

The Philosophy of Love & Sex

PHIL/WST 365

Tuesday and Thursday 10-11:15

1057 Swenson

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“Erotic behavior is not simply a commotion in one’s anatomy; it is a way of relating to others.” -Alphonso Lingis

Course Description:

Frequently both love and sex are talked about as if they are merely a cascade of chemical reactions that have evolved simply for the benefits of having and raising the next generation. In this course we will begin with the assumption that love and sex cannot be reduced to “a commotion in one’s anatomy.” Instead we will consider them as two of the most meaningful aspects of human existence, as our most intimate and profound ways of relating to others and to ourselves.

The guiding themes of this course will be: how people intersect with one another as subjects and objects, how we live our love and sexuality through our bodies, what kind of effect our culture has on our desires, and how we might relate to our lovers and beloveds ethically. Some of the questions we will ask include: What does it mean to be a man or a woman? What does it mean to have breasts or a penis? How might our culture change the way we desire others and the way we experience our own bodies as sexual (or not)? What is love? Does it mean the sacrifice of oneself as an individual? Are even ‘normal’ relationships sadistic-masochistic? What is the relationship between desire and sexual objectification? Does pornography turn people into objects? Is being sexually objectified *always* an element of desire? How can we treat those we love and lust ethically? If true mutuality between lovers is possible, what would it look like?

Learning Outcomes:

- Ability to make a strong, sustained philosophical argument
- Gain deeper insights into the complexity of human relationships
- Understanding the impact of gender on power dynamics in relationships

Required Texts:

Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, Trans. By Borde & Malovany-Chevallier (not Parshley!)

Jean Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*

Eve Ensler, *The Vagina Monologues* (Extra Credit/Optional)

Mark Epstein, *Open to Desire*

Course Reader

Evaluation Tools:

- 1) **Class attendance and participation** (10% of final grade)
Lectures will presuppose familiarity with the texts. Coming prepared to discuss the assigned text and participating in class discussions are requirements. This portion of your grade includes all in-class writing assignments and quizzes. Except in extraordinary circumstances absences will not be excused. It is fully at the professor's discretion whether or not absences will be excused. **Every student must attend 70% of class sessions or more, or she/he will fail this course.**

Level	Criteria
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Present, not disruptive.▪ Tries to respond when called on but does not offer much.▪ Demonstrates sporadic involvement in discussion.
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Demonstrates adequate preparation.▪ Offers straightforward information (e.g., straight from the reading).▪ Regularly contributes to discussion
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Demonstrates good preparation▪ Offers interpretations and analysis▪ Contributes well to discussion in an ongoing way: responds to other students' points, thinks through own points, questions others in a constructive way, offers and supports suggestions that may be counter to the majority opinion.▪ Demonstrates consistent ongoing involvement.
A+	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Demonstrates excellent preparation.▪ Contributes in a very significant way to ongoing discussion: keeps analysis focused, responds very thoughtfully to other students' comments, contributes to the cooperative argument-building, suggests alternative ways of approaching material and helps class analyze which approaches are appropriate, etc.▪ Demonstrates ongoing very active involvement.

- 2) **2 Midterm Papers** (20% of final grade per paper, total 40%)

Paper #1 Due: Monday, October 22, 8am in Dropbox.

See syllabus page 6.

Paper #2 Due: Monday, November 12, 8am in Dropbox.

See syllabus page 6.

- 3) **Final Paper Proposal** (10% of final grade)

See syllabus page 7.

Proposal Due: December 3 @ 8am in Dropbox.

- 4) **Final Paper** (40% of final grade)

See syllabus page 7.

Final Paper Due: December 18 @ 10:30am in Dropbox.

5) Extra Credit Opportunities

If completed thoughtfully, this extra credit will increase one of your paper grades as follows A 'B+' will become an 'A.' An 'A' will become an 'A+' and so on.

The assignment is to write a two page paper (double spaced, Times New Roman 12 Point font) about one of the films shown in class. You must consider what at least two of the philosophers read so far might have to say about the film. Otherwise it is up to you what you would like to write about. **The paper is due at the next class after the film is shown.**

All films will be on reserve in the library. If we do not have time to watch the entire film in class, I will expect you to finish watching it on your own time, before writing your paper.

Late extra credit papers will not be accepted. You can complete as many as you would like.

In addition to those films we will be watching in class, you have the option to write such a paper about *The Vagina Monologues* (due at the next class after the book is read).

Policies:

A comprehensive set of course policies can be found on D2L in "Content."

- **CLASSROOM CONDUCT**

Classroom is a public space for serious work. Everybody in the classroom is thus expected to behave as a mature, respectful, thoughtful, and responsible person. The instructor reserves the right to take appropriate measures should this general rule be violated.

