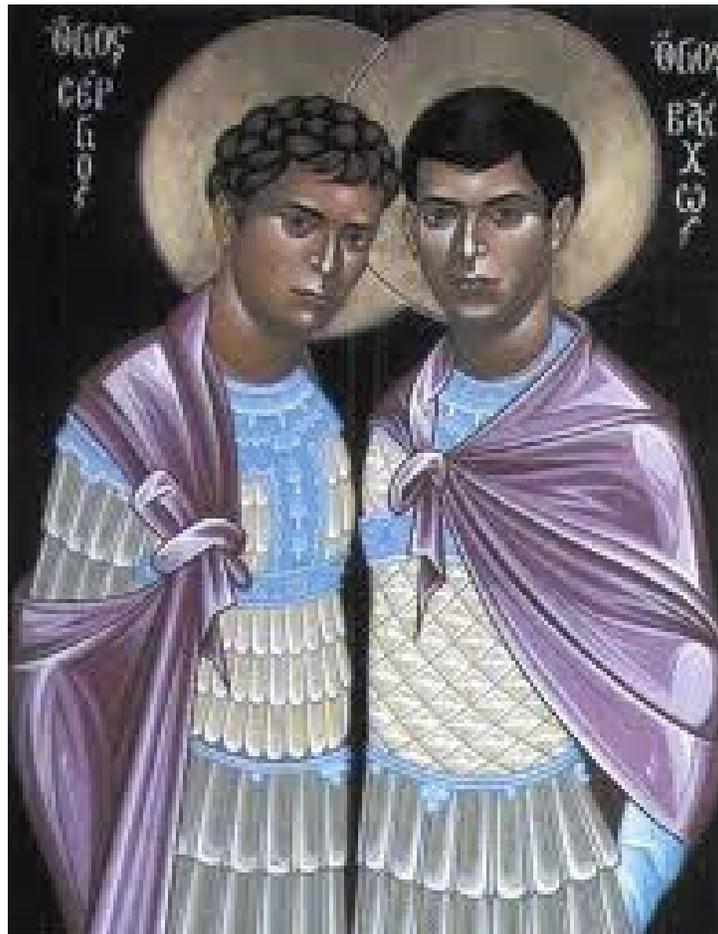


# Saints Sergius and Bacchus Theological Seminary Student Handbook



Saints Sergius and Bacchus Theological Seminary 2011–2012

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## **Mission Statement**

SSBTS is committed to providing excellence in progressive theological education to facilitate each student's intellectual growth; personal transformation and well-being; and a strengthened connection with the Divine through a nondiscriminatory community of seekers. Further, the seminary prides itself on ensuring equitable access through maintaining no tuition programs.

## **Message from the Dean of SSBTS**

Seminary educational institutions is unique from secular educational institutions in that at the heart of all seminary education is the process of deepening one's personal relationship with the Divine and, as in the case of this school's mission, a growing awareness of one's fellowship not only with the Divine but with others on spiritual journeys. While the heart of seminary education is the strengthening of one's personal sense of the sacred, it also provides a solid foundation in religious scholarship that serves to prepare the spiritual leaders of tomorrow to engage in service to their communities in responsible and collaborative ways.

At SSBTS, our focus is on providing students with opportunities for personal growth, preparation for ministerial service, and scholarship in progressive Christianity. Students have the opportunity to experience personal empowerment and solidarity through a community of like-minded seekers and to also engage in social change through their open commitment to their faith. As a place of learning, the seminary is positioned to also act as a gateway to promoting greater social understanding among lay members of society about the spiritual depth, integrity, and faith of those who follow progressive Christianity.

Finally, the heartbeat of this seminary is its mission to revitalize the spiritual and interdependent connection with the Divine and among seekers through its unique academic requirements challenging students to gain a deeper understanding of their own spirituality and the spirituality of others. This mission is integrated in all programs of study to encourage all students to work, live, and psychologically be in relationship with the Divine and others. Welcome to all who embark on this journey with us!

Peace,  
Rev. Daniel Payne  
Dean, SSBTS

## **About the Seminary**

Saints Sergius and Bacchus Theological Seminary is a new, online center of progressive theological education. SSBTS seeks to support students in their spiritual and religious journeys to become key touchstones for the public to understand the Divine in queer terms and manifest this in their day-to-day lives and the larger political and social realities of their immediate environments. As such, SSBTS was founded on the notion that an education in progressive, queered Christianity is critical for a seminarian and theologian in order to meet the challenges of creating a new Christianity for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

We are primarily a seminary for LGBTQ Christians, but we also invite allies of the LGBTQ community to study with us. Queer theology has much to offer all people, not just sexual minorities.

