

THE PHILOSOPHY OF SEX AND LOVE
Philosophy 3430
Spring 2014

INSTRUCTOR: Alison Duncan Kerr

OFFICE: 214 University Hall

OFFICE HOURS: M/W 3:45–4:45 or by appt.

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LOCATION: Koffolt Lab 0136

TIME: M/W, 2:20pm–3:40pm

I. REQUIRED TEXTS

Plato, *Symposium* (any edition will be acceptable)

Jean-Paul Sartre, *No Exit* (any edition will be acceptable)

Nicholas Power, Raja Halwani, and Alan Soble, Eds., *The Philosophy of Sex: Contemporary Readings*, 6th Edition (Rowman & Littlefield, 2012)

The books are available at the university bookstore. Several articles will also be available on Carmen. You are encouraged to print these articles out in order to read them. You must bring a copy of the article with you to class on the day it is being discussed. In addition to reading the assigned articles, you should also read the “Savage Love” column each week to provide some extra material for discussion.

II. COURSE WEBSITE: <https://carmen.osu.edu>

III. COURSE DESCRIPTION

What is sex? When we want to have sex, what is it that we actually want? Why do we want sex? What are the moral, social, and physical issues concerning sex? Is adultery immoral? What are sexual perversions? Ought sex be related to love?

What is love? Does parental love differ from sibling love, friendship love, erotic love, or romantic love? Is love essential to a flourishing human life? To answer these questions properly requires that we think hard about definitions, historical discussions, and implications of love.

This course will explore both historical and contemporary philosophical perspectives on sex and love. Most people spend surprisingly little time actually *thinking* through issues concerning sex and love despite the fact that they play such a fundamental role in our lives. A central aim of this course is to provide you with the theoretical tools to explore the concept of love that is so central to human life. This course will strengthen your critical thinking skills as well as your ability to read and write about moral and social/political philosophy.

IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Your final grade is determined on the basis of participation during class, pop quizzes, two exams, and a final paper. These requirements will be weighed as follows:

Participation and Attendance — 10%

You are expected to attend every class, to have read the assigned readings before class, and to bring your textbook, articles, and your syllabus with you to every class. This class is intended to be *significantly discussion-oriented*—attendance is important for this to be achieved. Poor attendance will adversely affect your

participation grade, but (good) participation in class will improve your participation grade. The quality, not just the quantity, of your participation is very important. I will call on students to answer specific questions about the assignments.

Regular, punctual attendance is expected; participation in class discussion is strongly encouraged. Regular failure to attend, participate, or bring the day's assigned readings to class will result in a failing participation grade.

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE: Cell phones should be silenced; I reserve the right to answer any phone that rings during class. Texting is absolutely forbidden; anyone caught texting will be asked to leave class immediately and will be considered absent for that class.

Reading Quizzes — 15%

There will be some number of pop quizzes, always given in the first few minutes of class. These pop quizzes are designed to test whether you have done the assigned reading. I will offer a make-up quiz only with a *documented* excuse. At the end of the course, the lowest quiz grade will be dropped.

Two Exams — 50%

There will be two exams; each exam is worth 25% of your final grade. Both exams will include two portions. One portion will be done in class—a standard short answer, multiple choice, and fill-in-the-blank exam. The second portion will be a take-home essay that you have 48 hours to complete.

The Essay — 25%

The essay should philosophically analyze the arguments made in at least one of the articles or books we've read in class. You are responsible for choosing your own topic; you are highly encouraged to do this in close consultation with me. This paper should be 8-10 pages. This paper should be typed and double-spaced, with 1-inch margins and 12-point font.

V. RUBRIC

For an explanation of what is expected from your essay assignments (both exams and the essay), see the attached rubric developed by Carnegie Mellon University's Eberly Center for Teaching Excellence.

VI. EXPECTATIONS

In general, I expect that you will not interfere with your classmates' ability to learn in the classroom. I expect you to show courtesy and respect to me and to your fellow classmates. While class is in session, please do not send text messages, surf the internet, make or answer phone calls, read things unrelated to the course, listen to headphones, etc. Please try your best to arrive on time for class. If you work or have some other obligation that will regularly cause you to miss class or come in more than fifteen minutes late, I highly recommend that you drop this course.

