

Portland State University
 Philosophy 369 Winter Term, 2015

□ □ *PHILOSOPHY OF SEX & LOVE* □ □

Professor: Dr. Vincent Mulier Office: Neuberger Hall Basement Rm 55
 Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday, 4:00-6:00 pm, and by appointment
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Course Summary

This is a course in the philosophy of love and the ethics of erotic relationships.

The ethics portion of the course is designed to raise questions about the philosophical basis of moral judgments regarding erotic relationships, especially judgments about relationships that are considered non-heteronormative. These questions are ground zero in what is commonly referred to as "the culture war" in U.S. society.

Students are expected to become familiar with the main antagonists on both sides of the culture war, and with the reasoning they use to justify their moral judgments about sex and love.

The philosophy of love portion of the course is designed to raise questions about the nature and meaning of love. Beneath these questions are deeper questions about the nature and meaning of being human and the nature and meaning of being alive.

How should we evaluate normative claims -- moral judgments -- about various types of erotic acts and relationships? How should we evaluate the following kinds of claims, for example?

- "Sex with my husband is morally good because I am married to him;"
- "Sex with my girlfriend is morally good because I am in love with her;"
- "Sex between two women, or between two men, is always immoral;"
- "Anal and oral sex are not morally permissible;" or
- "It is immoral to use contraceptives."

What philosophical justifications might there be for claims such as these?

As we cover the ethics of erotic relationships, we will raise a few conceptual questions about sex, gender, and sexual orientation: How do we know what a person's "sexual orientation" is? What does it mean to be "straight"? What does it mean to be "gay"? What does it mean to be "bi"? What properties do these terms designate? Do "straight," "gay," and "bi" designate types of *desire*, types of *conduct*, types of *identity*, or some combination of the three? Are gender and sexual orientation immutable facts of biology or are they, to a significant degree, culturally constructed, and therefore, in a sense, *chosen*? If gender and sexual orientation are culturally constructed, how, exactly, are they constructed? In what sense, if any, are they *chosen identities*?

Philosophy of love encompasses a vast range of philosophical and literary works stretching from the pre-Socratic era to the present day. The great Western philosophers of love include Sappho, Plato, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Benedict Spinoza, David Hume, Soren Kierkegaard, Arthur Schopenhauer, Friedrich Nietzsche, Max Scheler, Martha Nussbaum, Audre Lorde, and bell hooks. Because of time constraints, we will explore only a fraction of the contributions made by some of these thinkers.

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We live in an age in which the act of passing judgment on a person's love life and sexual behavior is controversial. On one side of the controversy are thinkers who believe that objective moral guidelines compel them to think of human sexuality, and of certain kinds of erotic love and erotic actions, as morally problematic. On the other side are thinkers who believe that love and sex are not susceptible to objective moral judgments, and that erotic acts and relationships – provided they occur between consenting adults – are simply a matter of individual preference and taste. We will devote most of our attention in this course to the claim that sex and love generally, and non-heteronormative expressions of sex and love in particular, are morally problematic. This claim is philosophically more interesting, and more difficult to understand, in a culture such as ours – a culture that is dominated by superficial, egocentric notions of the nature and purpose of erotic relationships.

Assignments and Grading

Readings are assigned for each week. See schedule of readings. You must carefully study and comprehend all reading assignments if you wish to do well in the course. You must be physically present and mentally attentive during all lectures if you wish to do well in the course. See attendance policy below. "Doing well in the course" means **learning**.

There will be two 75-minute in-class mid-term exams. Each mid-term exam will consist of a series of short essay questions based on narratives about fictional erotic and/or amorous relationships. These exams are scheduled for Thursday of Week Three (January 22nd) and Thursday of Week Six (February 12th). Each mid-term exam will be worth 15% of your final grade in the course.

A midterm essay (4-7 pages) will be due in class on Tuesday of Week Nine (March 3rd). Your professor will distribute a list of mid-term essay topic choices two weeks before the essay is due. Students may devise topics of their own or select one of the topics from the list. The mid-term essay will be worth 25% of your final grade in the course.

There will be a two-hour, in-class final exam. The final exam will consist of a series of short essay questions based on narratives about fictional erotic and/or amorous relationships. The final exam is scheduled for Tuesday, March 17th at 10:15 am. Students may use as much time as they want to complete the final exam. (Arrangements will be made for this.) The final exam will be worth 25% of your final grade in the course.

