

Philosophy 390H

Contemporary Topics in Philosophy:

The Philosophy of Sex, Gender and Love

Dr. Sharon Sytsma

Course Syllabus

Fall, 2011

*The course syllabus for this section
can be found on Blackboard at:
<http://webcourses.niu.edu>

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES:

The course will cover philosophical theories of sex, gender, friendship and love, with about 4 weeks devoted to each topic. The course will include a wide variety of philosophical readings--historical and contemporary, liberal and conservative, analytical and existential, metaphysical, conceptual and ethical.

Our approach to the study of sex and gender will be somewhat unorthodox: we will first discuss the nature and etiology of intersexuality, and then draw out its logical implications for sex and gender, and then for traditional theories of ethical sexuality.

Our study of friendship and love will draw on a variety of historical and contemporary sources, and will focus on both conceptual and ethical issues.

Questions to be addressed include, among others: What light does intersexuality shed on sexual dimorphism? How many sexes are there? What is the relationship between sex and gender? Is gender a social construction, or something that is “performed,” or something with which we are endowed at (or before) birth? Is gender fixed at birth or at some later stage, or can it change? What is the relationship between sex, gender and sexual orientation? What is sexual perversion? What makes some sex better sex? Is prostitution immoral, and if so, for what reason(s)? Is promiscuity or casual sex compatible with virtue (excellence)? How many kinds of love are there? Why is friendship so important? Is it true that in order to be a good friend you first have to love yourself? Is it true that true friendship requires virtue? Is it better to have loved and lost, than never to have loved at all? Why do we love? Can passionate love lead to virtue? Is there a connection between agape (unconditional love) and eros (passionate love)?

CLASS MEETINGS: MW 3:30 – 4:45 DU 474

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Warnke, G. *Debating Sex and Gender* (Oxford, 2011)
 Pakaluk, M. *Other Selves: Philosophers on Friendship* (Hackett, 1991)
 Stewart, R. *Philosophical Perspectives on Sex & Love* (Oxford, 1995)

Other required readings will be available electronically through Blackboard.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Dr. Sytsma:
(NEW!) OFFICE: Zulauf 913
PHONE: 753-6411
Email: ssytsma@niu.edu
Office Hours: MW: 11:00 – 12:00

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- A. **Class attendance and participation** are required. Students are allowed two unexcused absences, but will be docked a partial grade for every additional unexcused absence .
- B. There will be one exam following the first section of the course, and the students will be required to write three **short (4-5 page) argumentative papers** for following the next three sections. Topics will be provided, but students may suggest alternative projects for approval.
- C. There will be a final exam for which a study guide will be provided.
- D. There will be weekly assignments posted on Blackboard, and which must be submitted electronically through Safe Assignment. These assignments are not individually graded, but the percentage of assignments completed satisfactorily will count for about 20% of the student's grade.
- E. Honors students should write three short reports (1 page or so) on lectures on campus, news items, TV programs, movies , or anything that relates to the course topics. Due Dates:
- a. 1st Report: October 31st
 - b. 2nd Report: November 7th
 - c. 3rd Report: November 21st
- Suggestions can be made for alternative ways of making this course more meaningful to you.
- E. Students are expected to meet **high standards of classroom etiquette**. Ethically speaking, etiquette is a means of expressing respect for persons. Respect for other students and for the instructor is incompatible with yawning loudly, chewing gum, holding private conversations, arriving late, leaving early, exiting the classroom for personal reasons during the lecture, reading or sleeping during class, checking or using cell phones—in short, doing anything that does not manifest a profound sense of the importance of each

and every class meeting. Cell phones visible to the instructor may be confiscated, and their owners excoriated and vilified.

F. Cheating will be prosecuted according to the guidelines established in the College Catalogue. **Even unintentional plagiarism or copying daily assignments will be regarded as grounds for receiving a failing grade for the entire course.**

Plagiarism: "The attempt of any student to present as his or her own work that which he or she has not produced is regarded by the faculty and administration as **a serious offense**. Students are considered to have cheated if they copy the work of another during an examination or turn in a paper or an assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else. Students are guilty of plagiarism, **intentional or not**, if they copy material from books, magazines, or other sources or if they paraphrase ideas from such sources without acknowledging them. Students guilty of, **or assisting others in**, either cheating or plagiarism on an assignment, quiz, or examination **may receive a grade of F for the course involved and may be suspended or dismissed from the university.**"

Philosophy 390
Philosophy of Sex, Gender and Love

(Idealistic and Somewhat Tentative)
Course Schedule and Reading Assignments

Part I: Philosophy of Sex and Gender

Key for Book Titles:

