

Philosophy of Love and Sex
Spring 2024
Instructor: Dr. Patricia Marechal
E-mail address: pmarechal@ucsd.edu

Meeting times: M, W & F 10:00 - 10:50

Location: PODEM 1A20

OH Patricia: Wednesdays 11-1, RWAC 0498.

OH Jacob Zellmer (TA): Fridays 11am-1pm, RWAC 0440

OH Joseph Martinez (TA): Mondays 11am-1pm, RWAC 0429

Course Description

In this course, we will focus on philosophical topics surrounding love and sex. We will touch on these issues by examining both historical and contemporary texts, ranging from Plato and Aristotle to contemporary philosophers, such as Langton, Srinivasan, and Zheng. We will discuss love and sex from different angles and perspectives. We will, for example, address the nature of love both as a mental and social phenomenon, the ethics and politics of love and sex, and the linguistic categories and concepts we use to discuss these issues. This course will help you develop skills fundamental to philosophy, such as understanding, reconstructing, and criticizing arguments. You will also develop tools that might be useful for thinking about your and other people's love and sex lives.

Course Objectives

This class focuses on developing skills that are central to humanities classes. These include: skills in *reading a text closely and critically*, skills in *writing clearly* and in *constructing a well-defended argument*, and skills in *productive group discussion*. And since this class is designed to be a course in the history of philosophy, there will be both historical and philosophical objectives.

By the end of this course, you will have developed and refined the following general skills: (i) how to read difficult philosophical material; (ii) how to identify and reconstruct arguments; and (iii) how to produce and clearly articulate your own arguments, both in writing and orally in class.

Policies and Academic Integrity

Extensions for papers are not available in this course except in extraordinary circumstances (contact me or the T.A.s *ahead of time* should you think that your circumstances fit this description). Late papers are penalized 1/2 a grade for every 24-hour delay. Electronic copies of every paper need to be submitted to the Canvas website.

There will be strict enforcement of UCSD's guidelines for academically honest research. For details, see: <https://academicintegrity.ucsd.edu/process/policy.html>

Mental Health

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, substance abuse problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance and may reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. Northwestern University services are available to assist you. You can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via <https://caps.ucsd.edu/>. If you find yourself struggling with your mental or physical health this quarter, please feel to approach me. I will be flexible and accommodating.

Required Texts

Many of the materials are linked on the course schedule. I will also make other primary texts and all secondary materials available to you in PDF form on the course website.

Course Requirements

Participation: You must show active participation and involvement in this class by attending lecture and/or posting questions about the course readings on Canvas.

Writing Assignments: You will have to (1) write an **Op. Ed. piece (800-1000 words)** and (2) complete a **short writing assignment (400 words)**. There will also be a **final, sit-in exam** during exam week.

Grades

20% Participation

20% Op. Ed. piece

20% Short writing assignment

40% Final Exam

Writing Resources

*** Guides for Writing a Philosophy Paper**

- [Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Paper. \(Links to an external site.\)](#) (Written by Jim Pryor)
- [Tackling the Philosophy Essay. \(Links to an external site.\)](#) (From Cambridge University)

Course Schedule

PART I: LOVE

April 1: Introduction (no readings)

April 3: What is Romantic Love?

- Plato, *Symposium* (selections)

April 5: What is Romantic Love?

- Plato, *Symposium* (continued)

April 8, 10 & 12: What is Romantic Love?

- Is love a union of souls? – Robert Nozick, “Love’s Bond” (in Files)
- Is love an emotion? [Interview with Berit Brogaard \(Links to an external site.\)Links to an external site.](#)
- Is love a bunch of chemicals in the brain? [Some neuroscience of love \(Links to an external site.\)Links to an external site.](#)
- Can we choose who we love? The NYT Modern Love column’s [36 questions that lead to love \(Links to an external site.\)Links to an external site.](#)

April 15, 17 & 19: What is Friendship Love?

- 04/15 - Aristotle: *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 8, chapters 1-5
- 04/ 17 - Interview with Alexander Nehamas, PDF version [here](#). Link here: [“Why Friendship is like Art” \(Links to an external site.\)Links to an external site.](#)
- 04/19 – No class.

April 22: Friendship continued

- Vida Yao, “Grace and Alienation” (in Files)

April 24: What is Parental Love?

- Sara Protasi, “Mama, Do You Love Me?’ A Defense of Unloving Parents” (in Files)

April 26: Love and Meaning in Life

- Susan Wolf, *Meaning in Life and Why it Matters*, Lecture 1
- Harry Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love*, Ch. 2, p. 53-68

April 29, May 1 & 3: Where Do We Find Love?

- Kierkegaard, “The Aesthetic Validity of Marriage” from the Second Part of *Either/Or* (selections) (in Files)
- Clare Chambers, [“Against Marriage \(Links to an external site.\)Links to an external site.”](#)
- Elizabeth Brake, *Minimizing Marriage* (selections) (in Files)

Op-ed piece due on Friday, May 3 at 11 PM on Canvas.

PART II: SEX

May 6, 8 & 10: Sex and Love

- Troy Jollimore, "Love, Romance, and Sex"
- David M. Halperin, "What is Sex for?"

May 13, 15 & 17: Sex, Consent, and Good Sex

- Quill Kukla, "That's What She Said: The Language of Sexual Negotiation"
- Kristen Roupenian, "[Cat Person](#)" ([Links to an external site.](#))[Links to an external site.](#)

May 20, 22 & 24: Sex, Race, and Conceptions of Beauty

- Robin Zheng, "Why Yellow Fever isn't Flattering: A Case Against Racial Fetishes"
- Enuma Okoro, "[Blackness and Beauty](#)" ([Links to an external site.](#))[Links to an external site.](#)

May 27, 29 & 31: Sex and Porn

- Langton & West, "Scorekeeping in a Pornographic Language Game"
- Nancy Bauer, *How to do things with pornography* (selections)

Short Writing Assignment due on Friday, May 31 by 11:59PM on Canvas.

June 3, 5 & 7: Sex and Entitlement

- Amia Srinivasan, "Does Anyone have the Right to Sex?"
- Jia Tolentino, "[The Rage of the Incels](#)" ([Links to an external site.](#))[Links to an external site.](#)
- Anthony Appiah, NYT, "[Is it Ok to Dump Him Because of his Medical Condition?](#)"[Links to an external site.](#) ([Links to an external site.](#))[Links to an external site.](#)

Final Exam: TBD