SSBTS meets these challenges in two specific ways. First it is the only completely online seminary in the world that provides a fully queer-oriented program of study within the larger context of Christian faith. In addition to creating an active spiritual and scholarly climate for queer Christians and allies, SSBTS is also grounded upon the notion that “queerness” is central to any spirituality that seeks to reveal and embody the presence of the Divine. As such, all students are required to participate in coursework that grounds them in: (a) the latest philosophical theories emerging in queer studies, (b) queer-oriented ethics and theological frameworks revealing the queer nature of the Divine, and (c) self-exploration to identify how their own unique spiritual paths can facilitate responsible queer faith.

## **Vision**

The seminary was founded upon the goal of educating men and women to become seminarians, religious leaders, and theologians who embody inner peace, wholeness, and a profound sense of connectedness to the Divine and one another. It is a seminary that values a vision of connectedness, which students are called to experience through immersion, exploration, self-reflection, nurturing, generating, openness and reception, communication, and transformation.

## **Social Change & Religious Diversity**

At this time, there are no federally or internationally recognized accreditation boards that oversee *purely online seminary education* in queer Christianity. Further there are no accredited online seminaries offering such an extensive focus on queer Christianity within the US or worldwide. The widespread absence of completely online queer Christian academic studies reflects a deeper issue that persists in the Church of continued oppression of the disenfranchised and oppressed, and a suppression of minority voices.

Because of this, SSBTS seeks to empower women and men with a deep understanding of queer theology through affiliation with a rigorous and scholarly program, the conferring of certificates and diplomas, a firm access to a community of like-minded individuals, and the skills to become advocates for social change in their community.

Students of this seminary are expected to actively engage in the promotion of equal rights among all. In order for any spiritual path to be recognized and accepted, it must be nested within a culture that increasingly values all members without prejudicial and institutionalized fears. In this fashion the success of true equality among the stigmatized members of our society is intimately related to the success of religious freedom and the right to accessible education and conscientious worship.

## **Accreditation**

Theological colleges are exempt from accreditation requirements that are applied to traditional higher education institutions. SSBTS has, however, designed all its programs to exceed the academic requirements of accreditation. While SSBTS may pursue accreditation in the future to be able to confer onto students degree programs, the process is not only lengthy, but very expensive. Given the initial and yearly cost of accreditation and the fees for regional accreditation coupled with financial, library, and faculty goal requirements, it would require SSBTS to forgo its current no-tuition policy.

Additionally, accreditation for online universities as it stands requires students to participate in a specific number of hours of in-person contact. This would then require all students, regardless of country of residence, physical health status, financial abilities, work obligations, or familial responsibilities to travel to attend workshops. Due to the fundamental changes accreditation would require in the defining mission of SSBTS of barrier-free education, we have chosen not to pursue accreditation at this time.

## **Learning at Saints Sergius and Bacchus Theological Seminary**

At the heart of SSBTS are adult learners, cooperation, and collaborative learning. Learning material and goals are always flexible to ensure that the wide ranges of learning styles students have are met. We pride ourselves on student success and the creation of a learning environment that captures the positives and helps students set realistically challenging goals.

We encourage students to think outside the box and to express their own views, rather than regurgitate. Students are encouraged to critique the work they read and the lectures they hear and to value their own views, while engaging in dynamic discussions with others.

## **How Courses Are Delivered**

All courses at SSBTS are completed via self-study with the assistance of a seminary mentor. Submission of assignments and interaction with your mentor will be done via email. Once you register for a course or courses through SSBTS, you will receive an email from your mentor within 48 hours informing you of the required text(s) and course requirements. Further information can also be found below in the “Course Descriptions” section.

## **Grading**

The concern of SSBTS is more about student-centered, goal-oriented learning than a focus on grades. That said, it is necessary to evaluate a student’s work for the purposes of maintaining high educational standards and the reputation of SSBTS as a leading provider of theological education. Your seminary mentor will grade you on a pass/fail basis rather than assigning a numerical or letter grade to your submissions. On your transcript, you will find P (pass) or F (fail) marks to indicate the final mark for any course.

## **Mentorship**

As stated above, all students enrolled at SSBTS will work with a seminary mentor for the duration of the program. All questions and comments about coursework should be directed to your mentor. Please allow your mentor 48 hours to respond to any queries, though the response is usually within 24 hours. Please understand that all of our mentors are volunteers, many with full-time jobs. They will reply to your questions and submission of assignment as soon as they are able.

