IPT5/720 (3 credits) Gender and Sexuality in Religious Traditions

Instructor: Rabbi Dr. Laura Duhan Kaplan  
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Office hours during term: T,W, Th 1:00-6:00 pm & by appointment

Purpose: Today’s spiritual leaders will confront questions about gender and sexuality. These affect our experience of our own traditions as well as our perception of other traditions. In this introductory course, we will focus on three issues common to Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Indigenous traditions. (1) Origin stories of the first human beings and their implication for gender norms. (2) Scriptural traditions used to condemn and support same-sex relationships. (3) Women’s religious roles, including religious clothing.

As we explore the issues using theological language, we will be mindful of each tradition’s unique history, view of God, and reliance on religious law. Students will also consider their own leadership roles in addressing these issues within their communities of faith.

Competence Objectives: Students will be expected to learn and demonstrate the ability to:
- Define basic concepts in gender studies (e.g., human rights, sex vs. gender, stereotypes, intersectionality, feminisms, equality vs. equity)
- Explain questions about gender raised in human origin stories from Torah, Quran, and Haida traditions, along with selected multiple answers offered in the traditions
- Summarize key debates about LGBTQ identity as expressed in the particular language and contemporary social context of the four traditions
- Understand some contemporary discussions about religious roles of women in the four traditions, with sensitivity to multicultural contexts
- Integrate the knowledge into one’s own leadership approach

Format: Tuesdays, 2:00 pm – 5:00 pm.

Identification of the levels at which the course can be taken: Audit, Certificate, Basic (Diploma/MA/M.Div) or Advanced (Th.M).

Required text: Available in kindle or paperback at Amazon.ca; paperback at chapters.indigo.ca or abebooks.com


Required texts: A selected chapter from each will be posted on Canvas


**Recommended text:** If you are new to Judaism, Islam, or Christianity, please read the relevant chapters in this book.


**Recommended reading:** Additional short readings may be posted on Canvas during the term.

**Assignments:** For all students:

- Attendance in accordance with VST policies
- Thoughtful, engaged participation in class discussion and activities
- Completion of assigned readings
- Current events in-class presentation: One five-minute in-class oral presentation on a relevant recent short news or opinion article. Suggested sites will be listed in class. Your presentation should (1) present the main point of the article; (2) Offer your response to it; (3) Close with a thought-provoking question to the class; (4) Last no more than five minutes. (If you write it out in advance, that’s 500 words.) Each week where no guest speaker is scheduled, one or more students will present. A sign-up sheet will be distributed at the first class.

**Additional for Certificate-level, Basic-level, and Advanced-level students:**

- **Book Review:** One 750-1000 word book review of a book on the course bibliography. Your book review should (1) summarize the main points of the book; (2) explain how the book contributes to your growing knowledge of the field; (3) note something you appreciated; (3) note something you disagreed with, or thought could use more development. Book reviews will be made available to fellow students in class.
Additional for Basic-level students (MATS, M.Div, MAPPL, MAIIS, Diploma):
  • **Research Paper:** A 3000-word research paper on a topic of the student’s choice, demonstrating two or more of the course competencies, and involving research (5 sources) beyond the assigned course readings.

Additional for Advanced-level students (Th.M., Graduate Diploma):
  • **Research Paper:** A 5000-word research paper on a topic of the student’s choice, demonstrating two or more of the course competencies, and involving significant research (10 sources) beyond the assigned course readings.

**Prerequisites:** None.

**Selected Bibliography:**


