

**PHIL 105—Philosophy of Love and Desire**  
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**Office hours: MWF 9:30-10 A.M. and 1:30-3 P.M., and by appt.**

*“Erôs once again limb-loosener whirls me  
sweetbitter, impossible to fight off, creature stealing up” --Sappho*

*Socrates: “Ask yourself whether it’s necessary that this be so: a thing that desires desires something of which it is in need; otherwise, if it were not in need, it would not desire it.” --Plato, Symposium 200b*

*“Love’s knowledge is ‘kind of slow’; it unfolds, evolves, in human time. It is no one thing at all, but a complex way of being with another person, a deliberate yielding to uncontrollable influences. There are no necessary and sufficient conditions, and no certainty.” --Martha Nussbaum, Love’s Knowledge*

*“She had experienced something beautiful, and he had failed to experience it with her. The two ways in which their memories reacted to the evening storm sharply delimit love and nonlove. By the word ‘nonlove’ I do not wish to imply that he took a cynical attitude to the young woman, that, as present-day parlance has it, he looked upon her as a sex object; on the contrary, he was quite fond of her, valued her character and intelligence, and was willing to come to her aid if ever she needed him. He was not the one who behaved shamefully towards her; it was his memory, for it was his memory that, unbeknown to him, had excluded her from the sphere of love. The brain appears to possess a special area which we might call poetic memory and which records everything that charms or touches us, that makes our lives beautiful.”  
--Milan Kundera, The Unbearable Lightness of Being*

*“Love demands expression. It will not stay still, stay silent, be good, be modest, be seen and not heard, no. It will break out in tongues of praise, the high note that smashes the glass and spills the liquid. It is no conservationist love. It is a big game hunter and you are the game. A curse on this game. How can you stick at a game when the rules keep changing? I shall call myself Alice and play croquet with the flamingoes. In Wonderland everyone cheats and love is Wonderland isn’t it?” --Jeanette Winterson,  
Written on the Body*

**Course Description:**

The routine of daily life can induce someone to live passively, accepting human experience at face value rather than really thinking about it. From time to time we do stop to think about some aspects of life, but all thoughtful people should think critically on a regular basis about what is really going on in life. This reflective activity is the wondering with which Plato said philosophy begins. The primary activity in this course is wondering about love and desire, just as philosophers have struggled to understand these aspects of human life for millennia. This course introduces one to the Western philosophical tradition, examining theories of love, desire, and friendship from ancient, medieval, modern, and contemporary philosophers, with a focus on ethical theories such as: Greek virtue-ethics, divine command theory, deontology, utilitarianism, and existentialism. Wondering about these questions is not a passive business of simply learning theories. Instead, philosophizing is an active way of life, and it enables us to

decide which of our inclinations to support and which to oppose. Practicing this lifestyle, as Bertrand Russell said, makes us insightful, sophisticated, and open-minded; the world is better off when its citizens cultivate these qualities.

### **Course Objectives:**

The general aim of a philosophy course is, as Kant wrote, to “have the courage to use your *own* mind!” More specifically, as a course that satisfies the Central Curriculum Ethics requirement, students in this course should:

1. Exercise the art of wonder
2. Become more skillful in closely reading and analyzing philosophical texts in order to understand them as well as to evaluate them
3. Identify and use the fundamental vocabulary, questions, and theories in ethics and the philosophy of love and desire
4. Articulate the implications of ethical questions for human life
5. Question what one’s beliefs about love and desire presuppose
6. Identify and analyze one’s own choices regarding love and desire
7. Understand the interplay between one’s *theoretical* accounts of love, desire, and friendship and one’s *practical* experience of them
8. Debate effectively (in speaking as well as in writing), including: taking and justifying one’s own position, organizing thoughts logically, analyzing and evaluating arguments, accounting for a variety of viewpoints, and talking directly to fellow students in class

### **Required Texts** (bring your own copy of the day’s reading with you to class):

Simon Blackburn, *Lust* (Oxford University Press)

Ellen K. Feder, Karmen MacKendrick, and Sybol S. Cook, ed., *A Passion for Wisdom: Readings in Western Philosophy on Love and Desire* (Prentice Hall)

Epictetus, *The Handbook* (Hackett Publishing)