## **Programs Overview**

Each course consists of a various number of written materials and/or audio or video lectures (which are supplied by SSBTS free of charge) and requires the writing of at least one 12-15 page position paper and mini-essays during the duration of the course. Some courses may require more work than others, but the very minimum required for any course is the reading of the required texts and/or listening to the lectures and the writing of the position paper. The student should take only one course at a time, and should proceed through the courses in the order they are listed on the seminary website.

### **Certificate in Queer Ministry Program**

(30 credit hours / 10 courses)

### **Diploma in Queer Ministry Program**

(30 advanced credit hours above the Certificate level / 3 advanced courses + a thesis)

**See “Programs” link on the seminary website for information on the degree program on offer by SSBTS.**

## **Admissions**

This is an institution committed to providing quality education that is steeped in diversity, Divinity, and a queer understanding of spirituality to empower each of you with the skills necessary as future spiritual leaders and seekers in the 21st Century. Students qualifying for the programs demonstrate clear vocational and spiritual goals in the process of their education and have been accepted by the Admissions office. Additionally, students applying for the diploma program must have completed the certificate program first. Students may only apply for one program at a time.

SSBTS looks forward to working and sharing your journey with you! Applications are processed only online; please visit the following link to locate the appropriate information for applying to SSBTS: <http://queerseminary.weebly.com/admissions.html>.

## **Tuition**

SSBTS does not currently charge any tuition fees. In addition, all required course texts and lectures are provided free of charge.

## **Academic & Student Policies**

### 1 Homework Policies

- 1.a. All students are responsible for ensuring their homework is complete and submitted appropriately following course instructions; including on time and with appropriate attention to writing requirements. Students failing to demonstrate adequate depth of thought and clear writing style risk failing the course.
- 1.b. No homework may be submitted prior to deadlines unless noted in the course or permission given by mentor.
- 1.c. Students in any program may ask their mentor questions about their lessons or reading assignments at any time.
- 1.d. Students may not move on to the next lesson or course until all required homework is submitted in full. No exceptions.
- 1.e. Students who fail to submit homework on time per course deadlines without permission from the mentor may risk failing the course.
- 1.f. All homework is to be of original composition and not be copied from another source unless that source is appropriately cited with the author, text/web site address, and page number. Students who fail to cite references or quote excessively will have homework points reduced. Persistent posts in this manner after feedback will result in failure of the course.

### 2 Community Interactions

- 2.a. This is a nondiscriminatory program embracing all individuals, regardless of sexual orientation, religious background, ethnicity and race, gender, economic class status, health status, and other social identities. Students must communicate in a respectful and open manner when communicating with mentors and with one another. Students expressing covert or overt forms of discrimination will be warned, and may risk expulsion from the seminary.
- 2.b. Students are free to express their views but are reminded to avoid utilizing inflammatory, stigmatizing or discriminatory statements against groups of individuals, political entities, etc. Please preface personal opinions of this nature utilizing "I statements" to reduce friction or prevent students with opposite views from feeling comfortable on the boards.
- 2.c. Students are required to maintain confidentiality of other members to ensure a climate of trust and a forum for healthy development and relationship building.

### 3 General Academic Policies

- 3.a. Students are required to complete all components of their registered program of study in order to be permitted to move on to the next course.
- 3.b. Certificates and diplomas are conferred only when students have met the academic and experiential requirements of their program of study.
- 3.c. Currently enrolled students may register for any course that is presently available.
- 3.d. Electronic academic transcripts are available to students who request them and will be emailed by the Dean to the requesting student and/or academic institution.

3.e. Students are expected to display their credentials in a manner consistent with the laws where they live.

3.f. SSBTS is not liable for any student engaging in a manner inconsistent with state or federal laws.

3.g. All couples studying together are responsible for submitting their own work.

3.h. Students facing a medical crisis or life challenge are encouraged to contact SSBTS to request a Medical Leave of Absence (MLA) or a Family Leave of Absence (FLA) to retain their student status. There are five year time limits on each degree program.

#### 4 Discontinuation of Enrollment

4.a. Students are welcome to terminate their enrollment and should email the seminary of their intentions.

4.b. Students do not need to provide any explanation of why they are terminating studies, unless they so choose.

4.c. Studies may be discontinued at any time by the seminary if any policies are being violated by a student.

#### 5 Technology, Contact, Privacy Policies

5.a. Students are responsible for maintaining a valid email address as this is the primary method of lesson transmission and communication.

