

SEX AND CULTS: GENDER, POWER AND SEX IN U.S. NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS

GNDR_ST 101-8

WINTER
2024



NXIVM and sex trafficking. Warren Jeffs, FLDS, and polygamy. Child and sexual abuse at Waco and Jonestown. Scientology and sex audits. Free love among the Oneidas. The Shakers' total abstinence. Interracial marriage and the International Peace Missions Movement. Sex positivity and Neo-Paganism. What is it about cults and sex?! This course will examine the complicated and often fraught relationship among what scholars call New Religious Movements (NRM) and sex in the United States. We will ask and answer questions including: What are new religious movements? Are they dangerous? Is "cult" a bad word? Why is sex, in all its varieties, so important to these NRMs? Are these attitudes and practices atypical, or part and parcel of the broader religious landscape in the United States? What role has the media and popular culture played in our understandings of sex and religion? We will explore these questions through case studies of a number of New Religious Movements. Course materials will include primary and secondary source readings; podcasts; film, tv, and news media; and other forms of pop culture. Class will be a combination of lecture and discussion, and students will be required to complete analytical and creative writing assignments as well as a short oral presentation.

Courtney Rabada

TTh 12:30-1:50PM
Univ. Library 3370