

**Philosophy 255-001: Philosophy of Sex and Love**  
**CRN # 13659. Drexel University, Fall term, 2014-15**  
**TuTh, 3:30 PM – 4:50 PM. Room: MacAlister 4014**

First class day: Tuesday, September 23, 2014; last class day, Thursday, December 4  
Entry to Blackboard-Learn: <https://learn.dcollege.net>

**Professor:** Alan Soble, B.S., M.A. Ph.D., Professor, English-Philosophy Department.

**Office:** 0032 MacAlister, Room “D” (Ground floor, in the Writing Center).

**Office consultation:** Tuesday 2:00 PM – 3:15 PM (no appointment required). For other times, by appointment, see the instructor after class or send an e-mail. Skype Video is also possible.

**E-mail:** [ags38@drexel.edu](mailto:ags38@drexel.edu); **Landline:** 267-343-4203.

Eng-Phil Department office: MacAlister 5044

Eng-Phil Department phone: 215-895-2430/31

Eng-Phil Department mailroom: MacAlister 5057

Eng-Phil Department web site: <http://www.drexel.edu/coas/engphil>

Philosophy Program Director: Peter Amato: [pa34@drexel.edu](mailto:pa34@drexel.edu)

Information about the Philosophy Major and Minor: [www.drexel.edu/catalog/ug/coas/phil-index.htm](http://www.drexel.edu/catalog/ug/coas/phil-index.htm)

**A note to students with disabilities:** In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and Drexel University’s policies and procedures, the University is committed to the nondiscrimination of students with disabilities. Students with disabilities requesting appropriate accommodations and services at Drexel University must present a current accommodation verification letter (**AVL**) to the instructor before accommodations can be made. **AVLs** are issued by the Office of Equality and Disability, 3201 Arch St., Room 210, 215-895-1401 (TTY 215-895-2299). Web site: [www.drexel.edu/oed/disabilityResources](http://www.drexel.edu/oed/disabilityResources).

**Dropping a Course:** In case you need to drop a course, go to the web page linked below for general information. [http://www.drexel.edu/provost/policies/course\\_drop.asp](http://www.drexel.edu/provost/policies/course_drop.asp)

**Advice about this course:** Learning any type of philosophy requires from students the willingness to examine critically their most basic assumptions about what is true, right, and valuable. Critical examination in a philosophy course involves challenging what we take for granted and questioning what we believe to be obvious. Students occasionally find philosophy unsettling, because it causes them to doubt matters they previously thought to be secure or because it forces them to consider ideas, language, or viewpoints they find threatening, offensive, or absurd. This is especially possible in connection with controversial topics such as religion, politics and economics, and love and sexuality. In this course, sexual matters are sometimes dealt with in an explicit manner, which some students might find doing so embarrassing or painful. *The enrollment of a student in this course constitutes acceptance of the right of other students and the professor to use, explore, and discuss sexual ideas, language, and viewpoints in an open manner.* Only if we adopt this policy will our study of love and sex be faithful to the nature of philosophical inquiry as an intellectually honest and critical examination of our beliefs and practices.

**Writing skills:** Philosophy is one of the Humanities. Courses in the Humanities focus on ideas. Good writing skills are essential for expressing ideas well on examinations. Students who have language problems should consider seeking assistance in the Writing Center, 0032 MacAlister, 215-895-6633. In this course, examination answers are expected to be composed of grammatically correct sentences that convey your thoughts clearly. Be prepared to polish your writing before handing in written assignments.

## 1. Materials

(1) Two textbooks: Alan Soble, *The Philosophy of Sex and Love*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Paragon House, 2008. Also: Alan Soble, ed., *Eros, Agape, and Philia*, Paragon House, 1989/1999. (2) A. Soble, "Reading Material for Philosophy 255," posted on Blackboard-Learn (download, save, print, read, bring to class). (3) Resource for further reading and research (in Hagerty library, reference section): A. Soble, *Sex from Plato to Paglia: A Philosophical Encyclopedia*. (4) The course syllabus (this document), available on BB-Learn.

## 2. Course Description

**Official Catalogue Description: PHIL 255 - Philosophy of Sex & Love.** This course investigates sexual activity and desire, and the morality of sexual behavior. It also examines various types of love and their links with sexuality. Figures studied include Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, Kant, Freud, Kierkegaard, and (maybe) Foucault. Topics include marriage, prostitution, pornography, homosexuality, perversion, rape, irreplaceability, unconditionality, reciprocity, and exclusivity. **Credits:** 3.00. **College:** Arts and Sciences. **Department:** English & Philosophy. **Repeat Status:** Not repeatable for credit.

