

RELI 368

Race, Sexuality, and Disability in the
History of Western Christianity

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Tu/Thu 12:30-1:45PM

**General Education
Requirements:**
HS, GL



Contemporary debates over race relations and racism, pre-marital sex and homosexuality, and attitudes towards physical and mental disability are rooted explicitly or implicitly in a Western Christian framework that hierarchizes the worth of persons. This course proposes that careful examination of the ways that Christian institutions and practices have contributed to theories of race, sexuality, and disability in previous eras enables us to reconsider modern “hot-button issues.” We examine premodern case studies such as racialized stereotypes of monsters and Jews, the categorization of virginity as a sexuality, or the valuing of illness as a form of asceticism, before turning to the nineteenth century watershed movements of scientific racism, the pathologizing of homosexuality, and the growth of “muscular Christianity.” The last third of the course will examine race, sexuality, and disability - and their intersections - in twentieth and twenty-first century America in light of the questions that the historical units of the course raise.

