

Winter 2019
MTWR 9:00
– 9:50 Room:
Gerlinger
Hall 246
Instructor:
Óscar A.
Ralda

Office Hours:
Tuesday 12:00 – 1:50
& by appointment

Office:
Susan Campbell Hall
11

Email:
oralda@uoregon.edu

Course Description

Love and sex may not seem like particularly philosophical issues, but the point of this course will be to account for them as meriting philosophical investigation. This means we will engage in a critical interrogation about how we understand and practice love and sex, developing concepts along the way. We shall read both philosophical, psychoanalytic, and literary texts, ranging from G. W. F. Hegel to Simone de Beauvoir, Plato to Angela Davis, in order to grasp love as a phenomenon that exceeds and contests our everyday ways of coming to grips with it. Among the problems we shall account for are the following: What is love? What is its ontological and metaphysical status? Why do we love, even though it brings us pain (and, of course, immeasurable joy)? Is love an ethical problem? What is the relationship between love and philosophy? Is love ineffable? How and who can we love? Who are we forbidden to love? Can love be ideological? Is there a “normal” way to love? What are some of the (often unacknowledged) normative underpinnings of love and sex? What is the relation between love, sex, and technology? What might it mean to expand our notion of love so as to include spheres of our existence previously excluded from it? Finally, how can a philosophical—that is to say, *critical*—account of love provide a point of departure for reimagining our relations to others and, perhaps, even to the world as such? We will, of course, not answer these questions with any kind of finality; think of our task more as an opening onto an interminable question.

A Special Note

This class requires students to engage with themes that can be highly charged and deeply personal. While no one is required to disclose personal information, many students often do. I expect all participants in the class to handle such disclosures in a respectful and sensitive manner, to refrain from inappropriate humor (though appropriate humor is encouraged), and to work hard to practice an attitude of openness to experiences or points of view that you do not share.

Course Goals:

- Develop intellectual curiosity
- Develop rigorous argumentative skills
- Develop concepts to interrogate love and sex in their manifold character
- Cultivate critical readings skills (some of the texts we will read will be difficult, but we will think through them together, so you need not worry on this front)

Course Requirements and Grading:

Papers (3):

- Essay I: 15%
- Essay II: 20%
- Essay III: 25%

Quizzes (4):

- Quiz 1: 5%
- Quiz 2: 5%
- Quiz 3: 5%
- Quiz 4: 5%

Participation:

- 20%

Papers:

There will be three 1500-word essays assigned during the course that will require you to analyze and evaluate the arguments made in the text and in lecture. Essay prompts will be assigned on a Thursday at the beginning of class and will be due on Canvas the following Saturday before midnight. If you wish to write about something not covered in the prompts, please consult me first.

You will be required to upload the paper on Canvas.

NOTE: Late papers will be penalized a half letter grade for every day the paper is late.

Quizzes:

There will also be four in-class reading quizzes, each worth 5% of your grade, at the ends of even weeks: Week 2, Week 4, Week 6, and Week 8. These will test your comprehension of the readings and will thereby help to prepare you for the essay assignments

Participation and Attendance:

Your written work for the class is the space for presenting well-thought-out analysis and response. Class discussion will be your forum for trying out and experimenting with new and old ideas, and working through the material in the reading. I expect you to be prepared each day to 1) discuss the reading, 2) ask questions about its meaning and merit, 3) help others find the answers, 4) discern presuppositions, 5) trace consequences, 6) reconstruct arguments, and 7) evaluate strengths and weaknesses of positions.

Participation for this course is indispensable. We cannot simply do philosophy in our heads; it must also take shape in the very process of discussion. Thus, I will at times prepare group activities so as to facilitate discussion.

You are allowed 2 unexcused absences. Your grade will be reduced by one third of a letter grade for each unexcused absence after that. Excused absences consist in medical and family emergencies. If you miss class more than **five times for any reason**, you cannot earn a passing grade. If you are late more than 15 minutes you will be counted as absent.

Grading Criteria:

To do excellent work on the papers in this course, you need to be able to do more than just reiterate what various authors have said in your reading or what was said in class. An "A" indicates that you not only understand and comprehend the material, but that you have thought critically about it, fully fleshing out its subtleties and implications so that you can creatively apply the material at many levels. A "B" reflects an above-average understanding of the material without any major errors; however, "B" work doesn't capture the complexity of the issues and tends to accurately summarize what has been read or said in class. A "C" suggests a struggle with the material that manages an average, basic comprehension of it but is flawed by some significant misunderstandings or errors. A "D" indicates only a rudimentary comprehension of part of the material with most of the material being misunderstood. An "F" indicates no understanding of the material.

Additional Course Policies:

Incompletes and extensions will be given *only* in the event of documented emergencies.

Emergencies: In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines and grading percentages are subject to changes that may be necessitated by a revised semester calendar or other circumstances.

Accessibility: If you have a documented disability, please contact me in advance. If you need accommodations in this class, I will work with the Accessible Education Center to find a solution for you.

Academic Honesty: There will be **zero tolerance** for plagiarism in this course. Plagiarized papers will receive a 0, the student will automatically fail the course, and their name will be handed given to the university authorities. For more on the

University of Oregon policy on plagiarism, see the following website: <http://libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students>

In order to avoid plagiarizing from a source, both direct quotations and paraphrases or summaries of material found in traditional print media or on the internet must be acknowledged. If you have any questions about how this definition will be interpreted, please do not hesitate to discuss the matter with me.

Readings and Assignment Schedule

Class schedule and readings are subject to revision. You will be notified ahead of time if and when this happens. Reading is **mandatory. You are expected to come to class having read all of the assigned texts for that day.**

All readings will be available through the canvas site for the course. Go to the canvas site when it is up and look under "Files." Students are expected to print out the readings and bring them to lecture and discussion section each week, having read them closely and carefully.

