

**TESP 124 – Theology of Marriage**  
**Department of Religious Studies**  
Fulfills **RTC 3** core curriculum requirement

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**Course Meetings:** Summer Session 1 2017, June 22 – July 26 online

**Course Description**

In this course, which fulfills **RTC 3** core curriculum requirement, students will examine their own and others' intimate relationships through the lenses of social sciences and theology. In the first five course modules, students will explore social scientific and theological perspectives on the roles of 1) intimate relationship, 2) romantic commitment, 3) social-scientific perspectives on marriage, 4) theological perspectives on marriage and 5) sexuality in physical, psychological, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing. During these modules, students will collect social scientific and theological "tools" for creating, sustaining, and repairing healthy intimate relationships. In the final module, students will apply these tools to a variety of case studies taken from their own and others' relationships, in order to understand how interpersonal and theological ideals apply to real-world situations. Topics covered include global theological perspectives on marriage, same-sex union, polyamory, and inter-racial marriage.

**Course Objectives**

After taking this course, students will be able to:

1. Summarize theological perspectives on marriage from a variety of historical, cultural, gender, and global locations.
2. Apply a variety of social-scientific and theological perspectives on intimate relationships in order to evaluate contemporary marriage issues.
3. Articulate perspectives on and concerns about interpersonal relationships and describe how these perspectives may have changed over the course of the class.
4. Identify theological resources and relational skills to augment the student's existing interpersonal skills.

**Core Curriculum Learning Goals – Religion, Theology, and Culture (RTC) 3**

1. **Critical Thinking:** The ability to identify, reflect upon, evaluate, integrate, and apply different types of information and knowledge to form independent judgments.
2. **Ethical Reasoning:** Drawing on ethical traditions to assess the consequences of individual and institutional decisions.
3. **Religious Reflection:** Questioning and clarifying beliefs through critical inquiry into faith and the religious dimensions of human existence.
4. **Perspective:** Seeking out the experience of different cultures and people, striving to view the world through their eyes.

### **Core Curriculum Learning Objectives – Religion, Theology, and Culture (RTC) 3**

- 1 Identify diverse perspectives on and evaluate ethical implications of past or present issues of enduring relevance. (Critical Thinking; Ethical Reasoning; Perspective)
- 2 Evaluate and apply insights from the study of religion to open-ended issues facing societies, past or present. (Religious Reflection)

### **Religion Department Objectives**

1. Students question and probe religion for what it reveals about human beings, their diverse societies, traditions, convictions and aspirations.
2. Students use diverse materials and demonstrate formal postures of inquiry into religion and in order to go beyond simple description of religion to a reflective engagement with it.
3. Students propose and investigate the “big questions” – that is, the meta-reflective questions that ask how and why we ask the questions that we do about religion.

### **Required Reading**

#### *Textbooks:*

John M. Gottman, *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work* (New York: Harmony Books, 1999 and 2015).

Kieran Scott and Michael Warren, eds., *Perspectives on Marriage: A Reader*, Third Edition (New York: Oxford, 2007).

*Other Materials:* Available on the Camino course website

### **Grading**

#### *Participation – 25%*

Grade is based on participation in discussion threads. For each discussion topic, the student creates an initial video offering his/her perspectives on a reading, something troubling or intriguing about which s/he wants to begin a conversation. All students view each video and engage the topics on discussion threads. (*Core objective #1; Core objective #2*)

#### *Reflection Papers and Projects – 30%*

In reflection papers and projects, students demonstrate their grasp of key concepts and explore a variety of perspectives on intimate relationships. Topics include student perspectives on healthy relationships and relationship struggles; theological perspectives on intimate relationship; and social-scientific and theological approaches to transforming problems in intimate relationships. (*Core objective #1; Core objective #2*).

#### *Case Study Short Papers – 25%*

Students analyze a variety of real-life relationship problems and offer theological and social-scientific perspectives and options to transform these situations. (*Core objective #1; Core objective #2*).

#### *Final Essay – 20%*

The final paper is an articulation of the student’s end-of-class perspectives on what constitutes a healthy, God-centered relationship; a reflection on how these perspectives have changed during the course; and an opportunity for the student to apply social-scientific and theological resources gained in the course to the student’s own toughest relationship problem. (*Core objective #1; Core objective #2*).

### **Late Assignments**

Late assignments will receive a full-grade deduction for each day late. Thus one day late reduces an A assignment to a B, two days late reduces an A assignment to a C, etc.

### **Grading Scale**

A	=	93-100
A-	=	90-92
B+	=	87-89
B	=	83-86
B-	=	80-82
C+	=	77-79
C	=	73-76
C-	=	70-72
D+	=	67-69
D	=	63-66
D-	=	60-62
F	=	59 or lower

### **Feedback**

I will provide individual feedback to students on reflection papers and essays, pointing out successes and offering constructive feedback on ways to improve weaker areas. Because I post all grades on Camino, students will have ongoing access to information regarding their progress in the class. I encourage and welcome all students to contact me to discuss their experience in the course and address any questions or struggles they might have.