For discussion to be productive, everyone must participate and must be respectful of others. People might feel passionate or sensitive about particular topics that we will discuss. I will try hard, and I ask all of you to try hard, to be sensitive and respectful of each other's feelings. Being respectful, however, is not the same as accepting the views of others uncritically. I respect all of the thinkers whose work we will read this quarter. But, I will be prepared to criticize all of their arguments, and I would do it to their faces if they were here. This is a philosophy class, the sort of environment where we should subject each other's ideas to the same critical scrutiny to which we subject our own ideas. We owe it to each other to point out what we think are flaws in the arguments other people put forward. To do less than that is to patronize them; it is to assume that they can't face the truth, or can't think rigorously. Of course there may be some issues about which, in the end, we

think that people can reasonably disagree. But in order to find out which issues those are, we must be ready to pursue the discussion—to do some philosophy.

That said, if you find that you are uncomfortable with the content or tone of the discussion, please let me know as soon as possible.

Pep Talk: There is no doubt—philosophy is hard. You will find yourself grappling with ideas and language that are likely to seem quite obscure on the first read. My suggestion is to give the article a quick skim and then go back and read it a second time slowly. This process might sound incredibly time-consuming, but you will find that the ideas sink in much more deeply, and this will save you time and energy in the end.

VII. ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed, illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct <http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/>.

VIII. DISABILITIES SERVICES

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292.3307, TDD 292.0901; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>.

IX. READINGS: We will be reading many of the following articles. I will confirm what the next class’s reading will be at the end of each class. I reserve the right to make changes to the assigned readings, the order, or the due dates of assignments. *You must have a copy of the reading with you in class on the day it is being discussed.*

(I) LOVE

1. WHAT IS LOVE?

Thomas Merton, “Love and Need: Is Love a Package or a Message?”

Jonathan Franzen, “Liking Is for Cowards. Go for What Hurts.”

David Foster Wallace, *This is Water*

Plato, *The Symposium*

Jean Paul Sartre, *No Exit*

Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, “The Woman in Love”

Robert Kraut, “Love De Re”

Arthur Schopenhauer, “The Metaphysics of the Love of the Sexes”

Midterm Exam I

2. THE MORAL AND POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF LOVE: MARRIAGE

Emma Goldman, “Marriage and Love”

Cheshire Calhoun, “In Defense of Same-Sex Marriage”

Claudia Card, “Against Marriage and Motherhood”

Bryan Weaver and Fiona Woollard, “Marriage and the Norm of Monogamy”

(II) SEX

1. WHAT IS SEX?

- Greta Christina, "Are We Having Sex Now, or What?"
Thomas Nagel, "Sexual Perversion"
Robert Solomon, "Sex and Perversion"
Peter Singer, "Heavy Petting"
Louise Collins, "Is Cybersex Sex?"
Alan Soble, "Masturbation, Again"

Midterm Exam I

2. THE MORAL AND POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF SEX

- Martha Nussbaum, "Objectification"
Bonnie Mann, "Creepers, Flirts, Heroes and Allies: Four Theses on Men and Sexual Harassment"
Martha Nussbaum, "'Whether from Reason or Prejudice': Taking Money for Bodily Services"
Catharine MacKinnon, "Pornography, Civil Rights, and Speech"
Nancy Bauer, "Pornutopia"; Ann Barnhill's comments on "Pornutopia"
Sandra Bartky, "Feminine Masochism and the Politics of Personal Transformation"

Final Essay

(III) SOME ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Troy Jollimore, *Love's Vision*; Raja Halwani, *Philosophy of Love, Sex, and Marriage: An Introduction*;
Robert M. Stewart, *Philosophical Perspectives on Sex and Love*; Harry Frankfurt, "The Dear Self";
Bennett W. Helm, *Love, Friendship, and the Self: Intimacy, Identification, and the Social Nature of Persons*;
Hichem Naar, "A Dispositional Theory of Love"; Irving Singer, *Philosophy of Love: A Partial Summing-Up*.