Plato, *Symposium* (Hackett Publishing)

### **Required texts on Blackboard:**

Aristotle, excerpts from *Nicomachean Ethics*

Mary Catherine Bateson, “Emergent Visions” from *Composing a Life*

Alain de Botton, excerpts from *The Consolations of Philosophy*

G.W.F. Hegel, excerpt from *Phenomenology of Spirit*

Mark D. Jordan, “Redeeming Pleasures” from *The Ethics of Sex*

Brad Lemley, “Isn’t She Lovely?” from *Discover*, February 2000

David Linden, excerpts from *The Accidental Mind: How Brain Evolution Has Given Us Love, Memory, Dreams, and God*

Martha Nussbaum, “Love and the Individual: Romantic Rightness and Platonic Aspiration” from *Love’s Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature*

Plato, excerpt from *Phaedrus*

**Films:**

“Annie Hall” (1977, directed by Woody Allen)

“High Fidelity” (2000, directed by Stephen Frears)

“Shrek” (2001, directed by Andrew Adamson and Vicky Jenson)

**Office hours:** Please take advantage of my office hours to discuss any problems you have with the reading assignments, writing assignments, discussions in class, meaning of life, etc. Do not feel that you must have a carefully formulated set of questions to pose before you come to see me. The articulation of the problem is often the main stumbling block; so if something is an issue for you, don't hesitate to talk with me about it.

**Grading:** Your grade in this course will be based on the following:

Quizzes	= 25%	Participation	= 25%
Final Exam	= 25%	Term Paper	= 25%

**Course Requirements:**

**A. Attendance:** All students are expected to attend all classes, arriving punctually. Any missed class will lower one's participation grade.

**B. Class Participation:***1. My Assumptions:*

**a. Cell phones should be entirely silent and stowed in your bag for the duration of all class meetings.**

b. You are citizens (not consumers) at this university.

c. Some of you wonder what exactly an instructor expects when s/he asks you to participate and how this will be graded.

d. Every one of us is able to contribute something to our class discussions.

e. No one knows everything.

f. Questions are just as important as comments.

g. Expressing agreement with a classmate's comment is just as valuable as expressing disagreement.

h. Coming to class unprepared is disrespectful to your peers who are prepared.

i. Some of you are shy about speaking publicly.

j. Some of you don't believe you can learn from class discussions with your peers.

k. Those of you who take more time to ruminate sometimes resent students who appear to “shoot their mouths off.”

l. Some of you would prefer to be fed information directly by the instructor.

m. Many of you wonder why this and other courses ask students to participate.

n. Laptop computers may be used in class only with proper documentation from the SU Health and Counseling Center.

*2. Why participate?* There are two main reasons to participate in your classes. First, pedagogical research has demonstrated that students learn more when they actively participate in class discussions. Second, all students have a civic responsibility to offer their questions and thoughts so that the entire class can collaboratively learn the course material. Furthermore, participating in class will help you practice having thoughtful conversations outside of class.

3. *Class format*: The format of this class will vary from day to day, including all of the following: recitation “lectures”, conversations, debates, seminar. What I mean by recitation “lectures” is that when presenting new material, my presentation will include calling on students to elicit information about the readings. When class takes the form of a conversation I will ask students to discuss their responses to the texts and the issues they raise. Frequently there will be smaller group discussions—sometimes these will involve debating the strengths and weaknesses of theories and ideas, other times these will involve seminar-style in-depth analysis of the day’s topic.

4. *Assistance*: As soon as possible anyone who feels ill at ease should discuss with the instructor ways of easing oneself into participation.