5.b. Students are required to inform their mentor of any email change to prevent disruption in studies. Failure to do so will result in dismissal from SSBTS after six months.

5.c. Personal information will never be disclosed to any third-party individual or other student to the best of the seminary's ability; the seminary cannot guarantee the safety of technology. Upon dismissal of a student, records are held for 1 year and then shredded. Academic records are only retained if a student attended SSBTS for at least a year and/or completed 1 course to ensure students may request academic transcript at any time.

5.d. Students are responsible for their own computers, software, and internet needs.

### **Course Registration**

Students may take only one course at a time, and each section within the course should be taken in the order presented below in “Course Descriptions.” There is a minimum time frame of one month for the completion of each course, though it should take longer than a month to complete any course. Once you have been accepted into a program, there is no need to register for courses since you will work through them progressively in the order below. Once all requirements for a certain course have been fulfilled, it will be added to your student transcript.

### **Course Descriptions**

The below descriptions are for the courses offered at SSBTS. All programs at SSBTS consist only of required courses. There are no electives. If you wish to continue your self-directed studies in queer theology and ministry, see our “Links” section on the seminary website.

Note: All courses require the reading of a text(s) and/or listening to lectures, writing miniessays and the writing of a 12-15 page position paper unless otherwise noted by your mentor.

Language courses entail much more work, and are only required for students in the diploma program. Courses should be taken one at a time in the order they are presented below. For example, if you enroll in the Certificate Program, you will begin with the New Testament Studies Course and will be provided with access to all study materials for that course. You should work through the materials in the order they are listed below, so for the New Testament Studies Course, you would begin with Introduction to the New Testament, and then proceed to New Testament History and Literature.

## **Certificate Program Required Courses (10 courses / 30 credits)**

### **New Testament Studies Course**

1. Introduction to the New Testament: <http://oyc.yale.edu/religiousstudies/introduction-to-new-testament/content/downloads>
2. New Testament History and Literature: <http://academicearth.org/courses/newtestament-history-and-literature>
3. Romans 1:18-32 Amidst the Gay Debate: Interpretative Options (pdf file provided by the seminary)
4. Queering Mark's Male Disciples (pdf file provided by the seminary)
5. Eunuchs and the Postgender Jesus (pdf file provided by the seminary)

### **Old Testament Studies Course**

1. Introduction to the Hebrew Bible: <http://oyc.yale.edu/religiousstudies/introduction-to-the-old-testament-hebrew-bible/content/downloads>
2. Queer Commentary and the Hebrew Bible: Google Books
3. The Man of War and the Suffering Servant: The Old Testament and the Theology of Liberation: (pdf file to be provided by the seminary)
4. A New Word on Homosexuality, Isaiah 56 (pdf file provided by the seminary)

### **Hermeneutics Course**

1. Biblical Hermeneutics: <http://itunes.apple.com/us/itunes-u/biblicalhermeneutics/id426809656>
2. A Critical Analysis of Some Hermeneutical Principles Found in Latin American Theologies of Liberation: (pdf file to be provided by the seminary)
3. Paul, the Goddess Religion, and Queers: Romans 1:23-28: (MS Word file to be provided by the seminary)
4. A Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians by Martin Luther: (pdf file provided by the seminary)
5. Commentary on Romans by John Calvin: (pdf file provided by the seminary)
6. Homosexuality: A Scriptural Analysis Using a Conservative Hermeneutic (MS Word file to be provided by the seminary)

7. Intersections in Queer Theory and Postcolonial Theory (pdf file provided by the seminary)
8. Queering Religious Texts (pdf file provided by the seminary)

### **Biblical & Religious Studies Course**

1. Yale Divinity Bible Study Series:  
<http://www.youtube.com/playlist?p=PLBAB8086DE927F07F>
2. Queer Theology: Rethinking the Western Body (pdf file provided by the seminary)
3. "Still a Source of Grace: Reading the Bible as a Gay Christian:":<http://www.clgs.org/still-source-grace-reading-bible-gay-christian>
4. Queer Theology: Reclaiming Christianity (MS Word file provided by the seminary)
5. Queer Theory and Study of Religion (pdf file to be provided by the seminary)
6. Being Biblical, Being Gay (pdf file provided by the seminary)
7. The Search for a Queer Spirituality (pdf file provided by the seminary)
8. The Origins of Gay-Affirming Religion in the South (pdf file provided by the seminary)

