Rabbi Rebecca Alpert

Instructor

Dr. Rebecca Alpert teaches in the department of Religion at Temple University. Her specialization is in American and especially Jewish American religious history, and she focuses on issues related to gender, sexuality, and race. Her thinking about many of these issues was shaped by her teachers, who included Mordecai Kaplan, the founder of Reconstructionist Judaism. Alpert graduated from Barnard College before getting her Ph.D. in religion at Temple University and her rabbinical training at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College (RRC) in Wyncote, Pennsylvania. Alpert’s research has focused on explaining and expounding the Reconstructionist tradition and the place of gays and lesbians in Jewish religious history. She has lectured at a number of colleges and universities, including Columbia, UPenn, Princeton, and Swarthmore and is an active public intellectual who writes for mainstream publications and frequently speaks at rallies and on panels in the Philadelphia region and beyond. Her most recent works are Whose Torah? A Concise Guide to Progressive Judaism (New Press, 2008) and Out of Left Field: Jews and Black Baseball (Oxford University Press, 2011)

Dr. Ellen Armour

Presenter

Dr. Ellen Armour is the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Chair in Feminist Theology Director of the Carpenter Program in Religion, Gender, and Sexuality at Vanderbilt University School of Divinity. Dr. Armour’s research interests are in feminist theology, theories of sexuality, race, gender, disability and embodiment, and contemporary continental philosophy. She is the author of Deconstruction, Feminist Theology, and the Problem of Difference: Subverting the Race/Gender Divide (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999) and co-editor of Bodily Citations: Judith Butler and Religion (Columbia University Press, 2006), as well as a number of articles and book chapters. Her current book project, tentatively entitled Signs and Wonders: Theology After Modernity, will diagnose and craft a theological response to the shifts in our understanding of "man" and "his" others (sexed/raced, animal, and divine) as modernity declines.
Dr. Kent Brintnall

Mentor

Kent L. Brintnall is an associate professor in the Department of Religious Studies and an affiliate faculty member in the Women's & Gender Studies Program at The University of North Carolina at Charlotte. He received his B.A. in Philosophy from Fort Hays State University, his J.D. from Northeastern University School of Law, his M.A. from Pacific School of Religion and his Ph.D. from Emory University. He joined the UNC Charlotte faculty after serving as the inaugural post-doctoral fellow in religion and sexuality as well as a lecturer in film studies at Emory University. He teaches courses in feminist and queer theory, visual and popular culture, masculinity studies, literary theory and the Christian tradition. His first book, Ecce Homo: The Male-Body-in-Pain as Redemptive Figure, was published by University of Chicago Press in fall 2011. He is currently working on a book project, tentatively titled Sacrificing Ethics: Georges Bataille and Queer Theory, and a collection of essays, co-edited with Jeremy Biles, tentatively titled Negative Ecstasies: Georges Bataille and the Study of Religion.

Rev. Dr. Patrick Cheng

Mentor

Rev. Dr. Patrick S. Cheng is the Associate Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology at the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Dr. Cheng is the author of Radical Love: An Introduction to Queer Theology (2011) and From Sin to Amazing Grace: Discovering the Queer Christ (2012). He serves on the American Academy of Religion’s Committee on the Status of LGBTIQ Persons in the Profession, and he writes for the Religion and the Gay Voices sections of the Huffington Post. Dr. Cheng has served as an ordained minister with the Metropolitan Community Churches since 2001. He holds a B.A. from Yale College, a J.D. from Harvard Law School, and an M.A., M.Phil., and Ph.D. from Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York. For more information about Dr. Cheng, please see his website at http://www.patrickcheng.net.
Miguel A. De La Torre

Presenter

Since obtaining his doctoral in 1999, Rev. Dr. Miguel De La Torre has authored numerous articles and over twenty-five books, including the award-winning *Reading the Bible from the Margins*, (Orbis, 2002); *Santeria: The Beliefs and Rituals of a Growing Religion in America* (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2004); and *Doing Christian Ethics from the Margins*, (Orbis, 2004). He presently serves as Professor of Social Ethics and Latino/a Studies at Iliff School of Theology in Denver, Colorado. Within the academy he is a director to the *American Academy of Religion* and past director of the *Society of Christian Ethics*. He was elected the 2011 Vice-President of the *Society of Christian Ethics* and is in line to serve as the society’s president in 2012. Additionally, he is the editor of the *Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Religion* (www.raceandreligion.com). A scholar-activist, Dr. De La Torre has written numerous articles in popular media and has served on several civic organizations.

