

PHILOSOPHY 271: LOVE

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

What is love? What, if any reasons, do we have to love others? And what is the connection (or tension) between love, on the one hand, and morality on the other? This course will use love to explore questions about the nature of reasons, moral psychology, partiality, impartiality and the foundations of ethics. We'll start with two classic papers that make the case that moral theory somehow fails to accommodate the phenomenon of love. We'll then dive into the contemporary literature on the reasons (if any) for love (the attitude) and loving action, much of which is a response, in one form or another, to the first week's papers. With various accounts of reasons for love in view, we'll return to the idea that there is some kind of tension between ethics or morality, and consider more generally what role love plays in a life well lived and in ethical theorizing. Throughout much of the course's second half, we'll focus on authors not widely represented in the contemporary philosophical literature who take love as in some way foundational to ethics.

PERMISSION TO ENROLL:

This class officially requires my permission to enroll or audit. (Auditors are very welcome!) Graduate students in philosophy hereby have permission. If you are not a member of the Philosophy Department, please send me an email before term begins with a note about your background in philosophy and your interest in taking the class. I would love to have you! We just want to make sure this class is a good fit for your interests and/or whether some supplemental readings or preparation would be helpful.

All are welcome—with or without prior permission—to attend the first session of class to see if it is a good fit!

MEETING TIMES:

Class: Monday, 3-5:45.

Office Hours: Emerson 208. Tuesday, 3-5 PM.

COURSE READINGS:

Most readings will be posted online. The following books will *not be posted*. (Just let me know if you want to make photocopies!)

- Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good*
- Knud E. Løgstrup, *The Ethical Demand* (trans. Rabjerg and Stern)
- Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (trans. R. Gregor Smith)
- bell hooks, *All About Love*

GRADING AND ASSESSMENT

- Attendance, Participation (15%)
 - Attendance at all class sessions is required. I will excuse absences for good reason—just let me know!
 - I expect all those taking the class for credit to *contribute actively* to discussion each week.
- Discussion Posts (10%)

- Each week, students will have post a short (3-5 sentence) response on Canvas that raises one or two question about or critiques of the reading; the question can be clarificatory! The most useful posts are often those expressing confusion—ideally explaining the source of the puzzlement.
- Posts are due on Sunday at 11:59 pm and graded solely on the basis of completion.
- Posts are not required the week one is presenting.
- Presentation (15%)
 - All students will give one or two (depending on total enrollment) presentations in which they will introduce the day’s readings and open discussion. Presentations should be approximately 10-15 min long and use a handout or slides.
- Paper: 5000(ish) words (60%)
 - Students must meet individually with me to discuss a topic for the paper. Topics must be finalized by April 1.
 - By the end of term, students must turn an outline/very long abstract (1500ish words) of their paper.
 - Papers are due by Jan 17, 2024.
 - Papers should engage with some aspect of the literature covered in the syllabus. It *may* also be appropriate to consider a few additional sources if appropriate to the paper topic. Papers should aim to make a sharp criticism of extant arguments or views, advance a positive proposal of their own, or both.

CHAT GPT USE

I expect that all work students submit for this course will be their own. As a default, I specifically forbid the use of ChatGPT or any other generative artificial intelligence tools at all stages of the work process, including preliminary ones. If you have a use for generative text AI (including writing an essay that engages with the its functionality), let me know and I will be happy to clear it for limited use in advance. Violations of this policy will be considered academic misconduct. We draw your attention to the fact that different classes at Harvard could implement different AI policies, and it is the student’s responsibility to conform to expectations for each course.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

No laptops. iPads or tablets are fine but may not be used for anything not directly related to the class. If, however, you have some special need—whether that is for an accommodation or because you *really* prefer to take seminar notes on your laptop—send me an email and we can work it out. If you are found using gadgets for impermissible activities (checking email, etc.), your privileges will be revoked or (if applicable) we will meet with Disability Resources.

SCHEDULE AND READINGS

UNIT I: REASONS FOR LOVE AND LOVING ACTION

Week 1: Love and “Morality”

Williams, “Persons, Character and Morality”

Stocker, “The Schizophrenia of Modern Ethical Theories”

Week 2: Reasons for love 1: The No Reasons View

Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love*

Optional: Smuts, “In Defense of the No-Reasons View of Love”

Week 3: Reasons for love 2: Loving because of the Beloved’s Qualities

Jollimore, *Love’s Vision*, Ch. 1-4

Yao, “Grace and Alienation”

Optional: Lewis, “The aesthetics of coming to know someone” (if you write on this topic, read this)

Optional: Jollimore, “Love as Something In Between”

Week 4: Reasons for love 3: Loving because of one’s Relationship with the Beloved

Kolodny, “Love as Valuing a Relationship”

Scheffler, “Morality and Reasonable Partiality”

Optional: Jeske, *Rationality and Moral Theory*

Optional: Kolodny, “Which Relationships Justify Partiality? The Case of Parents and Children”

Optional (and highly recommended): Keller, *Partiality*, Ch. 3 (NB: if you write your term paper on reasons for love, you have to read *Partiality*)

Week 5: Reasons for love 4: Loving because the beloved is human

Velleman, “Love as a Moral Emotion”

Millgram, “Kantian Crystalization”

Setiya, “Love and the Value of a Life”

Optional: Setiya, “Other People”

Optional: Pettit, “Love and Its Place in Moral Discourse”

Optional: Keller, Ch. 4-5

UNIT II: LOVE AS A POINT OF DEPARTURE?

Week 6: A tension between ethics and love, revisited

Cottingham, “Ethics and Impartiality”

Wolf, “Moral Saints”

Week 7: Love & Respect?

Ebels-Duggan, “Love, Respect, and the Value of Humanity”

Wolterstorff, *Justice in Love*, excerpts

Baron, “Impartiality and Friendship”

Week 8: Loving the Beautiful, the Good, and the True

Plato, *Symposium*

Optional: Nehamas, *Only a Promise of Happiness*, excerpts

Optional: Nehamas, *On Friendship*

Week 9: Love as seeing what's real

Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good*

Optional: Setiya, "Murdoch on the Sovereignty of Good"

Optional: Mason, "Iris Murdoch, Privacy, and the Limits of Moral Testimony"

Optional: Mason, "Iris Murdoch and the Epistemic Significance of Love"

Week 10: Loving *You*

Buber, *I and Thou*

Optional: Darwall, "Love's Second Personal Character"

Week 11: A(n impossible) Demand of Love?

Løgstrup, *The Ethical Demand*

Optional: Stern, *The Radical Demand in Løgstrup's Ethics*

Week 12: Love amidst lovelessness

bell hooks, *All About Love*, excerpts

SOME OTHER WORKS THAT MIGHT BE OF INTEREST WHEN THINKING ABOUT PAPER TOPICS.

- Cherry, "Love, Anger, and Racial Injustice"
- Jaworska & Wonderly, "Loving and Caring"
- Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*
- Keller's *Partiality* (the rest of it)
- Marusic, *On the Temporality of Emotion* (the last ch. especially)
- Noddings, *Caring*
- Outka, *Agape*
- Singer, *Philosophy of Love*
- Simone Weil
- Spaemann, *Love and the Dignity of Human Life*
- Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice*
- Wonderly, "Love and Attachment"
- Yao, "Eros and Anxiety"