Week 1

Unit I – On the Nature of Love: Philosophical Interrogations

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| 10/1 | Introductions and review of syllabus |
| 10/2 | Plato, <i>Symposium</i> : Phaedrus's speech, 178a - 180c; Pausanias' speech, 180c - 185c; Aristophanes' speech 189d - 193e |
| 10/3 | Plato, <i>Symposium</i> continued, pp. 551-574 |
| 10/4 | Class canceled (I will be giving a paper at a conference) |

Week 2

The Vicissitudes of Eros: Marion, Barthes, Cavarero

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| 10/7 | Marion, "The Silence of Love," and "What's the Use?" pp. 1-19 from <i>The Erotic Phenomenon</i> |
| 10/8 | Barthes, Selections from <i>A Lover's Discourse</i> : "Agony," pp. 29-30, "The Unknowable," pp. 134-135, and "Why?" pp. 186-187; "Fragment 31" by Sappho |
| 10/9 | Cavarero, "Eros and Narration," pp. 109-116 from <i>Relating Narratives: Storytelling and Selfhood</i> |
| 10/10 | Class discussion QUIZ 1 |

Week 3

Sensing the Other in (and of) Love: Between Hegel and Butler

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| 10/14 | Hegel, "Fragment on Love," and Selections from "Lordship and Bondage" from <i>The Hegel Reader</i> |
| 10/15 | Butler, "To Sense what is Living in the Other: Hegel's Early Love," pp. 90-100 from <i>Senses of the Subject</i> |
| 10/16 | Butler continued, pp. 100-111. |
| 10/17 | Class discussion (ESSAY I ASSIGNED) |

Week 4***Why the Body Matters: Between Merleau-Ponty and Foucault***

- 10/21 Merleau-Ponty, "The Body in its Sexual Being," pp. 178-190 from *The Phenomenology of Perception*
- 10/22 Merleau-Ponty, "The Body in its Sexual Being," continued pp. 191-204
- 10/23 Foucault, "The Repressive Hypothesis," pp. 15-35
- 10/24 Class Discussion
QUIZ 2
(ESSAY 1 DUE OCTOBER 26)

Week 5***Simone de Beauvoir and the Woman in Love***

- 10/28 Beauvoir, "Introduction" pp. 3-10 from *The Second Sex*
- 10/29 Beauvoir, "Introduction," pp. 11-17 from *The Second Sex*
- 10/30 Beauvoir, "The Woman in Love," pp. 773-776, 780-782, 784-787, 789 half page down- 790 half page down, 796, 798 from bottom-800 from *The Second Sex* (14 pages total)
- 10/31 Class Discussion

Week 6**Sex, Conquest, and Communication**

- 11/4 Bordo, "Gentleman or Beast: The Double Bind of Masculinity," pp. 229-245 and pp. 262-264 from *The Male Body: A New Look at Men in Public and Private*
- 11/5 Phillips, "What's a Young Woman (Not) to Think," pp. 33-52
- 11/6 Phillips, "What's a Young Woman (Not) to Think," pp. 53-78
- 11/7 Mann, "Creepers, Flirts, Heroes and Allies: Four Theses on Men and Sexual Harassment"
- (QUIZ 3 + ESSAY 2 ASSIGNED)**

Week 7**Sex, Power, and Questions of Gender and Race**

- 11/11 Federici, "Wages Against Housework," and "Why Sexuality is Work" (11 pages)
- 11/12 Davis, "Rape, Racism, and the Myth of the Black Rapist" pp 171-185 from *Women, Race, and Class*
- 11/13 Davis continued, "Rape, Racism, and the Myth of the Black Rapist," pp. 186-201 from *Women, Race, and Class*
- 11/14 Class Discussion.
(ESSAY 2 DUE NOVEMBER 16)

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| Week 8 | <i>Sexuality: Telling, Being, Having</i> |
| 11/18 | Wittig, "The Category of Sex," pp. 1-8, and "The Straight Mind," pp. 21-32 from <i>The Straight Mind and Other Essays</i> |
| 11/19 | Eribon, "The Shock of Insult," pp. 15-17, and "To Tell or Not to Tell," pp. 46-54 from <i>Insult and the Making of the Gay Self</i> |
| 11/20 | Eribon, "Heterosexual Interpellation," pp. 56-63 and "Existence Precedes Essence," pp. 107-112 from <i>Insult and the Making of the Gay Self</i> |
| 11/21 | Class discussion. QUIZ 4 |

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| Week 9 | <i>The Critique of Love Under Capitalism</i> |
| 11/25 | Becker, "The Economic Approach to Human Behavior," pp. 3-14 |
| 11/26 | Fromm, "Love and Economic Competition," pp. 191-201 |
| 11/27 | No class. Film TBD. |
| 11/28 | Thanksgiving! No class. |

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| Week 10 | <i>The Dynamics of Internet and Intimacy</i> |
| 12/2 | Byung-Chul Han, Selections from <i>The Agony of Eros</i> ; Lenhart and Duggan, "Couples the Internet and Social Media" |
| 12/3 | "Bifo" Berardi, Selections from <i>Precarious Rhapsody: Semiocapitalism and the Pathologies of the Post-Alpha Generation</i> ; Laing, "The Future of Loneliness" |
| 12/4 | Lett, "You Up? College in the Age of Tinder"; Turkle, "There Will Never Be an Age of Artificial Intimacy" |
| 12/5 | Final Class Discussion. ESSAY 3 ASSIGNED. |

Week 11 (Finals week)

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| 12/11 | ESSAY 3 DUE DECEMBER 11 |
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