The remaining 20% of your final grade will be determined by your physical and mental attendance during lectures and class discussions. Physical and mental attendance during lectures and discussions is necessary to do well in this course.

Attendance Policy: Missing more than two class sessions, or the equivalent of two class sessions, without compelling reasons, will adversely affect your final grade in the course. A student who misses more than four class sessions, or the equivalent of four class sessions, without compelling reasons, will not pass the course. A student who misses more than six class sessions, or the equivalent of six class sessions, for any reason, will not pass the course. If you have a valid reason for missing class, you must inform your professor via email, prior to the start of class, in order to be excused.

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OUR JOURNEY ACROSS SEVEN TRADITIONS OF MORAL REASONING ABOUT SEX & LOVE

1. *Sadistic Libertinism*
2. *Thomistic Natural Law Theory*
3. *Utilitarianism*
4. *Conservative Kantianism*
5. *Liberal Kantianism*
6. *Erotic Virtue Ethics*
7. *Feminist Ethics*

Schedule of Readings

Most of our readings are from a book by Alan Soble, entitled *The Philosophy of Sex and Love, Second Edition, 2008*. The book should be available at the PSU Bookstore. A digitized version can be purchased online. All of our other readings are available on the internet or in the PSU library database.

To access readings that are only available in the PSU library database, begin at the PSU Library home page. Below the search window on the home page, click "PSU, Summit, and Articles" and type in the name of the author & title of the essay. Click "Search." The author's name and title of the essay will appear at or near the top of your search results. Click "View Online," then click one of the journal article databases that appear in the little box below the essay title. A summary of the essay will appear in a new browser window. Now click "Download PDF" or "View Article," or click the PDF icon or Full Text icon, to download the essay. Print the essay for careful reading and note-taking, and bring it to class with you.

Week One Lectures//January 6th and 8th: *Sadistic Libertine Sexual Ethics*

Reading:

1. Alan Soble, *The Philosophy of Sex and Love*, chapter 1, pp. 3-17
2. The Marquis de Sade, *Philosophy in the Bedroom*, "Yet another Effort, Frenchmen, If You Would Become Republicans," pp. 91-129, available at http://easywaytowrite.com/philosophy_in_the_bedroom.pdf

Week Two Lectures//January 13th and 15th: *Thomistic Sexual Ethics*

Reading:

3. Alan Soble, *The Philosophy of Sex and Love*, chapter 2, pp. 19-43
4. Karol Wojtyla (Pope John Paul II), *Love and Responsibility*, chapters 1-5 and all commentary, available at

http://www.catholicculture.com/jp2_on_l&r.pdf

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Week Three Lecture//January 20th: *Sadistic Libertinism and Thomistic Natural Law Theory: Comparison and Contrast*

Reading:

5. Alan Soble, *The Philosophy of Sex and Love*, Chapters 3 & 4, pp. 47-87

FIRST MIDTERM EXAM: THURSDAY, JANUARY 22ND, IN CLASS

Week Four Lectures//January 27th and 29th: *Utilitarian Sexual Ethics*

Readings:

6. Alan Soble, *The Philosophy of Sex and Love*, Chapter 5 & 6, pp. 89-125
7. Bertrand Russell, "Our Sexual Ethics," available at
<http://www.utilitarian.org/texts/oursexethics.html>

Week Five Lectures//February 3rd and 5th: *Conservative Kantian Sexual Ethics*

Readings:

8. Immanuel Kant, "Duties toward the Body in Respect of Sexual Impulse," available at
<http://everything2.com/title/Duties+towards+the+body+in+respect+of+sexual+impulse>
9. Immanuel Kant, excerpts from *The Metaphysics of Morals*, available at
<http://praxeology.net/kant8.htm>
10. John Finnis, "Law, Morality, and 'Sexual Orientation'," available at
<http://xa.yimg.com/kq/groups/21891644/1571436687/name/finnisorientation.pdf>

Week Six Lecture//February 10th: *Liberal Kantian Sexual Ethics*

Reading:

11. Alan Soble, "Kant and Sexual Perversion," available in the PSU library database

SECOND MIDTERM EXAM: THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 12TH, IN CLASS

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Week Seven Lectures//February 17th and 19th: *Feminist Sexual Ethics, Part I*

12. Lina Papadaki, "Feminist Perspectives on Objectification," in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, available at

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-objectification/>
13. Conor Kelly, "Feminist Ethics Evaluating the Hook-Up Culture," available in the PSU library database

