

# Colleges offer courses on 'queering' children, the Bible

This school year, colleges and universities across the country will be offering courses on "queering" children, the Bible, and theology in general.

Pomona College, for instance, will offer a course arguing that "the figure of the Child" is used to "justify continued cultural investment in reproductive heteronormativity and productive ablebodiedness."

Courses on "queer theologies," meanwhile, will be taught at Harvard Divinity School, Swarthmore College, the University of San Francisco, Eugene Lang College, and the University of Pennsylvania.



This school year, students across the country will attend courses on "Queering the Bible," "Queering Childhood," "Queering Theology," and similar topics.

Students at Pomona College in Claremont, California, for instance, will have the opportunity to enroll in a brand new course titled "Queering Childhood," which will examine "the figure of the Child and how this figuration is used by politics, law, and medicine to justify continued cultural investment in reproductive heteronormativity and productive ablebodiedness."

The course description explains that students will examine the childhoods of "queer and crip children," as well as "childhoods against which the figure of the Child is articulated," with reference to work related to "gender studies, childhood studies, disability studies, and queer theory."

[RELATED: Princeton course will teach students to 'read queerly']

Colleges are not only attempting to "queer" childhood, they are teaching students to "queer" Christianity and religion in general, as well.

This fall, Eugene Lang College will offer a course titled "Queering and Decolonizing Theology," where students will explore topics such as "the sexual ethics and ritualization found in the S&M community," and "transgender Christs."

“Christian theology is often depicted as a violent colonial force standing in particular opposition to LGBTQI lives. However, over the last 30 years people of faith, activists, and theorists alike have rediscovered what is queer within Christianity, uncovered what is religious within secular queer communities, and used postcolonial theory to decolonize lived religious practices and theologies,” the course description asserts.

According to the college, the course “explores secular philosophies of queer and postcolonial theory as well as their critical and constructive application to religion,” focusing on topics like “the sexual ethics and ritualization found in the S&M community, transgender Christs, and the mestiza (or mixed) cultures of Latin America.”

[RELATED: Theology prof writes book connecting Christianity to racism]

Similarly, students at Harvard Divinity School will be able to attend a course on “Queer Theologies, Queer Religions” this fall, which will explore the “project of ‘queer theology’” and how it relates to “larger aspirations of queer religion or spirituality in America.”

In this course, students will begin by “sampling the efforts to revise traditional Christian theologies in order to accept or affirm same-sex loves.” After that, they will move on to examining “forgotten possibilities in historical engagements between advocates of homosexual rights and established religious bodies (chiefly churches and synagogues).”

“We will consider the boundaries between queer theology and queer theory or between it and other political theologies,” the course description explains. “We will test the boundaries of ‘Christianity’ while considering the varied forms of queer religion outside familiar religious institutions—in spirituality or spiritualism, in magic or neo-paganism, in erotic asceticism.”

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Swarthmore College students, meanwhile, will survey “queer and trans\* readings of biblical texts” during a course titled “Queering the Bible,” which will introduce them to “the complexity of constructions of sex, gender, and identity in one of the most influential literary works produced in ancient times.”

“By reading the Bible with the methods of queer and trans\* theoretical approaches,” the description promises, “this class destabilizes long held assumptions about what the [B]ible—and religion—says about gender and sexuality.”

The University of San Francisco is also getting into the act with a course on “Christian Feminist Theology” that aims to “develop an understanding of how feminist scholarship provides one fruitful means towards reappropriation of central Christian insights about God.”

The course will facilitate “critical reflection upon the experience of God, and insights from feminist thought,” according to the description.

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In a similar vein, students enrolled in the University of Pennsylvania’s “Gender, Sexuality, and Religion” course “will read religion through a variety of feminist and queer theory lenses- exploring the key characteristics of diverse feminist analyses of religion, as well as limits of specific feminist approaches.”

“In this course we will learn about women’s and men’s rituals, social roles, and mythologies in specific religious traditions,” the course description explains. “We will also look at the central significance of gender to the field of religious studies generally, with particular attention to non-binary genders.”

To that end, the course will address questions such as “How important are the gender differences in deciding social roles, ritual activities, and spiritual vocations?” and “How does gender intersect with nationality, language, and politics?”

*Campus Reform* reached out to each of the schools mentioned in this report for additional comment on the courses in question, and is currently awaiting responses. This article will be updated if and when any of them provide a statement.

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