

EARLY MODERN SEXUALITIES

GNDR_ST 361 & ENGLISH 338
& GNDR_ST 350-6

WINTER
2022



This course explores the history of sex and sexualities – in all their variety – in English Renaissance literature and culture. Before the homo/hetero divide, before what Michel Foucault calls as “the implantation of the perverse,” before genders in their modern forms, what were the routes, locations, effects, and politics of sex and desire? To what extent can we discuss “sexuality” in relation to “identity” in the pre-modern era? To address these complex questions, and to begin to ask new ones, we will concentrate on a range of exemplary literary and historical texts from around 1600 in England. We will be interested to explore both the multiple forms and functions of desire, eroticism, sex, asexuality, gender, gender-identification, etc. in this culture, as well as the terms, methods, and theories we now use to read the sexual past. We will gain fluency in the seemingly familiar but simultaneously foreign languages of early modern identities and desires: sodomy, tribadism, friendship, marriage; bodies, their parts, and their pleasures. We will interrogate sex/gender’s intersections with such categories as race, religion, social class, and nation, and we will think through some new scholarship on trans* identities in early modern culture.

Jeffrey Masten

TTh 3:30-4:50pm
University Hall 218