Week Eight Lectures//February 24th and 26th: *Feminist Sexual Ethics, Part II*

Reading:

14. bell hooks, "Understanding Patriarchy," available at

<http://imagineborders.org/pdf/zines/UnderstandingPatriarchy.pdf>
15. Audre Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power," available at

<http://www.cds.hawaii.edu/sites/default/files/downloads/resources/diversity/SisterOutside.pdf>
16. Ruth Ginzberg, "Audre Lorde's (Nonessentialist) Lesbian Eros," available in the PSU library database

Week Nine Lectures//March 3rd and 5th: *Erotic Virtue Ethics*

Reading:

17. Alan Soble, *The Philosophy of Sex and Love*, chapters 7 & 9, pp. 129-160 and pp. 189-209

MIDTERM ESSAY DUE IN CLASS ON TUESDAY, MARCH 3RD

Week Ten Lectures//March 10th and 12th: *Gender, Sexual Orientation, and Marriage*

Reading:

18. Alan Soble, *The Philosophy of Sex and Love*, chapter 10, pp. 211-229
19. Lina Papadaki, "Kantian Marriage and Beyond: Why It Is Worth Thinking About Kant on Marriage," available in the PSU library database

>>>> FINAL EXAM: TUESDAY, MARCH 17TH, 10:15 am <<<<

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Strictly Anonymous Love & Sex Ethics Questionnaire (To be filled out on the first day of class)

Key: MPBNMB = Morally Permissible But Not Morally Best *If you cannot answer a question, leave it blank.*

1. What is your gender? FEMININE MASCULINE OTHER
2. What is your sex? FEMALE MALE OTHER
3. Identify your current sexual orientation – *based on which type of human, male or female, you most strongly desire to have intimate sexual relationships with* – using the Kinsey Scale below. Referring to your *private sexual desires* – *which might or might not correspond to your actual sexual conduct or your preferred public identity* – you are:

Rating	Description
0	Exclusively heterosexual
1	Predominantly heterosexual, only incidentally homosexual
2	Predominantly heterosexual, but more than incidentally homosexual
3	Equally heterosexual and homosexual
4	Predominantly homosexual, but more than incidentally heterosexual
5	Predominantly homosexual, only incidentally heterosexual
6	Exclusively homosexual
X	Non-Sexual
Q	Queer – Questioning – Beyond Categorization

4. Identify your current amorous orientation – *based on which type of human, male or female, you are most strongly inclined to fall in love with* – using the modified Kinsey Scale below. Referring to your *private amorous inclinations* – *which might or might not correspond to your actual conduct or your preferred public identity* – you are:

Rating	Description
0	Exclusively heteroamorous
1	Predominantly heteroamorous, only incidentally homoamorous
2	Predominantly heteroamorous, but more than incidentally homoamorous
3	Equally heteroamorous and homoamorous
4	Predominantly homoamorous, but more than incidentally heteroamorous
5	Predominantly homoamorous, only incidentally heteroamorous
6	Exclusively homoamorous
X	Non-Amorous
Q	Queer – Questioning – Beyond Categorization

5. Do you believe that most instances of adult, consensual casual sex – defined as sex outside the context of an emotionally deep, loving relationship – are morally permissible?
 YES NO MPBNMB

6. Do you believe that most consensual, adult homosexual relationships in 21st century U.S. society are morally permissible?
 YES NO MPBNMB

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7. Do you believe that most consensual, adult interracial marriages in 21st century U.S. society are morally permissible?
 YES NO MPBNMB

8. Do you believe that most consensual, adult same-sex marriages in 21st century U.S. society are morally permissible?
 YES NO MPBNMB

9. Do you believe that (at least) some consensual, adult, plural (polygamous) marriages are morally permissible?
 YES NO MPBNMB

10. Do you believe that most instances of sexual prostitution between consenting adults in 21st century U.S. society are morally permissible?
 YES NO MPBNMB

11. Do you believe it is morally permissible to produce, sell, purchase, and use (at least) some kinds of adult pornography?
 YES NO MPBNMB

12. Do you believe it is morally permissible to produce, sell, purchase, and use contraceptives for birth control purposes?
 YES NO MPBNMB

13. Do you believe that most instances of oral sex between consenting adults in 21st century U.S. society are morally permissible?
 YES NO MPBNMB

14. Do you believe that most instances of anal sex between consenting adults in 21st century U.S. society are morally permissible?
 YES NO MPBNMB

15. Do you believe that (at least) some relationships involving fully consensual BDSM (bondage, discipline, sadism, or masochism) are morally permissible?
 YES NO MPBNMB

16. Do you believe it is morally permissible for a person to undergo voluntary gender reassignment?
 YES NO MPBNMB

17. Do you believe it is morally permissible for a person to undergo voluntary sex reassignment?

YES NO MPBNMB

18. Do you believe that some instances of female genital cutting (also known as female circumcision or female genital mutilation), performed on girls under age 13, are morally permissible?

