

Background

Dr. Kent Brintnall holds a B.A., from Fort Hays State University, a J.D. from Northeastern University School of Law, M.A. from the Pacific School of Religion and a Ph.D. from Emory University. He is an affiliate faculty member in the Women's and Gender Studies and Film Studies programs at UNC Charlotte, where he teaches courses in feminist and queer theory, literary theory, masculinity studies, visual and popular culture and the Christian tradition.

Research

Dr. Brintnall notes that "In the broadest and most straightforward terms, my teaching and scholarship focuses on the relationship between religion (especially Christianity), gender and sexuality in the larger cultural order. My research is informed primarily by theoretical, rather than social scientific approaches, most significantly, psychoanalytic theory, queer theory, and the work of French social theorist Georges Bataille. Rather than ask, for example, "What does the *Bible* say about premarital sex?" I am interested in questions like, "Why do we think that the *Bible* is relevant to conversations about premarital sex? In what way is the Bible relevant to conversations about premarital sex? What assumptions do we bring to the Bible when we read it to find answers to questions about premarital sex? And, what might we find in the biblical text that gives us a very different picture of sex if we approach it with different questions and assumptions?"

In thinking about religion, gender and sexuality, I am interested in their relationship as a case study for thinking about how power is distributed and conceived, how people are valorized or denigrated based on their gender or sexuality, how this denigration is a form of violence. And, most especially, in my recent work, how many responses to this denigration only exacerbate or displace the violence on to other bodies, other subjectivities, other kinds of persons.

Relevance

Insofar as women and girls are frequently characterized as somehow more sexual, and therefore more suspicious, more in need of supervision, regulation and control, thinking about the role that religion plays in such cultural discourses contributes both to the Alliance's commitment to foster the Health and Well-Being of women and girls (and, hopefully, of men and boys) as well as combatting certain forms of Violence against Women (which religious discourses, and officials, frequently explicitly justify). At the same time, my thinking about the ways that responses to violence can mirror the violence they seek to prevent—or, the way in which "health," with its astonishing normative weight, can be used as a cudgel against women and girls, my research also holds various kinds of advocates responsible for the consequences and unseen implications of the kind of work they pursue, the strategies they enact, the discourses they speak.

I hope the difference that my work makes is both to reveal the astonishing cruelty that religious discourses can perform. I am, as the opening paragraph notes, also very interested in exploring the ways that religion can fund resisting—or counter-discourses. Religion is no monolithic system; there is no such thing as "Christianity"—there are competing actors, all of whom speak in the name of Christianity, using Christian texts and symbols, seeking radically disparate ends. Thinking about what makes that possible and what possibilities that makes is key to the work that I do.

Also as noted above, I am very concerned with the ways in which liberal and progressive policy makers, pundits and theorists often rely on astonishingly damaging metaphors, images, assumptions—both about the people they are trying to combat, and the people they are trying to help. I see the over-arching value of my work as the value I understand to be at the heart of the academic enterprise—a suspicious, critical examination of what seems to us most obvious, most incontestable.”