



LGBTQ
Religious Archives Network

Elizabeth Pérez Receives 2022 Educational Resource Prize

The LGBTQ Religious Archives Network (LGBTQ-RAN) honors Elizabeth Pérez, Ph.D. with the [2022 LGBTQ-RAN Educational Resource Prize](#) for her course, [“LGBT Religious History: Queering the Spirit.”](#) Honorable mention goes to Sam Davis and Sam McLoughlin for their syllabus, [“Queerness at the Potluck: Storytelling, Religion, & History.”](#)

[Elizabeth Pérez](#) (she/her) is associate professor of Religious Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. She is an ethnographer and historian of Afro-Diasporic traditions and LGBTQ religious experience. Her first monograph, *Religion in the Kitchen: Cooking, Talking, and the Making of Black Atlantic Traditions* (New York University Press, 2016), was awarded the 2017 Clifford Geertz Prize in the Anthropology of Religion by the Society for the Anthropology of Religion, and it received Honorable Mention for the Caribbean Studies Association’s 2019 Barbara T. Christian Literary Award. She has published widely in edited volumes and scholarly journals, including *Feminist Anthropology* and *Material Religion*.

Dr. Pérez specializes in the teaching of subjects that many people shy away from discussing in polite company: religion, politics, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality. Her approach to teaching is marked by the incorporation of social media and audiovisual materials (including many maps, film clips, illustrations, and a judicious selection of slides available in the public domain). Trips to museums have enriched such courses as “Witches & *Brujxs*: Black Magic & (Afro-)Latinx Feminism” and “Black Gods of Cuba, Brazil, & Beyond: The Orishas” at UCSB and “Religion, Healing, & Medicine,” “The Virgin of Guadalupe: From Tilma to Tattoo,” and “Dark Goddesses & Black Madonnas” (when taught at Dartmouth College). Her courses “African Religions of the Americas” and “Religion & Music in Cuba” have included live demonstrations of religious drumming by master musicians and Afro-Cuban movement workshops led by highly trained professional dancers.

Dr. Pérez taught the Prize-winning [“LGBT Religious History: Queering the Spirit”](#) course at the University of California, Santa Barbara, in fall 2018 and spring 2022. The course adopts a comparative historical perspective in considering the multiplicity of LGBTQIA+ religious identities. (The acronym was shortened to LGBT in the title so as to fit in the course catalog.) The course also traces the emergence of gender categories and norms in different societies, beginning with our own. It pays special attention to LGBTQIA+ people as ritual specialists, healers, and trance mediums; “transgender-similar” experience; and traditions not often included in “world religions” classes.

In awarding the Prize, the jury members observed: “Dr. Pérez’s course is broad in chronological coverage, theoretical approaches, and geographical diversity. Impressively, it manages to carefully guide students through this wealth of material in a way that is focused, informative, engaging, and creative. The syllabus combines broad intellectual horizons with deep social inclusivity. It is generous to its subject and to students engaging with these materials.”

The course materials [posted at this link](#) on the LGBTQ-RAN website include: the syllabus; midterm and final assignment instructions; and a PDF of the course website, listing the required readings as well as optional texts and videos. The website contains colorful portraits from Gabriel Garcia Roman's "Queer Icons" series and by artists Alberto del Pozo and Maria Giulia Alemanno, among other images meant to inspire students on their educational journey. Also posted are a folder with the readings and another with original PowerPoint presentations used during lectures. These demonstrate Pérez's pedagogical concern with meeting students where they are by incorporating diagrams, social media posts, and memes, which are particularly effective for engaging visual learners.

Pérez's submission was one of five received for the [2022 Educational Resource Prize](#). The jury also gave an honorable mention to Sam Davis and Sam McLoughlin for their "[Queerness at the Potluck: Storytelling, Religion & History](#)" syllabus, intended for co-teaching opportunities at the university level. The jury was impressed with Davis's and McLoughlin's "creative, student-centered pedagogy and a commitment to dismantling various hierarchies in both the assigned material and their approach to facilitating learning."

[Sam Davis](#) (they/them) is a Ph.D. student in the American Religious History track at the Florida State University. They have an M.A. in Church History from Union Theological Seminary where their experiences teaching in both academic and alternative learning settings laid the foundations for the collaborative, community-based pedagogical methods they value. Sam's research broadly focuses on the religiosity of LGBTQ+ Americans, while their dissertation will focus on religion in queer leather and kink communities in NYC. [Sam McLoughlin](#) (she/her) is an MA student of American Religious History at the Florida State University. She researches the work of Phyllis Schlafly and her STOP ERA movement to understand the intersections of religion, race, and gender to illuminate how whiteness operates as an unmarked norm in our contemporary academic disciplines. While developing her research interests at FSU, Sam has started creating her own pedagogical toolkit of focusing on collaborative, student-led classroom environments. Their "Queerness at the Potluck" syllabus can be found [at this link](#).

Pérez is the second recipient of the [LGBTQ-RAN Educational Resource Prize](#). LGBTQ-RAN initiated this Prize in 2021 to honor scholars and teachers who develop curricular and instructional materials for the teaching of LGBTQ+ religious history at all levels of education from primary to higher education, as well as in congregational or community settings. The Prize is intended to support and amplify the development of these educational resources and to make excellent resources available by publishing them on the LGBTQ-RAN website. Submissions for next year's LGBTQ-RAN Educational Resource Prize must be postmarked or received electronically by June 30, 2023. Complete information on submission guidelines for the Prize can be found here: www.lgbtqreligiousarchives.org/educational-resource-prize-guidelines

The [LGBTQ Religious Archives Network](#) is a ground-breaking venture to preserve the history of LGBTQ religious movements around the world. It has three primary purposes: a) to assist LGBTQ religious leaders and groups in determining how best to preserve their records and papers in appropriate repositories; b) to provide an electronic information clearinghouse for these archival collections and other historical data about LGBTQ religious history; and c) to encourage research and study of LGBTQ religious history. Learn more about LGBTQ-RAN at its website: <https://lgbtqreligiousarchives.org/>

August 3, 2022 (revised 10/14/2022)