YES NO MPBNMB

19. Do you believe that some instances of male genital cutting (circumcision), performed on boys under the age of 13, are morally permissible?

YES NO MPBNMB

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20. Do you believe that consensual, adult, sexual relations between biological siblings might sometimes be morally permissible, if these relations are *reproductively sterile* and are forever kept *completely secret*, known only to the siblings?

YES NO MPBNMB

21. Do you believe that necrophilia (sex with a corpse) might sometimes be morally permissible, if the deceased person (an adult) *consented* to it while still alive, in absolute secrecy, and the act itself is also kept *completely secret*, known only to the necrophile (also an adult)?

YES NO MPBNMB

22. Do you believe it is ever morally permissible for a human to gratify himself or herself sexually with a non-human animal, if the non-human animal indicates that he/she is a *willing participant* and the act is kept *completely secret*, known only to the zoophile?

YES NO MPBNMB

23. Do you believe that it would be morally permissible to produce, sell, purchase, or consume (at least) some genetically modified organisms (GMOs), if some GMOs and the techniques used to grow them are scientifically proven to be *completely harmless* to humans, wildlife, and ecosystems, *though not of greater benefit* than non-GMOs?

YES NO MPBNMB

24. Do you believe that all abortions requested by the mother and performed during the first trimester of a pregnancy, for **any** reason, are morally permissible? (Note: This question is *not* asking for your position on the issue of whether first-trimester abortions should be legal and available on request.)

YES NO MPBNMB

25. Do you believe that some abortions requested by the mother and performed during the third trimester of a pregnancy are morally permissible, in cases where the pregnancy is the result of a rape and the health of the mother is **not** at risk?

YES NO MPBNMB

26. Do you believe that abortions performed to protect the health of the mother, at **any** stage of a pregnancy, are morally permissible, when the health of the mother is seriously at risk?

YES NO MPBNMB

27. Should the people of the United States pass a Constitutional amendment that expressly prohibits all citizens and residents of the U.S. from producing more than two children?

YES NO MPBNMB

28. Do you believe that all mentally competent adult humans have a moral right to sell their own organs and other body parts (eg, kidneys, colons, corneas, hands, faces, penises) provided they do not terminate their own lives or physically harm other humans in the process? (MPBNMB is not an option for this question.)
YES NO
29. Do you believe that all mentally competent adult humans – young & old, healthy & sick – have a moral right to commit suicide, provided they do not physically harm other humans in the process? (MPBNMB is not an option for this question, because humans either have such a right or do not.)
YES NO

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Questionnaire Results for Professor Mulier

KEY:

