Kukla, Address, Religious Action Center, Kulanu, Resource Lists, transtorah.org, reconstructingjudaism.org, https://svara.org/tedx/