Amanullah De Sondy

Presenter

Dr. Amanullah De Sondy is Visiting Assistant Professor of Islamic Studies within the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Miami, FL. He holds a Ph.D. in theology and religious studies (University of Glasgow, Scotland). In addition to a BA Hons in Religious Studies and Education Studies with the Diploma in Education from the University of Stirling (Scotland) and an M.Litt in Jerusalem Studies. He has studied Arabic and Islamic Studies in France, Jordan and Syria and is also proficient in Urdu and Punjabi, with a particular interest in Urdu and Punjabi poetry/ghazals. Aman was invited in May 2008 to present at the opening of weekly proceedings at the Scottish Parliament and is equally proud of being a Scotsman of Pakistani descent.
Denise Eger

Presenter

Rabbi Denise Eger is Vice President of the Central Conference of American Rabbis and was the first female Rabbi to be elected President of the Board of Rabbis of Southern California. She just completed her term. She had the privilege of performing the first legal wedding for a same gender couple in California in June 2008. She received HRC’s Community Equality Award at this year’s Los Angeles Gala.

Rabbi Eger is also a founding member of HRC’s Religion Council.

Sharon Groves

Director, Religion & Faith Program

Dr. Sharon Groves joined HRC in 2005 and became the director of the Religion and Faith Program in 2011. She brings considerable experience editing, writing and managing print and online publications to her work at HRC. She has overseen the creation of numerous new resources, including a weekly preaching resource, a guide to living openly in your place of worship, a bilingual booklet on inclusion for Latino/a Catholic and Protestant families, and extensive curricula that address congregational marriage equality advocacy, one that follows the movie *For the Bible Tells Me So* and another that helps congregations wrestle with issues of gender identity within their faith communities. Sharon previously served as managing editor for *Feminist Studies*, an interdisciplinary scholarly journal housed at the University of Maryland, where she also taught courses in English literature and women’s studies. Additionally, she is a lay leader at All Souls Church, Unitarian, where she has chaired the Committee on Ministry and worked extensively on issues of racial justice, voting rights and neighborhood outreach.
Robyn Henderson-Espinoza
Presenter

Self-identified as a Christian Agnostic and QueerMestizo (of Mexican & Anglo heritage), Robyn is a Ph.D Student in the Joint Ph.D. program at the University of Denver-Iliff School of Theology, Denver, CO focusing on Philosophical Ethics with an primary interest in ethics in the Borderlands. Robyn's research focuses on the body and ways in which the queer body is morally significant in today's world. Robyn begins research in the intersecting realities of theories and discourse focusing particularly on the intersection of moral philosophy (ethics) and culture. Robyn uses queer theories, Critical Chican@ Studies, and queer epistemologies to consider Ethics and works with notions of ontology to consider ways of being queer in the world.

Mary E. Hunt
Presenter

Dr. Mary E. Hunt, Ph.D., is a feminist theologian who is co-founder and co-director of the Women’s Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual (WATER) in Silver Spring, Maryland, USA. A Catholic active in the women-church movement, she lectures and writes on theology and ethics with particular attention to liberation issues. She is the editor of A Guide for Women in Religion: Making Your Way from A to Z (Palgrave, 2004) and co-editor with Diann L. Neu of New Feminist Christianity: Many Voices, Many Views (SkyLight Paths, 2010).

Janet Jakobsen
Presenter

Dr. Janet R. Jakobsen is Director of the Center for Research on Women and Ann Whitney Olin Professor of Women's Gender and Sexuality Studies at Barnard College, Columbia University where she has also served as Dean for Faculty Diversity and Development. She is the author of Working Alliances and the Politics of Difference: Diversity and Feminist Ethics. With Ann Pellegrini she is the author of Love the Sin: Sexual Regulation and the Limits of Religious Tolerance and editor of Secularisms, and with Elizabeth Castelli she is editor of Interventions: Academics and Activists Respond to Violence. Before entering the academy, she was a policy analyst and organizer in Washington, D.C.
Jay Michaelson

Presenter

Dr. Jay Michaelson is the Associate Editor of Religion Dispatches magazine and the author, most recently, of "God vs. Gay? The Religious Case for Equality." The founding director of Nehirim, a national community of LGBT Jews, partners, and allies, Jay has written over 200 articles about the intersections of religion, sexuality, and spirituality. His work on the subject has appeared on NPR, and in The New York Times, Tikkun, the Duke Law Review, the Michigan Journal of Gender & Law, and anthologies including *Mentsh: On Being Jewish and Queer, Righteous Indignation: A Jewish Call for Justice and Jews and Sex.*

Sara Rosenau

Presenter

Sara Rosenau is a doctoral student in the Graduate Division of Religion at Drew University. Her scholarly work centers in the areas of political theology and ethics and gender and sexuality. She holds a B.A. from Earlham College, a M.S.W. from University of Denver, and a M.Div. from Iliff School of Theology. Raised a Quaker, Sara is now a candidate for ordination with the United Church of Christ. She lives with her family in the Catskills region of New York State.