MPBNMB = Morally Permissible But Not Morally Best

U = Utilitarianism

LK = Liberal Kantianism

CK = Conservative Kantianism

F = Feminism

EVE = Erotic Virtue Ethics

SPNLT = Sex-Positive Natural Law Theory

TNLT = Thomistic Natural Law Theory

- | | | | |
|-----|---|----|-------------------------|
| 5. | Do you believe that most instances of adult, consensual <u>casual sex</u> – defined as sex outside the context of an emotionally deep, loving relationship – are morally permissible? | | |
| | YES | NO | MPBNMB ♥ LK/F/EVE/SPNLT |
| 6. | Do you believe that most consensual, adult <u>homosexual relationships</u> in 21 st century U.S. society are morally permissible? | | |
| | YES ♥ U/LK/F/EVE/SPNLT | NO | MPBNMB |
| 7. | Do you believe that most consensual, adult <u>interracial marriages</u> in 21 st century U.S. society are morally permissible? | | |
| | YES ♥ U/LK/F/EVE/SPNLT | NO | MPBNMB |
| 8. | Do you believe that most consensual, adult <u>same-sex marriages</u> in 21 st century U.S. society are morally permissible? | | |
| | YES ♥ U/LK/F/EVE/SPNLT | NO | MPBNMB |
| 9. | Do you believe that (at least) some consensual, adult, <u>plural (polygamous) marriages</u> are morally permissible? | | |
| | YES ♥ U/LK/F/EVE/SPNLT | NO | MPBNMB |
| 10. | Do you believe that most instances of sexual <u>prostitution</u> between consenting adults in 21 st century U.S. society are morally permissible? | | |
| | YES | NO | MPBNMB ♥ LK/F/EVE |
| 11. | Do you believe it is morally permissible to produce, sell, purchase, and use (at least) some kinds of adult <u>pornography</u> ? | | |
| | YES | NO | MPBNMB ♥ LK/F/EVE |
| 12. | Do you believe it is morally permissible to produce, sell, purchase, and use <u>contraceptives</u> for birth control purposes? | | |
| | YES ♥ U/LK/F/EVE/SPNLT | NO | MPBNMB |
| 13. | Do you believe that most instances of <u>oral sex</u> between consenting adults in 21 st century U.S. society are morally permissible? | | |
| | YES ♥ U/LK/F/EVE/SPNLT | NO | MPBNMB |

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14. Do you believe that most instances of anal sex between consenting adults in 21st century U.S. society are morally permissible?
 YES ♥ U/LK/F/EVE/SPNLT NO MPBNMB
15. Do you believe that (at least) some relationships involving fully consensual BDSM (bondage, discipline, sadism, or masochism) are morally permissible?
 YES ♥ U/F/EVE NO ♥ LK/F/EVE MPBNMB ♥ LK/F/EVE
16. Do you believe it is morally permissible for a person to undergo voluntary gender reassignment?
 YES ♥ U/LK/F/EVE NO MPBNMB
17. Do you believe it is morally permissible for a person to undergo voluntary sex reassignment?
 YES ♥ U/LK NO MPBNMB ♥ LK/F/EVE/SPNLT
18. Do you believe that some instances of female genital cutting (also known as female circumcision or female genital mutilation), performed on girls under age 13, are morally permissible?
 YES NO ♥ U/LK/F/EVE/SPNLT MPBNMB
19. Do you believe that some instances of male genital cutting (circumcision), performed on boys under the age of 13, are morally permissible?
 YES NO ♥ U/LK/F/EVE/SPNLT MPBNMB
20. Do you believe that consensual, adult sexual relations between biological siblings might sometimes be morally permissible, if these relations are *reproductively sterile* and are forever kept *completely secret*, known only to the siblings?
 YES NO MPBNMB ♥ F/EVE/SPNLT
21. Do you believe that necrophilia (sex with a corpse) might sometimes be morally permissible, if the deceased person (an adult) *consented* to it while still alive, in absolute secrecy, and the act itself is also kept *completely secret*, known only to the necrophile (also an adult)?
 YES NO ♥ F/EVE/SPNLT MPBNMB

22. Do you believe it is ever morally permissible for an adult human to gratify himself or herself sexually with a non-human animal, if the non-human animal clearly indicates that he/she is a *willing participant* and the act is kept *completely secret*, known only to the zoophile?
 YES NO ♥ F/EVE/SPNLT MPBNMB

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 YES NO ♥ F/EVE/SPNLT MPBNMB
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 YES NO MPBNMB ♥ U/F/EVE/SPNLT
25. Do you believe that some abortions requested by the mother and performed during the third trimester of a pregnancy are morally permissible, in cases where the pregnancy is the result of a rape and the health of the mother is **not** at risk?
 YES NO ♥ U/F/EVE/SPNLT MPBNMB ♥ LK/F
26. Do you believe that abortions performed to protect the health of the mother, at **any** stage of a pregnancy, are morally permissible, when the health of the mother is seriously at risk?
 YES ♥ F/U/CK/LK/EVE/SPNLT/TNLT NO MPBNMB
27. Should the people of the United States pass a Constitutional amendment that expressly prohibits all citizens and residents of the U.S. from producing more than two children?
 YES ♥ U/EVE/F NO MPBNMB
28. Do you believe that all adult, mentally competent persons have a moral right to sell their own organs and other body parts (eg, kidneys, colons, corneas, hands, faces, penises) provided they do not terminate their own lives or physically harm other humans in the process? (MPBNMB is not an option for this question, because humans either have such a right or do not.)
 YES NO ♥ F/U/CK/LK/EVE/SPNLT/TNLT

