



LGBTQ
Religious Archives Network

Julie Kelto Lillis Receives 2024 Educational Resource Prize

The LGBTQ Religious Archives Network (LGBTQ-RAN) honors Julie Kelto Lillis with the [2024 LGBTQ-RAN Educational Resource Prize](#) for her course syllabus on: “Genders and Sexualities of Early Christians.”

Julie Kelto Lillis, Ph.D. is Assistant Professor of Early Christian History at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. Her research focuses on gender and sexuality topics in ancient texts and includes a monograph called *Virgin Territory: Configuring Female Virginity in Early Christianity*, which was awarded the North American Patristic Society’s prize for Best First Book. Her next project discusses human genderlessness. Much of her professional work explores notions of health and disability and the means for creating fuller access to academic life.

The Prize-winning “Genders and Sexualities of Early Christians” seminary/graduate course examines several gender and sexuality topics, giving special attention to questions like what being “straight” looked like in antiquity, which ancient Christian lifestyles can be considered “queer,” and whether early Christian thinkers saw gender (here meaning sexual difference or gender-and-sex) as an eternal or temporary aspect of being human. The course asks students to compare ancient and present-day issues/categories and to question current assumptions in our home cultures about how gender functions (and for whom), how gender and sexuality identities relate, and how Christianity has historically shaped societal options and expectations for these aspects of life. Dr. Lillis taught this class at Union Theological Seminary in spring 2024.

In awarding the Prize, the jury members observed: “This syllabus is a standout as an educational tool supporting a liberatory mission. With critical questions assigned to each week's readings, it guides the students’ learning through building on each successive new skill/framework/idea. The readings are sound and rich. The syllabus is thoughtfully designed and includes ample pedagogical scaffolding to welcome students with little background into the conversation. However, more advanced students have much to work with also. The focus questions, the clear delineation of topics and the forethought put into the quantity and content of readings are especially appreciated. The assignment where she invites students to connect the present with the distant past is a provocative and engaging teaching tool.”

The jury gave an honorable mention to Siobhan Kelly for their syllabus for a class, “Sex Wars: Religion and Gender in the Public Sphere,” which they taught to undergraduates at Brown University in Spring 2024. This course focuses on increasing understanding of and critical engagement with present U.S. debates around religion, gender, and sexuality. It probes such questions as how to make sense of growing up in the #MeToo moment, anti-trans evangelical activism, and what it means to live in a post-Roe U.S. To address these questions, Kelly developed a theoretically engaged syllabus using our present moment as a lens through which to view, engage, and understand the historical and contemporary development of the relationship between religion, gender, and sexuality. The jury noted

that Kelly's syllabus "skillfully combines theoretical texts with historical texts and smartly weds historical thinking with interdisciplinary studies." Siobhan Kelly is a Ph.D. candidate with the Harvard University Committee on the Study of Religion and will start as a Society of Fellows Postdoctoral Scholar at Boston University in September.

Both of these syllabi are available on the "Teaching Resources" page on the LGBTQ-RAN website, <https://lgbtqreligiousarchives.org/teaching-resources>

Lillis' and Kelly's submissions were among nine received for the [2024 Educational Resource Prize](#). Lillis is the fourth recipient of the prize which LGBTQ-RAN initiated 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, 2025. 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/>

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