- **DISABILITIES**

Individuals who have any disabilities, either permanent or temporary, that might affect their ability to perform in this course are encouraged to inform the instructor at the beginning of the semester. (Contact also the Office for Disability Support Services.) Adaptations of methods, materials or testing may be made as requested to provide for equitable participation.

- **NO IN-CLASS ELECTRONIC DEVICE USE**

All cell phones and other electronic devices must be turned off or silenced AND stored out of sight. (Discuss with the instructor in advance if there is a reason to violate this rule.)

Any student using such a device in class will be considered absent for the day.

- **TIMELY SUBMISSION OF THE ASSIGNMENT**

All assignments must be completed in order to receive a passing grade. If you have to turn in assignments late, contact the instructor in advance. (In the case of emergency, students should contact the instructor as soon as possible.) Late papers will not be accepted without proof of illness or emergency. It is fully at the professor's discretion whether or not late papers will be accepted.

- **PAPER GRADING CRITERIA**

DO NOT use the internet as a resource in writing these papers. If you need help or clarification, ask me. Complete evaluation criteria are provided at the end of this syllabus.

- **RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS**

The UW-System Board of the Regents rules that students' sincerely held religious beliefs shall be reasonably accommodated with respect to scheduling all examinations and other academic requirements. Students are responsible, however, for contacting the instructor in advance, so as to make an accommodation.

- **COMMUNICATE!**

Communicating to the instructor any issue that may affect your learning is very important for your success. Visit the instructor during the office hours or e-mail the instructor with specific questions. The instructor will do her best to accommodate the needs of the students.

Course Outline

Week 1 9/4-9/6

T: Course Introduction

TH: Hegel, "Lordship and Bondage" from *Phenomenology of Spirit* p 111-119 (Reader)

Week 2 9/11-9/13

T: Sartre, "The Look" from *Being and Nothingness* [340-355, 358-360, 382-385]

"Aristophanes' Speech" from Plato's *Symposium* (Reader)

TH: No reading due

Week 3 9/18-9/20

T: Sartre, "The First Attitude Towards Others: Love, Language, Masochism" from *Being and Nothingness* [474-485, 491-493]

TH: Video *America the Beautiful*

No reading due

Week 4 9/25-9/27

T: Sartre, "The Second Attitude Towards Others: Indifference, Desire, Hate, Sadism" from *Being and Nothingness* [494-512, 517-519, 524-529]

TH: Bataille, Introduction to *Eroticism* (Reader)

Week 5 10/2-10/4

T: Beauvoir, "Introduction" to *The Second Sex* [3-17]

TH: Beauvoir, "Myths" from *The Second Sex* [266-274 & 159-213]

Week 6 10/9-10/11

T: Beauvoir, "The Woman in Love" from *The Second Sex* [683-708]

Ruskoff, "Picture Perfect" (Reader)

TH: Dines "Leaky Images: How Porn Seeps into Men's Lives" (Reader)

Week 7 **10/16-10/18**

T: Foucault, "Docile Bodies" from *Discipline and Punish* (Reader), Bartky Ch 5 (Reader)

TH: Bartky, essays from *Femininity and Domination* Chapters 3 & 4(Reader)

Young, Throwing like a girl excerpts (Reader)

Week 8 **10/23-10/25**

Paper #1 Due Monday October 22 at 8am

T: Perel, Democracy vs. Hot Sex (Reader)

TH: Churchill, The Alchemy of Male Desire (Reader)

Week 9 **10/30-11/1**

T: Berry, "Embracing the Catastrophe" (Reader)

Bring a typed question regarding the article for Dr. Berry

(Guest Speaker, Keith Berry)

TH: Film: *Breasts: A Documentary* & *Private Dicks: Men Exposed*

Enslar, *The Vagina Monologues* (Optional Extra Credit)

Week 10 **11/6-11/8**

T: Bordo, Young, *Breasted Experience* (Reader)

"Hard and Soft" & "Does Size Matter?" from *The Male Body* (Reader)

TH: Film: *Secretary*

No reading due

Week 11 **11/13-11/15**

Paper #2 Due Monday November 12 at 8am

T: Merleau-Ponty, excerpt from *Phenomenology of Perception* and the *Visible and the Invisible* (Reader)

TH: Irigaray, "Mechanics of Fluids" (Reader)

Week 12 **11/20**

T: Beauvoir, "The Lesbian" from *The Second Sex* p 417-436

Wilkerson, "Is it a Choice?" (Reader)

TH: NO SCHOOL

Week 13 **11/27-11/29**

T: "Socrates questions Agathon," "Diotima Questions Socrates," "The Speech of Diotima" (excerpt) from Plato's *Symposium* (Reader)

"Desire for the Invisible," "Freedom Called into Question," "Living From,"

“Enjoyment and Independence,” “Need and Corporeity,” & “The Ambiguity of Love” from Levinas’s *Totality and Infinity* (Reader)