### **Course Evaluation**

I offer students two narrative evaluation opportunities: early in the course and at the end of the course. I use the first evaluation to make immediate adjustments in response to student concerns wherever possible.

### **Academic Integrity Pledge**

The Academic Integrity pledge is an expression of the University's commitment to fostering an understanding of -- and commitment to -- a culture of integrity at Santa Clara University. The Academic Integrity pledge, which applies to all students, states: "I am committed to being a person of integrity. I pledge, as a member of the Santa Clara University community, to abide by and uphold the standards of academic integrity contained in the Student Conduct Code." Students are expected to uphold the principles of this pledge for all work in this class.

### **Disability Resources**

If you have a disability for which accommodations may be required in this class, please contact Disabilities Resources, Benson 216, (408) 554-4109, [www.scu.edu/disabilities](http://www.scu.edu/disabilities) as soon as possible to discuss your needs and register for accommodations with the University. If you have already arranged accommodations through Disabilities Resources, please discuss them with me. Students who have medical needs related to pregnancy or parenting may be eligible for accommodations. While I am happy to assist you, I am unable to provide accommodations until I have received verification from Disabilities Resources.

### **Accommodations for Pregnancy and Parenting**

In alignment with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and with the California Education Code, Section 66281.7, Santa Clara University provides reasonable accommodations to students who are pregnant, have recently experienced childbirth, and/or have medically related needs. Pregnant and parenting students can often arrange accommodations by working directly with their instructors, supervisors, or departments. Alternatively, a pregnant or parenting student experiencing related medical conditions may request accommodations through Disability Resources.

### **Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct (Title IX)**

Santa Clara University upholds a zero-tolerance policy for discrimination, harassment and sexual misconduct. If you, or someone you know, have experienced discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, domestic/dating violence, or stalking, I encourage you to tell someone promptly. For more information, please consult the University's Gender-Based Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct Policy or contact the University's EEO and Title IX Coordinator, Belinda Guthrie, at 408-554-3043, [bguthrie@scu.edu](mailto:bguthrie@scu.edu). Reports may be submitted online through <https://www.scu.edu/osl/report/> or anonymously through Ethicspoint <https://www.scu.edu/hr/quick-links/ethicspoint/>

### **Reporting Practices**

I want you to feel comfortable coming to me with issues you may be struggling with or concerns you may be having. At the same time, please be aware that there are some reporting requirements that are part of my job at Santa Clara University. For example, if you inform me of an issue of harassment, sexual violence, or discrimination, I will keep the information as private as I can, but I am required to bring it to the attention of the institution's EEO and Title IX Coordinator. If you inform me that you are struggling with an issue that may be resulting in, or caused by, traumatic or unusual stress, I will likely inform the campus Student Care Team (SCU CARE). If you would like to reach out directly to the Student Care Team for assistance, you can contact them at [www.scu.edu/osl/report](http://www.scu.edu/osl/report). Additionally, you can report incidents or complaints to the Office of Student Life (OSL), Campus Safety Services, and local law enforcement. For confidential support, contact the Counseling and Psychological Services office, the YWCA, or a member of the clergy (for example, a priest or minister).

Finally, please be aware that if, for some reason, our interaction involves a disruptive behavior, a concern about your safety or the safety of others, or potential violation of University policy, I will inform the Office of Student Life. The purpose of this is to keep OSL apprised of incidents of concern, and to ensure that students can receive or stay connected to the academic support and student wellness services they need.

## PRE-COURSE MODULE: COURSE OVERVIEW

### Materials:

1. Multimedia Course Overview
2. Syllabus

### Assignments:

1. Quiz on course introduction and syllabus
2. Opening Reflection: 7 pages
  - a. Relationship Continuum: Things I won't tolerate > Things I must have
  - b. Your perspective on a healthy, God-centered relationship
  - c. Theology of marriage (Where does God come into a marriage, and what does God do in the marriage?)
  - d. Single toughest relationship problem that you had – describe an episode in the past (this will be shared with fellow students, but anonymously and edited)
  - e. What is the single thing (in general terms) that makes it tough for you to be in an intimate relationship?

## MODULE 1: INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP

### Materials:

#### *Perspectives on Marriage*

- Chapter 28: Benedict Carey, "Watching New Love as it Sears the Brain"
- Chapter 19: Robert Johnson, "Beyond Romance to Human Love"
- Chapter 21: Allen Wheelis, "How People Change"
- Chapter 22: Deborah Tannen, "Put Down that Paper and Talk to Me!"
- Chapter 23: Evelyn & James Whitehead, "Communication and Conflict"
- Chapter 24: Thomas and Kathleen Hart, "Communication"
- Chapter 27: Zoë Wolff, "Going to the Therapist En Route to the Altar"

#### *Seven Principles*

Introduction, Chapters 1-3

### Assignments:

#### **Discussion Thread**

Each student creates an initial video where he/she offers perspectives on a reading, something troubling or something worthy of discussion. All students view each video and offer comments on discussion threads.

#### **Toolbox**

Add at least one tool (2-3 sentences each) from each reading to your social-scientific and/or theological toolboxes.

