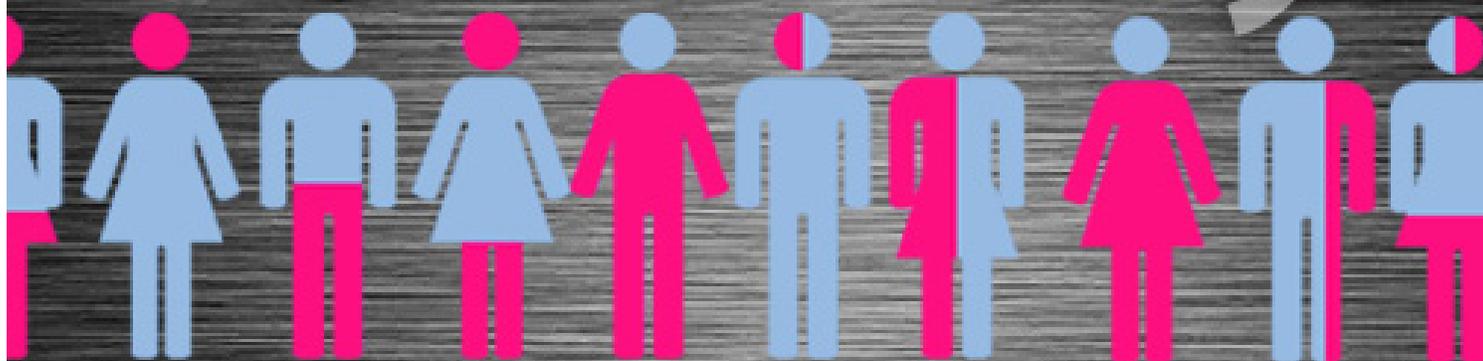


Let's Talk About Sex, Faith, & Relationships 2015

identity



Discussion guide for student leaders

Sponsored by the Office of Student Life | University Ministries
Associated Students of Seattle Pacific (ASSP)
Office of Student Programs | Office of Residence Life



Let's Talk About Sex, Faith & Relationships 2015

Let's Talk About Sex, Faith, and Relationships is an annual program hosted by the Office of Student Life at Seattle Pacific University. This community event engages us in conversations regarding topics of sex, sexuality, relationships, and the integration of faith into our understanding of ourselves and others.

This year, our focus is on the topic of **identity**. Speakers from the academic disciplines of theology, sociology, and anthropology come together to discuss gender and sexuality from their respective fields.

In addition to two panels, chapel, and a guided discussion evening, you will notice displays and other thought-provoking publicity around campus. It is our hope that these events and creative displays provoke **discussion** and **greater understanding and appreciation** for both our own stories and the stories of others.

In this booklet, you will find descriptions of each event, brief biographies of speakers, discussion questions, event-specific resources, guidelines for healthy discussions, and a list of on-campus resources.

May this week spark fresh discussions and new insights into the complex topic of identity, especially as it relates to human sexuality and gender.

-the LTASFR committee

Monday, April 27th:
Opening Keynote:
Gender & Identity
7–8:30 p.m., Upper Gwinn

Tuesday, April 28th:
Chapel Address:
Dialoguing in a Divided Church
11:10–12 p.m., First Free Methodist Church

Wednesday, April 29th:
Theology, Sexuality, and the Bible panel discussion
7–8:30 p.m., Upper Gwinn

Descriptions of each event may be found in the following pages.

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When you facilitate discussions regarding sensitive topics such as those addressed in LTASFR, please reiterate the following boundaries to those participating in the conversation.

- Use “I” language (see examples below)
- No interrupting
- Maintain confidentiality
- Be fully present
- No jokes or guilt
- Realize we are all on a journey together
- Think of the conversation as a time to learn from one another

These guidelines will help others voice their opinions regarding various subject matters without offending other members of the group.

Examples of “I” language include:

- I experienced...
- I feel hurt by...
- I belong to...
- I feel challenged by...

Guidelines developed by Dr. Brenda Salter-McNeil, Associate Professor of Reconciliation Studies and Director of Reconciliation Studies at SPU.

Let's Talk About Sex, Faith, & Relationships

4 Year Curriculum Plan

Year 1



Identity

What is gender vs. sex?
Are gender roles binary or on a spectrum?
What is sexual orientation?
What does it mean to be a sexual being?

