

WHAT IS LOVE?

AN INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

PHILOSOPHY 101 (501)

Summer (II) 2017

M-F, 11:45-1:15p @ HSS 115

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

What is love? Aside from comprising the eponymous refrain to a catchy song from the early 1990s, this is a central question which has captivated human interest from time immemorial. It's safe to assume that, in at least some capacity, it has similarly fascinated, implicated, or perhaps entirely eluded us all at some time or another. What is the nature of love itself? How does romantic love differ from friendship? How do related physical and mental states like attraction and sexual desire fit in? Can we love things that aren't individuals? How, in fact, does it all work? We will confront these questions and more in this class as we examine the work and methodology of great thinkers from throughout history.

We'll begin, as philosophical inquiry often does, in Ancient Greece, with an examination of Plato's prescriptions to love wisdom and to love others, and a look at Aristotle's conception of virtue in friendships, as well as how these conceptions coincide and differ. We'll then look at the notion of loving God and our proverbial neighbor through the eyes of thinkers from the medieval and early modern eras, before turning to more contemporary conceptions of love as we know it. More specifically, we'll consider the nature of romantic attraction and several related issues concerning human identity before turning to love's various physical instantiations with a discussion of sexuality and consent. Finally, we'll turn to relations of love that may hold between us and those entities that aren't necessarily other individuals, e.g., love of country and relations of community and society more generally.

If you participate actively in class and approach readings and course assignments with attention and care, I suspect that you will grow as a thinker. If you take the knowledge you acquire in this course with you and apply it to your own life and projects, I hope you will flourish as a human being.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

As a result of taking this course, students should be better able to:

- recognize and explain key ideas, figures, and distinctions from the history of philosophy.
- read and understand philosophical texts.
- analyze and evaluate philosophical arguments.
- critically reflect upon their own ideas and beliefs.
- communicate their ideas effectively in speech and writing.

MATERIALS

While we will work our way through a substantial amount of source material in this course, there is no textbook required for purchase. All class reading assignments will be made available to students in PDF format. These and any supplementary materials will be accessible via [Canvas](#).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

In order to be successful in this course, students should do **all** of the following:

- A. **Read this syllabus in its entirety.** Students will be held responsible for all information and policies contained in this document.
- B. **Read all assigned materials in accordance with the course calendar (see below).** Students should complete their reading before class on the day materials are assigned. Please note that philosophy can often be dense, and reading it difficult—so be sure to leave yourself some time to read carefully and critically.
- C. **Attend class regularly and participate in class meetings.** Students should do their best to attend every class, and to come prepared to contribute to daily discussions (by having read and thought about the assignment, written relevant responses, etc.).
- D. **Check UT email and Canvas regularly for course announcements.** Communications will often be made this way in order to keep you informed about class happenings during the semester. (Enabling notifications or using the Canvas app is a good idea in this regard.)
- E. **Complete all class assignments by their designated due dates (see below).** Late assignments will only be accepted in the most serious of circumstances, and ought to be arranged well in advance where possible.

ASSIGNMENTS

Pop Reading Quizzes (15%): Throughout the semester, there will be 6 short reading quizzes assigned in class at random. 5 quizzes will count toward your final grade at 3% each, as the lowest quiz grade will be dropped. These will vary in format from multiple choice questions to short essay responses, and are designed to encourage careful and critical reading to prepare you for in-class discussions.

Critical Responses (40%): During the term, you should write four critical responses (CRs) to assigned readings of your choice. Each should be around 800 words in length, and will be worth 10% of your final grade. In each of your CRs, you should briefly reconstruct an argument from one of our reading assignments and then offer your own take on that argument. Responses can be in the form of criticism, constructive extension, or application of an idea to a new area of inquiry. You may choose any reading assignment you like, but you can only do one response per reading. You should choose a reading that interests you assigned on or before the date that each CR is due (July 17, 24, 31, and August 7, respectively). Each response will be evaluated according to its accuracy with respect to the assigned reading, the rigor and quality of your response, and the quality of your writing (composition, grammar, and organization will count).

Final Exam (30%): At the end of the semester, you'll take an in-class written exam. This will be a closed-book test consisting of short and long essay questions drawn from readings, lectures, and class discussion during the course. The test will be completable in a normal class meeting's time (90 minutes).

Engaged Participation (15%+): Philosophical learning occurs best in collaboration and connection with others. For this reason, you must attend class regularly, having sufficiently prepared for discussion of any assigned readings or supplementary materials. Regular physical attendance, while usually necessary for a good participation grade, is not sufficient on its own. Thus, participation will be evaluated based on the quality of your overall contribution to in-class discussions and the course as a whole. This being said, different students participate in different ways (e.g., speaking in class, responding to others' thoughts, group work, visiting office hours, etc.), and this will be taken into account. Additionally, I reserve the right to raise grades in borderline cases where a student has an exemplary participation record, though this is by no means a guarantee that grades will be rounded up as a matter of policy.

ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSION AND GRADING

All of your written assignments should be turned in via Canvas, and will be checked for plagiarism upon their submission (see below for policy on academic integrity). Microsoft Word (.docx) or PDF format is preferred for ease of grading and feedback. I use an anonymized grading process, so please do not include any identifying information (e.g., headers, cover pages or other front matter, etc.) on your assignments themselves.

I will make every effort to return graded assignments to you within two weeks of their submission date. Often, grade turnaround will be quicker, but sometimes it may take a few days longer—if this is the case, you'll be notified in class. Communications about grading, wherever possible, should be done in person, rather than via email. To understand your grades, consult any relevant assignment details, rubrics, etc. from Canvas, as well as my comments on your graded paper. If questions arise, come by during office hours or set up an appointment, and we can discuss your grade. In order to appeal a grade, you must submit to me, in writing, why you think your assignment was unfairly graded. I won't consider changing grades without a written appeal.

This course will use a university standard +/- grading scale, with point gradations and letter grades defined as follows:

A 100-94	B 84-86	C 76-74	D 66-64
A- 93-90	B- 83-80	C- 73-70	D- 63-60
B+ 89-87	C+ 79-77	D+ 69-67	F < 60

CLASS POLICIES

Class Attendance: Student attendance is crucial to success in this (and any) course. Attendance records will be taken promptly at the beginning of each class period—so, please make sure you arrive on time. Participation grades can and will be affected by students' attendance. For these reasons, excused absences (which will not count adversely) will be granted only in the most serious of circumstances (university business, religious holidays, significant illnesses, etc.) and ought to be discussed with me in advance when possible. In order for an absence to be excused, you must be able to provide documentation related to meetings missed upon request.

Academic Integrity: All assignments for this course will be checked for plagiarism upon their submission. At Tennessee, plagiarism is defined as "using the intellectual property or product of someone else without giving proper credit," whether intentional or otherwise. Any student found in violation of university policy will immediately receive a failing grade for the course, and may be subject to further disciplinary action at the institutional level. Please refer to the university honor statement and other accompanying [resources](#) to further familiarize yourself with UT's academic honesty policies.

Electronics: The responsible use of laptops, tablets, and in some cases, smartphones for note-taking, class assignments, and research tasks is welcome in class. However, I do reserve the right to ask students to see their notes or work, and to discontinue their usage should it not be consistent with classroom purposes. Participation grades can and will be affected by violations of this policy, and repeated violations may result in being asked to leave class. Relatedly, student photography, as well as audio and video recording of lectures and class discussions is prohibited without prior and explicit permission of all parties involved.

Classroom Climate and Discussion Guidelines: Disagreement and the discussion of sensitive topics are key hallmarks of a modern democratic society, and a free exchange of ideas and perspectives is thus crucial in the university classroom as well. I fully expect and welcome vigorous disagreements in this class, especially given the somewhat sensitive subject matter we'll often engage with. With that being said, please be mindful of some important constraints on our discussions: Be thoughtful and courteous. Respect your classmates by listening to what they have to say, and make an effort to respond to issues raised by those who spoke before you rather than simply waiting your turn to give your opinion and consider your obligations for the day fulfilled. Please also be conscious of the relative balance of contributions in class—if you've spoken a lot, make an effort to cede the floor to less vocal classmates who might be waiting to enter the conversation. I will make every possible effort to maintain a collaborative atmosphere for inquiry and learning—I only ask that you do the same with respect to your classmates. To this end, I consider my classroom and office inclusive spaces for all students. No one should feel unwelcome, undervalued, or unsafe on the bases of their race, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, cultural background, religious belief, age, wealth, or physical/mental ability. I take this policy very seriously, and strive to provide a class environment that is based on full recognition and mutual respect for all who enter.

Accessibility: We all learn and work in different ways, and accordingly, I strive to make my courses as widely accessible as possible. Any student who may need special classroom or assignment

accommodations based on the impact of a disability, chronic illness, mental health concern, etc. is encouraged to meet with me to discuss their specific needs. Additionally, students seeking disability accommodations may contact [Student Disability Services](#) (SDS) at (865) 974-6087 or sds@utk.edu to document their eligibility for institutional accommodation services.

RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

Instructor Contact and Office Hours: The best way to get ahold of me in a pinch is via [email](#), and many brief questions or concerns are ideally addressed this way. I'll typically respond to student emails within 24 hours (weekends and holidays excepted). To ensure a prompt reply, please include "PHIL 101" in the subject line of your email. For any and all more substantive concerns and questions pertaining to the course, students are encouraged to visit my weekly office hours. In addition to regularly scheduled times on Tuesdays and Thursdays, I am available to meet with students via appointment (either in person or virtually). To request an appointment, send me an email, and we will find a time that accommodates all parties involved. I am happy to provide whatever assistance I can to make sure you are successful in class, be it discussing your assignments and grades with you in detail (as above, I prefer not to discuss grades via email except in extreme cases), working through assignments and arguments with you one-on-one, etc. I am here to help. All this being said, please remember that I am indeed a human with as many competing priorities as any other, and that I require some advance notice for appointment requests, assignment drafts to read, etc.

Philosophy Department Resources: The UT Philosophy Department's [website](#) offers a variety of resources helpful to those studying philosophy, as well as information about our degree programs and other opportunities for undergraduates—including our annual scholarship awards, essay contest, and the UT Philosophy Club (all of which are open to non-majors). You are, of course, encouraged to check out these opportunities and consider taking advantage of them!

UT Student Success Center: The Student Success Center is a valuable resource for UT students, providing academic coaching on matters like time management and study tips, as well as general student support at any time in the semester. From the center's [website](#): "Through academic support programs such as tutoring, supplemental instruction, academic coaching, and other educational enhancement programs, as well as our website and referral to the university's other excellent curricular and co-curricular resources, the staff promotes undergraduate student excellence and persistence to graduation."

UT Writing Center: In addition to using class resources and my office hours to your advantage, the Writing Center can provide extra individualized help with written assignments. From the center's [website](#): "The writing center serves student writers in all disciplines of the UTK academic community by offering free and individualized help throughout the writing process. Thousands of students visit the Writing Center each year from all types of courses on campus. Trained tutors (graduate students and lecturers) read and discuss student writing in one-to-one conversations and offer constructive feedback. We teach students how to think about their written work from the brainstorming stage to final revisions. We work with writers on a walk-in, first-come, first-served basis."

COURSE CALENDAR¹

Setting the Stage: What is philosophy? What does it have to do with love?

M 07.10.17: Introductions

T 07.11.17: Susan Wolf, "Meaning in Life" (from *Meaning in Life and Why It Matters*)

W 07.12.17: Plato, *Apology*

R 07.13.17: Plato, *Apology*

F 07.14.17: Plato, *Symposium* (FPP Conference; Guest Lecturer: Naomi Rinehold)

Self, Friends, God, and Others: Historical Accounts of Love from Greece to Today

M 07.17.17: Plato, *Symposium* (CR 1)

T 07.18.17: Class Cancellation

W 07.19.17: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, VIII

R 07.20.17: St. Augustine, *Confessions*, II-III

F 07.21.17: Søren Kierkegaard, "Thou Shalt Love Thy Neighbor," II.B, from *Works of Love*

Attraction, Romantic Love, and Identity: Some Theoretical Issues

M 07.24.17: Søren Kierkegaard, "Thou Shalt Love Thy Neighbor," II.C, from *Works of Love* (CR 2)

T 07.25.17: Simone de Beauvoir, "The Woman in Love" from *The Second Sex*

W 07.26.17: Iris Marion Young, "Lived Body vs. Gender: Reflections on Social Structure..."

R 07.27.17: Robin Dembroff, "What is Sexual Orientation?"

F 07.28.17: Talia Mae Bettcher, "Trans Women and the Meaning of 'Woman'"

Sexual Desire, Objectification, and Consent: Some Applied Issues

M 07.31.17: Alan Goldman, "Plain Sex" & Greta Christina, "Are We Having Sex Now or What?" (CR 3)

T 08.01.17: Class Cancellation

W 08.02.17: Thomas Nagel, "Sexual Perversion"

R 08.03.17: John Corvino, "It's Not Natural" from *What's Wrong with Homosexuality?*

F 08.04.17: Martha Nussbaum, "Objectification"

Friendship, Community, and Society: Designing and Promoting a Politics of Love

M 08.07.17: John Rawls, "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited" (CR 4)

T 08.08.17: Michael Walzer, "Kinship and Love" from *Spheres of Justice*

W 08.09.17: Martha Nussbaum, "Teaching Patriotism: Love and Critical Reform"

R 08.10.17: Discussion/Review for Final Exam

F 08.11.17: Final Exam

¹ I reserve the right to make changes to the reading and assignment schedule as needed. In the case of any changes, you'll be notified in advance in class and on Canvas, where an updated version of the schedule will always be posted.