### Description of this particular section of Phil 255

The philosophy of love and sex is a more difficult subject than most people believe it is. Everyone has his or her own personal views about love and sex and everyone holds their view as strongly as anyone else holds their own view. The topics are contentious. In this course we will discuss several prominent philosophical views about love and sexuality, which students will be able to compare with their own views. Of course, no examination of love and sex will be illuminating unless the relationship, if any, between the two protagonists, "sex" and "love," are explored. As we make our way through classic and contemporary accounts of sex and love, allusions to music, literature, the arts, film, psychology, biology, and history will be plentiful. Ever since the ancient Greeks (Sappho, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle), sex and love have been studied extensively by philosophers, theologians, psychologists, poets, and novelists. These reflections have ranged over ethics, ontology, emotions and psychology, and political theory. Love and sex are often thought to be central ingredients of human life. If so, what they are and how they are related are important topics. This course will encourage students to think critically about how love and sex figure in their own lives and about social attitudes and policies that impinge on love and sexual activity. A few of the special topics to be explored include: The nature and definitions of "sexual act" and "sexual desire." The nature and definition of "sexual perversion" (including the definition offered by Catholic theology and the American Psychiatric Association). Central issues in the ethics of sexual behavior, including the roles of consent and respect. And the relationships (if any, and how important they are) among sex, love, marriage, pleasure, and procreation.

**Course Goals:** (1) There are 150 or so philosophical terms and concepts that students will learn from the textbook readings, the extra reading material, and lectures. The student will understand these terms, will be able to apply them in novel situations, and will comprehend how they logically interact with each other. (2) There are 50 or so important philosophers and other figures in the humanities and the sciences that the student will learn about in this course. The student will understand how these people were (or are) important in the history of Western philosophy of love and sex and the development of Western cultural love and sex practices and standards. (3) The student will learn some basic principles of coherent thinking; will be able to converse intelligently about love and sex in the public forum; and will be encouraged to develop the skills of an autodidact, and to use these skills after graduation from Drexel.

## 3. Calendar and Assignments.

**Reading assignments: to be determined by the class. Each of us will select his/her preferred topics and papers/essays (see the textbooks and the supplementary packet of readings). The professor will**

use a social welfare function to put together a "group decision" (he does not promise to run afoul of Kenneth Arrow's Impossibility Theorem).

**Note: No class October 7 (Convocation). You will have an assignment to do that day or Wednesday and turn in at class time on Thursday October 9.**

**Examination #1, Thursday, October 23**

**Examination #2, Thursday, November 20**

*The Final Examination, exam #3, is a comprehensive/cumulative exam. It will be a "do-at-home" exam that will be posted on BB-Learn on Thursday, December 4 (= the last day of class) by 7 PM. Due date: Friday, December 5, by 7 PM. Answers must be submitted in MS-Word .doc/.docx format or Windows Wordpad .rtf format. NO OTHER FORMATS are acceptable. Do not hand deliver your exam answers to me or leave them in my mailbox or in the departmental office. Send your answer document **only** as an e-mail attachment to [ags38@drexel.edu](mailto:ags38@drexel.edu) (late papers will be penalized 10 points). Other directions will be included on the exam itself.*

#### 4. Course Grading Criteria

Examination questions in this course will usually have objectively right or wrong answers, for example, "define term X," "compare and contrast A and B," "provide a clear example of Y," "describe the significance of Q" Other questions (essays) will require insight, imagination, and the application of covered material to new situations. Each of the three exams in the course is worth 1/3 of the final course grade. Each exam is worth 100 points. The total number of points available is therefore 300. The separate exams will receive only a numerical grade. Final course grades will be calculated using this table:

A+	= 290-300 total points	C+	= 230-234
A	= 270-289	C	= 210-229
A-	= 265-269	C-	= 205-209
B+	= 260-264	D+	= 200-204
B	= 240-259	D	= 180-199
B-	= 235-239	F	= below 180

#### *Notes on grading:*

(1) No extra credit assignments will be permitted for single students to gain additional points. *If* there are any extra credit assignments, every student will have the chance to earn the points. Extra-credit points are *not automatic*: only **good** work will receive extra, additional points. Bad work will result in the subtraction of points.