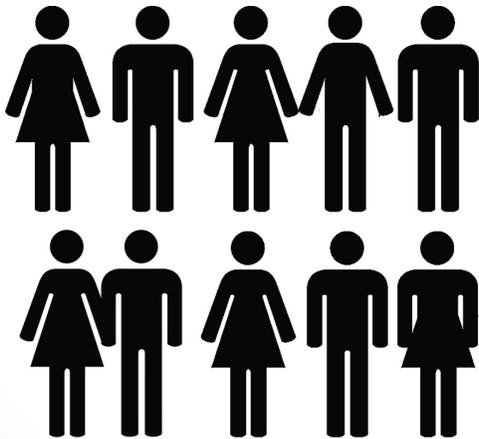
Year 2

Intimacy

What different kinds of relationships can a person be a part of?
How do relationships and sexuality change throughout the lifespan?
How can I do singleness well?
What do healthy relationships look like?



Year 3



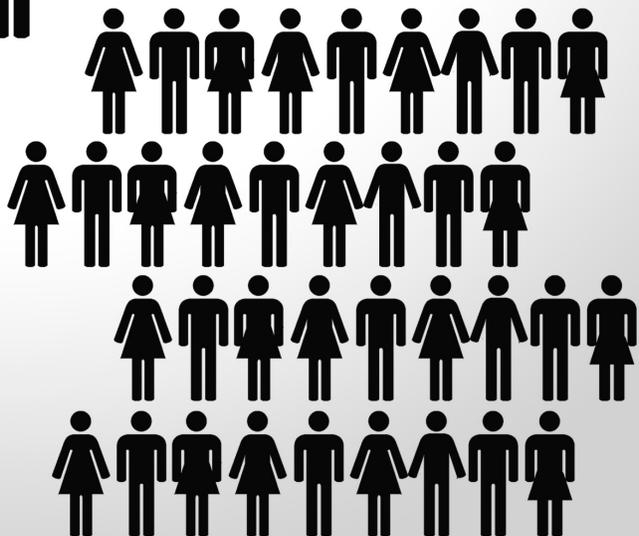
Community

How do relationships work after college?
How do I begin and build healthy romantic relationships?
How should the church think about human sexuality?
What are some of the different views on gay marriage, and where does my community stand?

Year 4

Culture

How have perspectives on marriage and sexuality changed throughout history and between cultures?
How are we to interact with others whose opinions we may not agree with?
How does culture inform my beliefs on my sexuality?



Let's Talk About Sex, Faith, & Relationships

Passive Programming

Notice the life-sized male-female figures on A-frames around campus? They're part of **Let's Talk About Sex, Faith, & Relationships 2015**.

These creative displays have two goals:

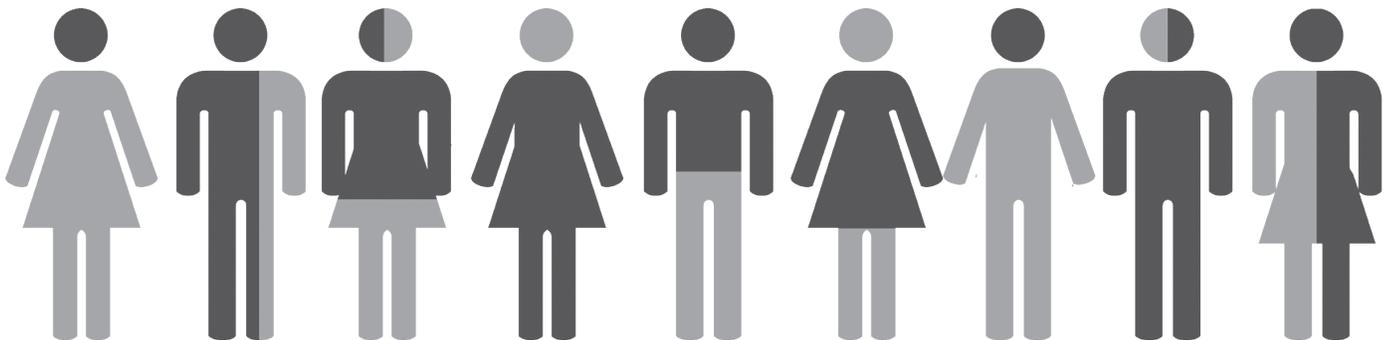
1. Educate individuals that gender is far more than two binary categories (male and female).

At these displays, feel free to guide peers to reflect about their own unique sets of traits. Some may be traditionally viewed as masculine, others as feminine. All are equally valuable and valid, and make that individual the person they are.