Laurel Schneider

Presenter

Dr. Laurel C. Schneider is Professor of Theology, Ethics, and Culture at Chicago Theological Seminary. Her most recent books include *Polydoxy: Theologies of Multiplicity and Relation* (Routledge 2010) and *Beyond Monotheism: A Theology of Multiplicity* (Routledge 2008). She is the author of numerous articles and anthology chapters that variously work at the intersections of theology with queer, race, postcolonial, and feminist theories.
Ken Stone
Presenter

Dr. Ken Stone is the Academic Dean & Professor of Bible, Culture, and Hermeneutics at Chicago Theological Seminary. Stone received his B.A. from Lee College, 1984; M. Div., Church of God School of Theology, 1987; Th.M., Harvard Divinity School, 1989; M.A., Ph.D., Vanderbilt University, 1992, 1995. He is the author of Sex, Honor and Power in the Deuteronomistic History (Sheffield Academic Press, 1996); and editor of Queer Commentary and the Hebrew Bible (Sheffield Academic Press/Pilgrim Press, 2001) and Bible Trouble: Queer Reading at the Boundaries of Biblical Scholarship (Society of Biblical Literature Press, 2011). Professor Stone, a Lambda Literary Award winner, focuses his research on the relationship between critical theory and biblical interpretation and matters of gender, sexuality, animals, and ecology. Dr. Stone is also a member of the HRC Religion Council.

Emilie Townes
Presenter

Dr. Emilie Townes is the first African American and first woman to serve as Associate Dean for Academic Affairs in the Divinity School and is the first Andrew W. Mellon Professor of African American Religion and Theology at Yale University Divinity School. In the fall of 2005, she was the first African American woman elected to the presidential line of the American Academy of Religion (AAR) and served as president in 2008. Among her many publications are Breaking the Fine Rain of Death: African American Health and a Womanist Ethic of Care; Womanist Justice, Womanist Hope; In a Blaze of Glory: Womanist Spirituality as Social Witness, and Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil. She is a Fellow in the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.
Rebecca Voelkel
Presenter

Rev. Rebecca Voelkel is an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ, and the Program Director for the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's Institute for Welcoming Resources, a national, ecumenical collaboration of the Welcoming Church Movement. Before coming to the Task Force/Institute for Welcoming Resources, she served as interim national coordinator for the United Church of Christ Coalition for LGBT Concerns, as pastor of Spirit of the Lakes United Church of Christ and as program staff for the Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence. She is a founding member of the HRC Religion Council.

Traci C. West
Presenter

Rev. Dr. Traci C. West is Professor of Ethics and African American Studies at Drew University Theological School in New Jersey where she teaches both seminary and PhD students. She is the author of Disruptive Christian Ethics: When Racism and Women’s Lives Matter (Westminster/John Knox, 2006), Wounds of the Spirit: Black Women, Violence, and Resistance Ethics (New York University Press, 1999), and editor of Our Family Values: Religion and Same-sex Marriage (Praeger, 2006). She has published articles on clergy ethics, racism, sexual ethics, and other justice issues in church and society. She is an ordained minister in the United Methodist church who previously served in parish and campus ministry in the Hartford Connecticut area.
Heather White
Mentor

Dr. Heather White is a Visiting Assistant Professor of Religion at the New College of Florida. Dr. White began her education at Eastern University and went on to get a M.Div. from Princeton Theological Seminary and a Ph.D. in American Religions from Princeton University. Her work brings attention to the plurality of religious perspectives around sexuality, particularly the influence of liberal Protestants within progressive sexuality politics. She writes about LGBT religious movements and religion and sexuality education and is currently finishing a book about the emergence of pro-LGBT Protestantism.

Thelathia “Nikki” Young
Presenter

Dr. Thelathia “Nikki” Young is Visiting Assistant Professor of Women’s and Gender Studies at Bucknell University. She recently received her doctoral degree in Christian Ethics from Emory University’s Graduate Division of Religion. Her research focuses on ethical issues of race, gender, and sexuality, and particularly emphasizes the ways that black queer communities possess, embody, and enact moral excellence. She is currently at work on her dissertation-to-book manuscript, “Imagining New Relationships: Black Queers and Family,” which investigates the moral norms of kinship and family that foreground the intersection of race, gender and sexuality. Nikki is also Director of Ambassadors for the All My Children Project, a program in which she mentors and teaches college students to reflect critically and organize campus activities designed to raise awareness about the consequences of anti-lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning (LGBTQQ) bias within ethnically diverse families and communities.