(2) No points will be added or deducted for class participation or its absence. Participation is of course encouraged but is not mandatory.

(3) Points will be deducted (from the total points earned on exams) for poor class attendance and lateness. See below.

#### 5. Rules And Policies

**Examination policies:** Students are expected to take examinations on the scheduled day at the scheduled time. Exceptions will be made only in *extraordinary* circumstances (vacation travel does not count as *extraordinary*) and only if the cause of the absence can be *documented* (the burden of proof is on the student). A request for a make-up examination must be submitted in writing and include all relevant details and the signature of the student. Students may request a make-up exam either after an exam has been missed or before the exam, anticipating that events will prevent attending the exam. *Note this additional policy:* students are not permitted to leave the classroom and return to the classroom to continue the exam once an examination has begun. Students who leave the room will forfeit the opportunity to complete the exam if they have not yet finished it. Students should attend to their needs (using the restroom; drinking water; getting tissues) before coming to the classroom for the exam.

***Taking notes and electronic devices:*** The material presented in lecture is an essential and large part of the course content. Students should have or develop the ability to take comprehensive and accurate notes by hand, the old-fashioned way. When taking notes, pay attention to what other students ask and say in class, which is often relevant and interesting. This material will likely appear on exams. Digital and electronic audiovisual recording devices are not permitted; this includes the use of laptop computers. Cell phones, calculators, and other electrical equipment are prohibited during all classes: please put them away and keep them away. (There are pedagogical reasons for this rule.) Finally, students are not permitted to have on their desks, or to be working on, material (including books and notes) from other courses or any non-course-related material. Failure to abide by this policy is a criterion of grading: violation will result the subtraction of points from the total points earned on the examinations.

***Class discussion and etiquette:*** Please feel free to ask questions and to propose your own point of view. This should be done in a civil manner that respects the opportunities of other students to speak as well. Please do not monopolize discussion. Do not fear criticism or being embarrassed. Airing all ideas (silly ones, brilliant ones) and having them critically discussed is a crucial feature of a university education, especially in a philosophy course. However, privately talking while the professor is either taking roll or lecturing, or while a student is asking a question, is disrespectful and distracting.

***Attendance:*** Roll will be taken daily, at the beginning of class, and absences noted. Students are expected to attend every session. Poor attendance can hurt your course grade, which will be lowered a part-grade (e.g., B to B-) for 3 absences. Four absences will result in the lowering of your course grade by one full letter (eight absences = 2 letters). Lateness, arriving after roll has been called, counts as a half-absence. **If you arrive late to class and want to make sure that you have not been marked as absent, you must tell the professor at the end of that period.** More than 15 minutes late counts as an absence. *Students will not be “charged” an absence or lateness if they can argue convincingly that unavoidable, important, or emergency circumstances prevented them from attending on a given day or arriving on time. To avoid being charged an absence or lateness, a student must send an email to the professor either before or after the missed class or lateness, explaining the situation.* This email (keep a copy for yourself) is important for the professor to be able to document grading decisions based on absences.

***Academic integrity policy:*** Students are responsible for reading and abiding by Drexel’s “Academic Dishonesty Policy.” [See two links, below.] Cheating on exams, submitting plagiarized\* or fabricated work, or engaging in any form of deception or fraud bearing on the evaluation of assigned work is a breach of Drexel University’s policy. Any work turned in by a student must be the student’s own work. Further, **no collaboration or consultation, of any kind, on examinations between students and any other people** is permitted (this includes take-home exams, do-at-home exams, extra-credit assignments, and so forth). No student may help others or be helped by others on exams or any other assignment. Cases of academic dishonesty on any assignment (any exam, any quiz, any extra-credit, and so forth) will result in failure (F grade) for the assignment *and perhaps* for the entire course, without the ability to withdraw. Incidents of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards and will then become part of a student’s official record.

[http://www.drexel.edu/provost/policies/academic\\_dishonesty.asp](http://www.drexel.edu/provost/policies/academic_dishonesty.asp)  
[http://www.drexel.edu/studentlife/community\\_standards/overview](http://www.drexel.edu/studentlife/community_standards/overview)

\* Plagiarism is not limited to copying a passage from a source word-for-word. If you acquire specific information from a source, you must acknowledge that source, even if you have used your own words to express it, i.e., you have paraphrased that information.

**This syllabus constitutes a contract and every enrolled student has explicitly agreed to its provisions.**