2. Guide individuals to think about their relationship with themselves.

Before thinking about oneself in relationship with others, whether romantic relationships, platonic friendships, or family relationships, it can be helpful to consider one's relationship with oneself first.

Feel free to encourage peers to look at themselves in the mirrors mounted on displays and think introspectively about who they are. Questions next to the display help guide individuals through self-reflection.



Monday, April 27th: Opening Keynote

Gender & Identity

Dr. Jenell Paris, anthropologist and author of *The End of Sexual Identity*, opens a conversation on gender and sexuality from an anthropological perspective.

Dr. Paris is joined by SPU sociology professors Dr. Kevin Neuhouser and Dr. Jennifer McKinney for a panel discussion on what gender is, how it functions in societies, and ways Christians think about this topic.

Drs. Paris, Neuhouser, and McKinney provide fresh perspectives for how Christians can consider thinking about topics of gender and sexuality.

Speakers



Jenell Williams Paris, professor of Anthropology at Messiah College in Grantham, PA, researches and writes about gender, sexuality, faith and culture, and race. Her published work includes various genres, including academic, creative nonfiction, magazine, op-ed, advocacy, and online writing.



Jennifer McKinney is Professor of Sociology and Director of Women's Studies at Seattle Pacific University. Her research interests include gender, family, and religion and she has published articles in *The Sociological Quarterly*, *The Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, *Cultural Encounters*, and *Christianity Today*.



Kevin Neuhouser has been teaching in the Sociology Department at Seattle Pacific University since 1996. His research focuses on the interactions of social movements, gender, and religion in Brazil. This summer, for the 9th time, he will take a Sprint Team to Brazil.

Monday, April 27th:

Discussion questions

1. Is the concept of gender as a social construct a new or familiar one?
2. How does it impact the way you see yourself and others? Is it helpful for discussions about sex, faith, and relationships?
3. What cultural messages have you received about gender? How do those messages impact you?
4. Have gender roles influenced your choices in vocation/career, relationships, and other life choices? If so, how?
5. In your opinion, which elements of your society's gender or sex categories pattern God's creation well? Which elements miss the mark? By what criteria do you make these distinctions?

Additional resources*

The End of Sexual Identity: Why Sex Is Too Important to Define Who We Are by Jenell Williams Paris

"Divided by Gender: How Sociology Can Help" by Jennifer McKinney and Kevin Neuhouser

Sex and the Soul : Juggling Sexuality, Spirituality, Romance, and Religion on America's College Campuses by Donna Freitas

Real Sex : The Naked Truth about Chastity by Lauren Winner

*For full citations, visit spu.edu/ltsfr

Tuesday, April 28th: Chapel Address

Dialoguing in a Divided Church

Dr. Jenell Paris returns to speak at SPU's weekly chapel service. Dr. Paris' message addresses the variety of Christian approaches to sexual orientation, and our call to be reconcilers rather than culture warriors.

The weekly *gather* service includes worship and creative response to Dr. Paris' message.

Speaker



Jenell Williams Paris, professor of Anthropology at Messiah College in Grantham, PA, researches and writes about gender, sexuality, faith and culture, and race. Her published work includes various genres, including academic, creative nonfiction, magazine, op-ed, advocacy, and online writing.

Tuesday, April 28th:

Discussion questions

1. How have the faith communities you have been or currently are part of addressed issues of gender, identity, and sexuality?
2. What conversations about gender, identity, and sexuality, if any, do you wish you could have with your faith community or other communities you're a part of?
3. What might reconciliation surrounding issues of gender, identity, and sexuality look like in your faith community or other communities you're a part of?
4. How do *you* think Christians should engage in issues of gender, identity, and sexuality in the broader culture?

Additional resources*

The End of Sexual Identity: Why Sex Is Too Important to Define Who We Are by Jenell Williams Paris

*For full citations, visit spu.edu/ltastr

Wednesday, April 29th: Panel Discussion Theology, Faith, & Sexuality

Panelists Dr. Brian Bantum, Dr. J.J. Johnson Leese, and Dr. Rob Wall from SPU's School of Theology provide a theological framework for understanding the intersection of human identity and sexuality.

Panel discussion will be followed with a Q&A session with live questions from audience members.

Speakers



Brian Bantum, Associate Professor of Theology, focuses his teaching and research on the intersection of theology and identity exploring how the foundational claims of the Christian church serve to illumine the challenges and possibilities of discipleship in the modern world.



J.J. Johnson Leese, Instructor of Christian Scripture, has worked as an international educator teaching biblical studies in India and Hong Kong. Her research interests focus on the New Testament documents with special attention given to the Pauline letters.



