



Chalmers Summer School 2007

March 13, 2007

Eros, Sexuality, and Theology

Dr. Kwok Pui-lan

July 23-27; 1:30-4:30pm

Course Description

Why are Christians afraid of Eros? What has sexuality to do with theology? Why is it difficult to talk about Eros and sexuality in the church? Why are mainline denominations preoccupied with issues of human sexuality? What has the erotic to do with our spiritual practice? This course introduces recent writings on these topics and presents constructive proposals for an embodied and passionate theology.

We will explore the meaning of Eros from a cross-cultural perspective, and discuss the relationship between human desire and the desire for God. We will explore the shape of erotic imagination and its relation to our deepest longing for God through poetry, literature, and other art forms.

Course Format

This course will integrate academic and experiential learning, with lectures, group discussion of primary sources and other activities.

Class Outline

Monday July 23

Introduction to the course: content and process. The different understandings of Eros. The relation between Eros, sexuality, and theology. Sexuality as socially constructed. Embodiment, human desire, and experience of God.

Tuesday July 24

Erotic imagination of the Bible: focusing on the Song of Songs and the Book of Ruth.

Wednesday July 25

Eros and the love of God: historical trajectory, the language of the mystics, and contemporary articulations.

Thursday July 26

Eros and Jesus: Jesus as divine Eros, the erotic power of God, and toward an embodied sexual theology

Friday July 27

Eros and the Church: phobias about Eros in the church, historical memory and contemporary issues, the church's healing ministry

Required Course Texts: (Students expected to read these texts prior to course)

1. The Song of Songs and the Book of Ruth in the Bible (NRSV)
2. Brock, Rita Nakashima. Journeys by Heart: A Christology of Erotic Power. New York: Crossroad, 1988. ISBN 0-8245-1082-8
3. Carr, David M.. The Erotic Word: Sexuality, Spirituality, and the Bible. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003. ISBN 0-1951-816-2

4. Ellison, Marvin M, and Sylvia Thorson-Smith, eds. Body and Soul: Rethinking Sexuality as Justice-Love. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2003. ISBN 0-8298-1561-9

Recommended Reading: (Referred to in class, and for research, not necessary to purchase.)

- Farley, Wendy. The Wounding and Healing of Desire: Weaving Heaven and Earth. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2005.
- Heyward, Carter. Touching Our Strength: The Erotic as Power and the Love of God. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1989.
- Jordan, Mark D. Telling Truths in Church: Scandal, Flesh, and Christian Speech. Boston: Beacon, 2004.
- Pinn, Anthony B, and Dwight N. Hopkins, eds. Loving the Body: Black Religious Studies and the Erotic. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

Course Requirements

1. All participants are required to attend daily and engage the learning process for classroom lectures and seminars.
2. All students will be expected to do pre-reading of primary texts for the course, and do limited reading of handouts between classes (approximately one hour per day). Attendance is mandatory and class participation is expected.
3. In order to receive credit for the course, Diploma, Certificate and Continuing Education students must read three of the assigned texts.
4. For those taking the course for degree credit, (Diploma, M.Div., M.A.T.S., M.A.R.E., Th.M., or D.Min.), see “**Summer School Degree Credit Evaluation Information**” handout for paper requirements.
5. For those taking the course for Chalmers Institute Summer School Continuing Education credit, see handout, “**Summer School Continuing Education Credit Information**,” for requirements.

For all credit students there will be an extra one-hour meeting with the course grading tutor, additional to class time, for each course, to review credit requirements and decide on an appropriate research topic.

Kwok Pui-lan is William F. Cole Professor of Christian Theology and Spirituality at Episcopal Divinity School, Cambridge, MA. She has published extensively in Asian feminist theology, biblical hermeneutics, and postcolonial criticism. Her most recent book is *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology*.

**All books will be available from the UBC Bookstore by May 15th.
604-822-2665; Email: bkstore@interchange.ubc.ca**