### **Christology Course**

1. Historical Jesus: <http://itunes.apple.com/itunes-u/historicaljesus/id384233911#ls=1>
2. How to do Christology (2 parts):  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9C1Cs2Ebtt4&feature=edu> and  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z5XHgAKTJEA&feature=relmfu>
3. From Jesus to Christ:<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/watch/>
4. Scandalous Gospel of Jesus:  
[http://fora.tv/2007/11/27/Scandalous\\_Gospel\\_of\\_Jesus\\_Rev\\_\\_Peter\\_Gomes](http://fora.tv/2007/11/27/Scandalous_Gospel_of_Jesus_Rev__Peter_Gomes)
5. Victimless Cruciformity (pdf file provided by the seminary)

### **Ethics Course**

1. Queering Christian Ethics: <http://www.clgs.org/queering-christian-ethics-approach>
2. Religion and Oppression:  
[http://hulk03.princeton.edu:8080/WebMedia/flash/lectures/20110420\\_religion\\_and\\_oppression.shtml](http://hulk03.princeton.edu:8080/WebMedia/flash/lectures/20110420_religion_and_oppression.shtml)
3. God, Power & Revolution (Session 1) and Confronting History and State Violence (Session 2): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MfLhvFXQViU&feature=edu> and  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Tg0ZNYFLno&feature=relmfu>
4. Pleasure Beyond Shame: <http://www.clgs.org/queer-politics-pleasure-beyondshame-new-theological-errogenous-zones>
5. Constructing a Coherent Christian Sexual Ethic (pdf file provided by the seminary)
6. An Incarnational Ethic:  
[http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m1252/is\\_n2\\_v121/ai\\_14788240/](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1252/is_n2_v121/ai_14788240/)

### **Ministry Course**

1. Where Hands Will Reach (pdf file provided by the seminary)
2. Where all Can Safely Live (pdf file provided by the seminary)

3. A Time to Build (pdf file provided by the seminary)
4. Gender Identity and our Faith Communities (pdf file provided by the seminary)
5. A Time to Seek (pdf file provided by the seminary)
6. Transaction (pdf file provided by the seminary)
7. Great Emergence (view all 7 sessions):  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wh25r6kbQ1Q&feature=relmfu>
8. Symposium with Brian McLaren (view all 4 sessions):  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jqPpwxhRmQ8>
9. Emergent Church Roadtrip (view all 6 episodes):  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aHeoV4ITQ64>
10. Queering Church and Churching Queers:  
[http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m2096/is\\_1\\_49/ai\\_54482245/](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2096/is_1_49/ai_54482245/)
11. A scientific Understanding of Orientation for Pastoral Ministry (pdf file provided by seminary)

### **Preaching Course**

1. <http://preachingfoundation.org/pep-2011-audio>
2. <http://marshill.org/teaching/>
3. <http://www.crc.org/messages>
4. <http://www.youtube.com/dukechAPEL#p/c/0/sEzT7hFdhLU>
5. <http://www.youtube.com/dukechAPEL#p/c/0/wIVEU9oLJbg>
6. <http://www.youtube.com/dukechapel#p/c/0/eeNswHxpw-Y>
7. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=faB6FtXW8ks&feature=related>
8. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8EyeU7DDBHs&feature=related>
9. Empire Resisting Pedagogies (pdf file provided by the seminary)

### **Gender and Sexuality Course**

1. Psychology of Gender: <http://www.learnoutloud.com/Free-Audio-Video/Social-Sciences/Psychology/Psychology-of-Gender/43816>
2. Transgender Summit (6 parts):  
<http://vimeo.com/8897307>  
<http://vimeo.com/8892721>  
<http://vimeo.com/8744509>  
<http://vimeo.com/8770570>  
<http://vimeo.com/8852669>  
<http://vimeo.com/8869605>
3. Delusions of Gender:  
[http://fora.tv/2010/10/02/Cordelia\\_Fine\\_Delusions\\_of\\_Gender](http://fora.tv/2010/10/02/Cordelia_Fine_Delusions_of_Gender)
4. Challenging Conventional Wisdom: How a Conservative Reading of the Biblical References to Homosexuality Fails to Support Their Traditional Interpretation (pdf file provided by the seminary)
5. Religious Black Gay Men's Neutralization of Anti-Gay Religious Messages (pdf file provided by the seminary)
6. Queer Theory (pdf file provided by the seminary)
7. Queer Asian Spirituality (pdf file provided by the seminary)