Excerpt from Levinas’s *Otherwise Than Being* (Reader)

TH: Levinas continued (No reading due)

Week 14 12/4-12/6

T: Perel, “The Shadow of the Third: Rethinking Fidelity,” from *Mating in Captivity* (Reader)

Epstein, *Open to Desire*

Optional reading: Excerpts from Beauvoir’s Biography and Autobiography (Reader)

Proposal Due: Wednesday, December 3 @ 8am in Dropbox on D2L

TH: Epstein continued (No additional reading due)

Week 15 12/11-12/13

T: Warner, *Sex Sin and Zen* (excerpts) (Reader)

TH: Course evaluations

Final paper due: Wednesday, December 18 @10:30am in Dropbox on D2L

Midterm Paper #1

This paper should be 4-5 pages long, double-spaced. It is due **Monday, October 22, 8am in Dropbox.**

Describe the character of a certain type of relationship in light of Sartre’s understanding of our relations with others. For example, you might choose one of the following: husband and wife, parent and child, siblings, friends, lovers, politician and citizen, employer and employee, pornography model/actor and pornography user, student and teacher. Use this relationship as your example in explaining *three* of each following themes in Sartre’s work (each bullet point counts as one theme):

- The look and how it objectifies
- Disintegration of the self-centered point of view
- Shame
- Masochism
- Love
- Seduction
- Indifference
- Sadism
- Desire

If you think that Sartre is missing some vital element of our relations with others (as illustrated by your example relationship) you may argue against some part of his theory. However, this is *not* required as part of the assignment. And if you choose to do so, above all, be sure to demonstrate that you understand what Sartre means by each of the themes you discuss.

Midterm Paper #2

This paper should be 4-5 pages long, double spaced. It is due on Monday, November 12, 8am in Dropbox.

In The Second Sex Simone de Beauvoir says the following:

“...Each separate conscious being aspires to set himself up alone as sovereign subject. Each tries to fulfill himself by reducing the other to slavery....It is possible to rise above this conflict if each individual freely recognizes the other, each regarding himself and the other simultaneously as object and as subject in a reciprocal manner.”

Beauvoir, Bordo, Beneke, Dines, Young, and Ruskoff, each explain or describe how *difficult* it is to achieve reciprocity between men and women (doesn't have to be a romantic relationship you are discussing). Explain *in detail*, how *two* of the philosophers would describe this difficulty. That is, why is it so difficult? What makes it difficult?

In light of these philosophers, explain why you think it is either possible or impossible for men and women to relate to each other in a reciprocal manner. Draw on *at least one more* reading from with these dates: 9/27- 11/6.

Final Paper

8-10 pages, double spaced.

The final paper will be on a topic of your choosing. You will be required to write a proposal for this paper which includes the following:

- 1) The question that motivates the paper.
- 2) Approximately 3-4 philosophers/essays you will examine on this topic. On each author you will give a 3-4 sentence description of her/his view on the subject. These should be essays that you read *for this class*.
- 3) The thesis you expect to argue.
- 4) At least 3 supporting claims for your thesis. (See Hacker, “Constructing Reasonable Arguments” on D2L).

You will receive feedback on the proposal that will help you with the final paper.

Proposal Due: December 4 @ 8am on D2L

Final Paper Due: December 18, 10:30am on D2L

Name _____

Paper evaluation criteria

Assignment: _____

Basics:

- Is in 12 pt Times New Roman font and is double spaced
- Is stapled
- Paper was on time (if not, days late____)
- Includes an attached outline of thesis statement and supporting claims

Writing:

- Has a clearly stated thesis in the opening paragraph that is supported by the rest of the paper
- Is the appropriate length (2 pages), and is concise, not redundant
- Has few or no spelling and/or grammatical errors (misspellings will be circled)
- Is clearly written at the paragraph level
- Is clearly written at the sentence level
- Paper is well organized overall
- Words have been used appropriately (awkwardly used words will be circled)
- Quotes are well integrated into paper, appropriately chosen, understood, introduced, and followed-through with an explanation
- Ideas or passages are attributed to their author, and page # is provided.

Content:

- Answers all aspects of the question(s) in the paper prompt
- Makes use of the required number of sources/readings
- Fairly and accurately represents the views of the authors mentioned
- Paper includes a genuine conversation with the authors engaged

‘B’ level papers will have done all of the above.

‘C’ level papers will have done most of the above.

‘D’ level papers will have done only some of the above.

‘A’ level papers will have gone beyond the usual expectation in at least three of the following (in addition to all of the above):

- Contains your own original and creative insights
- Demonstrates extraordinarily strong grasp of theory
- Uses compelling personal (or other) examples
- Gives the subject thought beyond what was required
- VERY clearly written
- Demonstrates a willingness to challenge your previous assumptions