## MODULE 2: ROMANTIC COMMITMENT

### Materials:

#### *Perspectives on Marriage*

Chapter 6: Jo McGowan, "Marriage versus Living Together"

Chapter 7: NCCB, "Marriage Preparation and Cohabiting Couples"

Chapter 8: Kieran Scott, "Cohabitation and Marriage as a Life Process"

Chapter 31: Bernard Cook, "What God Has Joined Together..."

Chapter 32: Margaret Farley, "The Meaning of Commitment"

#### *Seven Principles*

Chapters 4-6

### Assignments:

#### **Discussion Thread**

Each student creates an initial video where he/she offers perspectives on a reading, something troubling or something worthy of discussion. All students view each video and offer comments on discussion threads.

#### **Toolbox**

Add at least one tool (2-3 sentences each) from each reading to your toolbox.

## MODULE 3: THEOLOGY OF MARRIAGE

### Materials:

#### *Perspectives on Marriage*

Chapter 3: Joseph Martos, "Marriage: A Historical Survey"

Chapter 4: Bernard Cooke, "Christian Marriage: Basic Sacrament"

Chapter 5: Julie McCarty, "Nuptial Pentecost"

Chapter 40: Wilson Yates, "The Protestant View of Marriage"

Chapter 35: Michael Lawler, "Divorce and Remarriage in the Catholic Church"

#### *Seven Principles*

Chapters 7-8

#### *Other Materials*

Orthodox Christianity: [www.pravmir.com/the-theology-of-christian-marriage/](http://www.pravmir.com/the-theology-of-christian-marriage/)

Samuel Waje Kunhiyop *African Christian Ethics*, Chapter 18: Divorce & Remarriage

### Assignments:

#### **Course Evaluation**

#### **Discussion Thread**

Each student creates an initial video where he/she offers perspectives on a reading, something troubling or something worthy of discussion. All students view each video and offer comments on discussion threads.

#### **Toolbox**

Add at least one tool (2-3 sentences each) from each reading to your toolbox.

## MODULE 4: RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL-SCIENTIFIC PERSPECTIVES ON MARRIAGE

### Materials:

#### *Perspectives on Marriage*

Chapter 9: Evelyn & James Whitehead “The Meaning of Marriage”

Chapter 12: Evelyn & James Whitehead, “Marriage Becomes a Journey”

Chapter 10: Edward Bacek, “The Meaning of Marriage: Of Two Minds”

Chapter 11: Stephen Pope, “Same-Sex marriage: Threat or Aspiration”

#### *Seven Principles*

Chapter 9

#### *Other Materials*

Samuel Waje Kunhiyop, *African Christian Ethics*, Chapter 24: Homosexuality

Kelly Brown Douglas, “Black Church Homophobia: What To Do About It”?

Julie Coates, “Interracial Marriage in the American Church”

J. Daniel Hays, “A Biblical Perspective on Interracial Marriage”

Samuel Waje Kunhiyop *African Christian Ethics*, Chapter 16: Polygamy

Bill Paris, “Sexual Freedom, Polyamory, and Christianity.”

Edgard Danielson-Morales, “Toward a Queer Theology of Relationships”

### Assignments:

#### **Discussion Thread**

Each student creates an initial video where he/she offers perspectives on a reading, something troubling or something worthy of discussion. All students view each video and offer comments on discussion threads.

#### **Toolbox**

Add at least one tool (2-3 sentences each) from each reading to your toolbox.

## MODULE 5: SEXUALITY

### Materials:

#### *Perspectives on Marriage*

Chapter 13: Sidney Callahan, “Sex Matters”

Chapter 14: Peter Marin, “A Revolution’s Broken Promises”

Chapter 16: William May, “Four Mischievous Theories of Sex”

Chapter 17: Thomas Lickona, “The Neglected Heart”

Chapter 18: Jason King & Donna Freitas, “Sex, Time, and Meaning”

Chapter 25: Lenore Walker, “The Battered Woman”

#### *Seven Principles*

Chapter 10

### Assignments:

#### **Discussion Thread**

Each student creates an initial video where he/she offers perspectives on a reading, something troubling or something worthy of discussion. All students view each video and offer comments on discussion threads.

#### **Toolbox**

Add at least one tool (2-3 sentences each) from each reading to your toolbox.

## **MODULE 6: CASE STUDIES**

### **Materials:**

*Seven Principles*

Chapters 11-12, Afterword

### **Assignments:**

#### **Toolbox (compiled)**

#### **Case Study Short Papers: (1 page each, 8 total)**

Case studies based on real-life relationship problems. Sources: the “toughest problems” sections of each other’s Introductory Reflection papers; also videos from outside sources.

## **FINAL PAPER**

### **Final Paper (8 pages)**

- 1) Relationship Continuum: Things I won’t tolerate > Things I must have
- 2) Your perspective on a healthy, God-centered relationship (based on sociological and theological tools from your toolbox; also the readings)
- 3) Reflection on how items 1) and 2) shifted, and why.
- 4) Offer a solution to your own toughest problem that you identified at the beginning (draw on your own thoughts as well as the feedback that students offered you)