DSG: Debating Sex and Gender

PPSL: Philosophical Perspectives on Sex and Love

OS: Other Selves

ER: Electronic Reserves (or Blackboard)

| | | |
|----------------|--------------------------------|--|
| Mon., Aug. 22 | Introduction to Class | |
| Wed., Aug. 24 | Introduction to Intersexuality | Ethics and Intersex (EI), Introduction, Ch. 1: Kemp. |
| Mon., Aug. 29 | Sex and Gender | Warnke, BSG: Chapters 1 and 2 |
| Wed., Aug. 31 | “ | Warnke: Chapters 3 |
| Mon., Sept. 5 | NO CLASS-- Holiday | |
| Wed., Sept. 7 | | Warnke: Chapter 4 |
| Mon., Sept. 12 | | Warnke: Chapter 5 and 6 |
| Wed., Sept. 14 | | Conclusions |
| Mon., Sept. 19 | Exam One | |

“Enhancement” Readings:

Boylan, Jennifer. *She’s not There: A Life in Two Genders*.

Dreger, Alice. *Hermaphroditism and the Medical Invention of Sex*.

Dreger, Alice. *Intersex and the Age of Ethics*.

Hillman, Thea. *Intersex for lack of a better word*. (poetry)

Karkazis, Katrina. *Fixing Sex*.

Kessler, Suzanne. *Lessons from the Intersex*.

Preves, Sharon. *Intersex and Identity*.

Shrage, Laurie. “You’ve Changed”: *Sex Reassignment and Personal Identity*.

Eugenides, Jeffrey. *Middlesex*. (a novel)

“Enhancement” Films:

XXY. Hedwig and the Angry Inch, Transamerica, Hermaphrodites Speak!

Part II: Sexual Ethics

| | | |
|----------------|-------------------------------|--|
| Wed. Sept. 21 | Introduction to Sexual Ethics | Kant, Hume PPSL: pp. 138-145. |
| Mon., Sept. 26 | Sexual “Perversion” | PPSL: pp. 105 – 113. |
| Wed., Sept. 28 | Sarah Ruddick: Better Sex | ER |
| Mon., Oct. 3 | Prostitution | Nussbaum (ER); Shrage: PPSL: 71-81. |

| | | |
|-------------------|--|---|
| Wed., Oct. 5 | Rightful Sexual Relations: Gay Marriage and Prostitution | Varden (ER) |
| Mon., Oct. 10 | Sadomasochism | Lee, PPSL, pp. 125 – 138. |
| Wed., Oct. 12 | Promiscuity; Friends with Benefits | Elliston: PPSL, P. 146 – 159. Stephens (ER) |
| Paper Due: | October 17th | |

Enhancement Readings:

The Wings of the Dove

Enhancement Films:

The Wings of the Dove (Using others as a Means Only)

“Water”(Prostitution)

Part III: Friendship

| | | |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Mon., Oct. 17 | Introduction to Plato: | |
| Wed., Oct. 19 | Plato’s Lysis Aristotle | OS, pp. 1-28. |
| Mon., Oct. 24 | Aristotle | OS, pp. 28-60 OR PPSL, pp. 259-265. |
| Wed., Oct. 26 | Montaigne, Bacon | OS, pp. 185-208. |
| Mon., Oct. 31 | Kant/Emerson | OS, pp. 208-232. |
| Wed., Nov. 2 | Kierkegaard? Telfer?(Or summary) | OS, pp. 233-368. |
| Paper Due: | November 7th | |

Enhancement Readings:

Dicken’s *David Copperfield*

Enhancement Films:

Lost in Translation

Enhancement Music: Verdi’s *Requiem*

Part IV: Eros

| | | |
|-------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Mon., Nov. 7 | Schopenhauer | PPSL, pp. 190-197 |
| Wed., Nov. 9 | Simone de Beauvoir | PPSL, pp. 213-217 |
| Mon., Nov. 14 | Soble, Nozick | PPSL, pp. 227 - 241 |
| Wed., Nov. 16 | Solomon, Robert | PPSL, 241 - 258 |
| Mon., Nov. 21 | Plato’s Symposium | PPSL, On-Line |
| Wed., Nov. 23 | No Class—Thanksgiving Break | |
| Wed., Nov. 28 | Plato’s Symposium | On-Line |
| Wed., Nov. 30 | Last Class: Summary | |
| Paper Due: | December 5th | |

Enhancement Reading:

Shakespeare’s Sonnets “Let me not to the marriage of true minds...,” “Call not my love idolatry,” “Tired of all of these..”

e.e. cummings, “I carry your heart.”

Final Exam: Monday, Dec. 5th, DU 474 4:00 – 5:30.