

# Philosophy of Sex and Love

PHM 4020 (sec 5862) Term A, summer 2013

Meeting online beginning on May 13 and ending on August 9

Dr. Nick Power, Department of Philosophy, UWF

**Course Description:** What kinds of love are there? What are the connections between sex and love, between love and marriage, and what role do gender differences play in each of these? What separates eroticism from pornography, and are these in some sense harmful? Is homosexuality a perversion and are perverse acts wrong? These questions, and many more besides, are the focus of our study. Though these issues are sometimes very personal and thus hard to discuss, this classroom will be a safe and secure place for their exploration and for the expression of reasoned views on them. Friendship, affection, love and sex are clearly important aspects of our shared humanity, and are obviously linked, in some way or other, to living a full and fulfilled life. The BIG challenge we face, as a class, is making sense of this link, so that we can make the best choices possible concerning them.

Though we will mostly read sources from within the history of Western philosophy, the arguments and the positions within the theories of sexual ethics are important in many areas outside of academic philosophy. The first part of the course will be taken up with topics within the history and philosophy of love. We'll chart the history of romantic love, discuss famous typologies of love, and relate love to marriage and to sex. Then, in the second half of the course, we'll turn to the contemporary and controversial parts: sexual perversion; pornography and prostitution; rape and sexual harassment.

**Student Learning Outcomes:** I. In terms of knowledge-base and content, the successful student will be able to clearly describe items of central importance in the Western thought, such as Plato's theory of erosic love, St. Paul's theory of agape and agapaic love, Kant's views on sex as objectification, and the like, and apply them to contemporary issues.

II. In addition to this, there are general philosophical skills which you will gain and/or sharpen:

1. An ability to identify underlying issues in various contemporary debates surrounding sex and sexual ethics.
2. Apply philosophical concepts to real world problems in these same areas.
3. Understanding of the importance of careful interpretation of a variety of texts.
4. Familiarity with the use of specialized philosophical terminology.
5. Awareness of the nature of sound arguments and logical fallacies.
6. Appreciation of how generalizations can be supported or weakened by detailed discussion.
7. Recognition of arguments on both sides of philosophical and moral questions.
8. Ability to recognize methodological errors, rhetorical devices, unexamined conventional wisdom, unnoticed assumptions, vagueness and superficiality.
9. Ability to consider unfamiliar ideas and ways of thinking, and to examine critically pre-suppositions and methods within the discipline itself.

**Texts:** *The Philosophy of Sex: Contemporary Readings*, 6th. Ed. edited by Nicholas Power, Raja Halwani, and Alan Soble published by Rowman and Littlefield in 2012 as well as online sources provided on e-learning.

**Instructor Info:** Online Hours: MWF 9am-5pm CT and by appointment; Phone: 474-2677;  
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**Course Requirements:** Your grade for the course is a function of the number of points you earn out of a possible 250, with their letter-grade equivalents determined as follows: 225-250 points = A or outstanding; 200-224 = B or above average; 175-199 = C or average; 150-174 = D or below average; and <149 = F or unthinkable.

The 250 available points will be earned and distributed in the following way:

I. **Analyze:** 60 points are available in 6 brief ( $\leq$  500 word or 2-page) "homework" response-papers turned in to that week's assigned dropbox on e-learning at the beginning of the week. (A detailed reading/homework schedule will be posted soon.) They will be on questions posed by me concerning the text(s) throughout the term, and each is worth 10 points each (graded on a scale where: 0/10 means "no response"; 1-5 means "weak response"; 6-7 means "developing response"; 8-9 means "adequate response"; and,

10 out of 10 means "excellent response." I expect them to be typed and grammatically sound, and you must use relevant and cogent quotes from the text/course materials in support of your major ideas. These are not accepted late, as they are designed to facilitate our online class discussion. A detailed rubric will be provided with your first assignment and it will be in effect for the remainder of them.

**II. Contribute, clarify, and criticize:** 90 points are available for class contribution, which is central to the success of an online class: these are earned by clarifying the course content in online threaded discussions which I will facilitate. For 6 of the 13 weeks making up the course (weeks 1 and 13 have other assessment activities) you will help us all better understand the course/text materials. Using the Discussions feature of e-learning, you will have to begin a discussion thread laying out what, in your humble opinion, is left unclear in the text, or in my lecture notes or my powerpoint slideshow, and say why you find it unclear. I have very specific instructions on how to use this feature. These are due on the second Wednesday, by midnight, within that unit's bi-weekly session and are worth 5 points each, where 0 out of 5 points means you contributed nothing to that week's class, 1-to-3 points out of 5 meant you did post something, but it lacked substance by not really engaging with the important topics raise in the readings, and 4-5 points means you really pointed to a central topic left unclear.

You'll also reply to other people's posts, once-per week for another possible 60 points, and submit these by midnight of Friday of that week. You are expected to read all of your classmates' (and my) posts. These are also worth 10 points each, where 0/10 means you posted nothing to that week's discussion, 1-5 meant you read some posts, and perhaps did post something, but it lacked substance (but merely agreed with or seconded someone else's post, for instance) and 6-10 points means you rocked, having read all of that unit's posts, and went far towards clearing up the discussion(s) you chose to contribute to. Details are provided in the Discussion Posting Instructions document.