Rob Wall, Paul T. Walls Professor of Scripture and Wesleyan Studies, approaches the Bible as a sacred text — a “production of the Holy Spirit” — in a manner that forms a clearer understanding of God for the people of God in both his published research and classroom teaching.

Wednesday, April 29th:
Discussion questions

1. What is *your* starting point when thinking about human sexuality? Are there any foundational truths you hold to?
2. What takes, if any, on gender and/or sexual identity have you heard from faith communities or other communities you have been or are currently part of?
3. Is there a difference between discernment and judgment when having conversations about and making choices concerning potentially divisive topics such as gender, sexual identity, and faith? If so, what? If not, why not?
4. How does your view of Scripture align or not align with your understanding of sexuality and gender?

Additional resources*

The End of Sexual Identity: Why Sex Is Too Important to Define Who We Are by Jenell Williams Paris

"Divided by Gender: How Sociology Can Help" by Jennifer McKinney and Kevin Neuhouser

Sex and the Soul : Juggling Sexuality, Spirituality, Romance, and Religion on America's College Campuses by

*For full citations, visit spu.edu/ltastr

Let's Talk About Sex, Faith, & Relationships

Vocabulary List

Conversations on sex and gender require a specialized vocabulary. Want to learn more? Visit spu.edu/ltsfr for more resources, from an expanded list of definitions to articles from different perspectives on topics surrounding gender roles and human sexuality.

Sex: The biological characteristics distinguishing males and females; emphasizing anatomy, physiology, hormones, reproductive systems (*Fausto-Sterling*).

Gender: The social, cultural, psychological traits linked to males and females through particular social contexts; masculine and feminine (*Mead*).

Sex identity: When chromosomal, sex organs, and genitalia match a sex category (96 percent of the population).

Gender identity: A person's internal perception of their gender.

Gender expression: How a person expresses their gender identity.

Cisgender/gender normative: When sex identity matches gender identity and gender expression.

Transgender: An umbrella term used to refer to people whose gender identities do not match their ascribed sex and/or people who choose not to identify as a particular gender.

Transsexual: Those seeking medical interventions, hormones and/or surgery to make their bodies congruent with their gender.

Transvestite/cross-dresser: People who cross-dress; more likely to be heterosexual men (not to be confused with drag queens).

Genderqueer: People who identify as neither/both woman or man; also encompasses people who experience non-binary sexual-orientations (intergender, bigender, androgynes, pangender, ambigender, nongender, gender-fluid).

Sexual orientation: A preference for sexual partners of one gender or the other (gynosexual, androsexual, femme, lesbian, queer, gay, bisexual).

Vocabulary list from Dr. Jennifer McKinney, Professor of Sociology at Seattle Pacific University

Let's Talk About Sex, Faith, & Relationships

Campus Resources

Have questions about what you've been learning through **Let's Talk About Sex, Faith, and Relationships**? Take advantage of SPU's on-campus resources to continue the conversation.

Student Counseling Center

Located in Watson Hall, 1st Floor

Open 9 a.m.–5 p.m., M–F

scc@spu.edu | 206-281-2657

<http://www.spu.edu/depts/scc/>

Health Center

Located in Watson Hall, 1st Floor

Open 9 a.m.–12 p.m., 1 p.m.–4:30 p.m., M–F

206-281-2231

<http://spu.edu/depts/healthservices/>

University Ministries

Located in the Student Union Building, 2nd Floor

um@spu.edu | 206-281-2966

<http://spu.edu/depts/um/>

Residence Life

Located in the Student Union Building, 2nd Floor
and Residence Halls/Campus Apartments

<http://www.spu.edu/depts/reslife/residential/staff.asp>

Student Programs

Located in the Student Union Building, 2nd Floor

osp@spu.edu | 206-281-2247

<http://www.spu.edu/depts/studentprograms/>

Please utilize these resources as students come with questions or stories that extend past your responsibility and knowledge. Our goal is to provide information and questions to encourage healthy and beneficial conversation around the topics of sex, faith, and relationships. This resource book is not meant to be a handbook of answers, but a guide pointing to those who have the expertise to both answer questions and help students through difficult situations. No matter what position you hold as a student leader, please do not take on your peers' issues alone! Instead, turn to the support of the incredible and capable SPU community. Thank you for all your work and your support of the **Let's Talk about Sex, Faith, & Relationships** 2015 events!

Notes

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