8. Queer Christian Art: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/jesusinlove/>

### **Interfaith Understanding Course**

1. Interreligious Understanding:

[http://fora.tv/2008/03/12/Gary\\_D\\_Bouma\\_Interreligious\\_Understanding](http://fora.tv/2008/03/12/Gary_D_Bouma_Interreligious_Understanding)

2. Islam and the Western World: An Interfaith Dialogue:

[http://fora.tv/2007/11/01/Islam\\_the\\_Western\\_World\\_An\\_Interfaith\\_Dialogue](http://fora.tv/2007/11/01/Islam_the_Western_World_An_Interfaith_Dialogue)

3. Going Beyond Tolerance:

[http://fora.tv/2008/08/06/R\\_Gustav\\_Niebuhr\\_Going\\_Beyond\\_Tolerance](http://fora.tv/2008/08/06/R_Gustav_Niebuhr_Going_Beyond_Tolerance)

4. Interfaith Perspectives on Transgenderism: <http://www.clgs.org/interfaithperspective-transgender-folks-transgender-nature-and-trnsngender>

5. Queer Jihad: A View from South Africa (pdf file provided by the seminary)

6. Islam and the Production of Queer Space (pdf file provided by the seminary)

### **Diploma Program Required Courses (3 advanced courses + a thesis)**

#### **Biblical Languages Course**

1. Elementary Greek: <http://itunes.apple.com/us/itunes-u/elementarygreek/id426804037>

and <http://www.chioulaoshi.org/BG/resource.html> and

<http://blackstripespub.com/greek.html>

2. Elementary Hebrew: <http://itunes.apple.com/us/itunes-u/elementaryhebrew/id426804337>

#### **Advanced Religious Studies Course**

1. Conversation between Marcus Borg and Huston Smith:

[http://fora.tv/2006/11/10/Marcus\\_Borg\\_and\\_Huston\\_Smith](http://fora.tv/2006/11/10/Marcus_Borg_and_Huston_Smith)

2. Religion and Democracy on Three Continents (view all 3 parts):

[http://hulk03.princeton.edu:8080/WebMedia/flash/lectures/20081103\\_10\\_17\\_publect\\_buruma.shtml](http://hulk03.princeton.edu:8080/WebMedia/flash/lectures/20081103_10_17_publect_buruma.shtml)

3. Gifford Lectures (choose three separate lectures):

<http://www.youtube.com/playlist?p=PLEA9467E8E8D991AE>

4. The Philosophy of Religion (choose three articles):

<http://philreligion.nd.edu/cprresources/introductory-articles-into-the-philosophy-of-religion/>

5. Queer Christian Identities (pdf file provided by the seminary)

6. Christianity is a Queer Thing (pdf file provided by seminary)

7. Possible Evidence of Same-Sex Committed Relationships in Early Christianity:

<http://www.depts.drew.edu/jhc/samesex.html>

8. The Queer God (pdf file provided by the seminary)

#### **Advanced Gender/Sexuality Studies Course**

1. A Dictionary of Sex in the Bible: <http://www.ronalddecker.com/and.htm>

2. For the Bible Tells Me So: (a video file will be provided by the seminary)
3. Sexual Prejudice:  
[http://psychology.ucdavis.edu/rainbow/html/sexual\\_prejudice.html](http://psychology.ucdavis.edu/rainbow/html/sexual_prejudice.html)
4. The Black Church and the Blues Body (2 parts): <http://vimeo.com/11883913> and <http://vimeo.com/11884429>
5. There's No Place Like Home (pdf file provided by the seminary)
6. Black Masculinity Matters in Attitudes Towards Gay Males (pdf file provided by the seminary)
7. Rainbow Rice (pdf file provided by the seminary)
8. Future of Queer Theology: <http://www.clgs.org/preparing-future-queer-theology>
9. Foucault and Queer Theory (pdf file provided by the seminary)
10. Holy Ferment: Queer Philosophical Destabilizations (pdf file provided by the seminary)
11. Toward a Queer Ecofeminism (pdf file provided by the seminary)
12. Identity Experience Among Progressive Gay Muslims (pdf file provided by the seminary)

### **Diploma Program Thesis**

All students in the diploma program must complete an original thesis of no fewer than 50 double-spaced pages. Students should follow the *Chicago Manual of Style* (can be found online) in the writing of their thesis. Each student will work closely with his or her mentor in the formation of a thesis research plan and in the writing of the thesis. The thesis topic should be a variation on the theme of queer theology. The student is responsible for finding two other thesis reviewers apart from the mentor. Each reviewer should have a minimum of a Masters degree in the fields of theology or divinity.