**III. Synthesize and Apply:** for 50 points a final exam made up of general essay questions, which will be distributed on August 2<sup>nd</sup> and is due on the final day of classes, August 9<sup>th</sup> and are to be completed at home meant to assess your understanding of the course content. Details on this to follow.

The remaining 50 points can be earned by introducing a portion of the course content to your classmates. By the last day of the semester, you will help us all better understand the course/text materials by introducing one of the readings to the class. (Any of the textbook chapters and supplementary readings made available on the e-learning site are eligible for your use here, though often the text chapters contain several readings. You will begin by choosing a topic you are interested in, and signing up for it by week 6 of the class, then read around in the course materials for a suitable reading.) Once your reading is approved by me, you will (a) writing a 500-word (or equivalent powerpoint presentation) summary and critical analysis presenting the main arguments of the reading you have chosen from the Reading Schedule (see below). More details on this assignment will be provided, and a topic sign-up sheet distributed, soon. I encourage you to partner with a classmate on this item, but only with my prior approval, and I maintain the right to disapprove of any proposed pairings for any reason, and to disallow any presentation at any time.

The total number of points is considered a "raw" score earned (out of a possible 250) and will be "curved" upwards, so that the top score(s) is 300, and the rest of the scores will be based on that revised scale.

**Policies: Plagiarism** is the unacknowledged or insufficiently acknowledged use of another's ideas and/or their expression. This applies to equally to borrowing from books and articles, notes taken/works prepared in other classes, or from the work of other students. Whenever an idea is not the result of the student's own primary research and thinking and is not reasonably understood to already be part of the public domain, its source must be properly identified in a footnote or other format; otherwise, plagiarism results. Plagiarism combines theft with fraud, and within the academy, no offense is more destructive, hence no offense is penalized more. At my discretion, I may fail you for that assignment, for the course, and I may recommend that you be suspended from UWF. *I take this issue very seriously.* You should know and abide by the UWF's plagiarism policies (see your student handbook under "Expectations for Academic Conduct" and available online at <http://uwf.edu/uwfMain/stuHandbk/>). Your Research Project must be submitted electronically to safeguard against this.

**Special needs** students should communicate them to me as soon as practical—before test dates certainly—in order to ensure their receipt of all the assistance they ask for, as per UWF Student Services policies.

**Special Technology** requirements for this course will be minor; beyond the baseline requirements of e-mail (know how to access your student Argomail account) and word processing abilities, you may have to access and download articles on electronic reserve within Pace Library.

**Capstone** course? If you are a philosophy major who intends to use this course to fulfill your "Capstone Requirement" see the department's web-page discussion of this and then talk to me.

Let me know if something comes up that will interfere with your class work and I promise to work with you, but you must do this ahead of time. My door is always open.

**GENERAL COURSE SCHEDULE/ TOPIC LIST:** *(Each unit will last 2 weeks. A detailed reading schedule will be posted on e-learning; these are subject to change at little notice; you are responsible for tracking changes.)*

*Unit 1: What is love?* (Ancient Greek and Christian views of sex and love; our first reading is Plato's *Symposium*, a link to which is provided on e-learning)

Read Plato's *Symposium* (available in the "Links" area).

View powerpoint presentations on Ancient Greek Views.

Early Christian Views (Have read the Nygren "Eros and Agape" selection in the content section, and Soble on "Love and Value")

View powerpoint presentation on Early Christian views.

Homework 1, on Plato, due in dropbox

Post to discussion board, read all posts and reply (to at least one)

*Unit 2: What is sex and sexual desire?* (Freud and Feminism, and Evolutionary Psychology)

Read Robert Frank's "Love," and Power's "Evolutionary Psychology's Theory of Love" and "A Marxist-Freudian Theory of Love"

View powerpoint presentation on Contemporary and Feminist views of Sex, Love, and Marriage

Homework 2, on the nature of love, due in dropbox

Post to discussion board; read all posts and reply (to at least one)

*Unit 3: When can sexual desire be considered abnormal?* (Sex and Sexual Perversion)

Read Nagel, Moulton on Nagel, and Goldman's essays on Sexual Perversion

View powerpoint presentation on Sex and Sexual Perversion

Homework 3, on Nagel, due in dropbox

Post to discussion board; read all posts and reply (to at least one)

*Unit 4: What is sexual orientation?* (Homosexuality and Same-Sex Marriage)

Read Stein and Wilkerson on the nature of sexual orientation, and Card and Calhoun on Same-sex Marriage

View powerpoint presentations on Homosexuality and on Same-Sex Marriage

Homework 4, on Card and Calhoun due in dropbox

Post to discussion board; read all posts and reply (to at least one)

Unit 5: How should sex be regulated? (Prostitution and Pornography)

Read Nussbaum on the legalization of prostitution

View powerpoint presentation on Prostitution

Read Mason-Grant, Tisdale, and Power on Pornography

View powerpoint presentation on Pornography

Homework 5, on Mason-Grant, due in dropbox

Post to discussion board; read all posts and reply (to at least one)

Unit 6: What causes, and best prevents, sexual assault? (Rape and Consent) Read Wertheimer on Rape Laws and Baber on the Harms of Rape

View powerpoint presentation on Rape.

Read Wertheimer and West on Consent

Homework 6, on Wertheimer, due in dropbox

Post to discussion board; read all posts and reply (to at least one)