5. *Rubric*: A participation grade will be assigned to each student based on which of the following regularly applied to her/him:

F = not physically present, or *severely detracting from* classroom discussion (e.g., behaving in a manner that is disrespectful like **checking text messages**); never interacts with peers; never prepared; never participates; demonstrates a noticeable and on-going lack of interest in course material (e.g., **sleeping**)

D = present physically but not mentally and/or not being prepared, or *detracting from* classroom discussion (e.g., **regular mid-class bathroom trips, not having text and classroom supplies with you**, having side conversations, daydreaming, etc.); making totally irrelevant comments

C = **present, alert, and prepared for class** (e.g., having read required texts in at least a cursory way, bringing text and classroom supplies with you to class, reflecting in advance on the day’s texts, etc.), and adding to the discussion **but in only minimal ways**

B = present, alert, prepared for class (e.g., having read required texts with significant attention, bringing text and classroom supplies with you to class, reflecting in advance on the day’s texts, etc.), and **contributing positively to class discussion (e.g., communicating some understanding of the text, asking related questions, sharing ideas, maintaining an appropriate balance of talking & listening, etc.)**

A = present, alert, prepared (e.g., having read required texts thoroughly, bringing notes, text--**with significant passages marked**--and classroom supplies with you to class, reflecting in advance on the day’s texts, having written a reflection paper as well as some additional questions to ask to advance the conversation, etc.), and **making thoughtful contributions to classroom discussion based on engagement with the texts** (e.g., communicating one’s understanding of the text and the overall course, posing related questions to both the instructor and fellow students, sharing ideas and responding to the ideas of others, maintaining an appropriate balance of talking and listening, **applying course material to personal experience; actively engaging in one’s own learning, etc.**)

*C. Quizzes and Exams*: There shall be six unannounced quizzes throughout the semester as well as a final exam. These will test your understanding of the reading material and what is covered in class. All quizzes and exams will be cumulative. A missed quiz or exam earns a zero (unless

permission for an alternative has been granted by the professor IN ADVANCE—and I do not automatically grant such requests). The lowest quiz grade will be dropped. The final exam will be proctored during the final exam period scheduled by the registrar.

**D. Writing:** There will be a formal writing assignment of approximately 6 pages in addition to less formal writing assignments. In the term paper assignment you will need to demonstrate both your understanding and evaluation of course texts. Details about this assignment will be announced well in advance of the due date. All papers must be submitted BOTH in hardcopy to me as well as in e-copy to [turnitin.com](http://turnitin.com). In advance of the due date you must set up an account at [www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com) (instructions and log in information will be provided).

#### **Policy on Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty:**

All forms of plagiarism and cheating are prohibited. All forms of academic dishonesty are prohibited. This includes submitting without citation your own work originally written for other assignments. Students found cheating on assignments will receive an F for the course and will be reported to the Dean of Student Life. I reserve the right to have all student written assignments submitted in an electronic format for the expressed purpose of checking assignments for plagiarism against internet sources (including pay-sites for papers) using [turnitin.com](http://turnitin.com). If you are in doubt about what constitutes cheating or plagiarism, please discuss this with me BEFORE turning in an assignment.

#### **Students with Disabilities:**

If you are seeking an academic accommodation, it is essential that you have appropriate documentation on file with the University and present that documentation to me as early as possible in the semester. If you believe that you have a disability but have no documentation on file at Susquehanna and wish to discuss what steps can be taken to determine whether an accommodation is warranted, please contact the Counseling Center for further information and assistance. Some additional information is available at <http://www.susqu.edu/counseling/disabilities/>.

#### **Tentative Schedule of Topics and Readings:**

Week 1, Day 1 (1/12)	Introductory Session
Week 1, Day 2 (1/14)	Brad Lemley, "Isn't She Lovely?" ( <b>bb=available on Blackboard under "course documents"</b> ) & David Linden, excerpt from <i>The Accidental Mind</i> ( <b>bb</b> )
Week 1, Day 3 (1/16)	Review of Lemley and Linden articles & Discussion of "Shrek"

#### **Unit One: Ancient Philosophy**

##### *A. Pre-Socratic Period*

Week 2, Day 1 (1/19)	Simon Blackburn, <i>Lust</i> (pp. 1–27) & Empedocles, selected fragments in <i>PW</i> (pp. 11-16) N.B. due to the MLK Day Convocation, this meeting will be 9:20-10:05 A.M.
Week 2, Day 2 (1/21)	no class
Week 2, Day 3 (1/23)	no class

##### *B. Classical Period*

Week 3, Day 1 (1/26)	Plato, <i>Symposium</i> 172a-201c (*N.B. this is a separate text,
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	don't bother with the translation of <i>Symposium</i> in <i>A Passion for Wisdom</i> )
Week 3, Day 2 (1/28)	Plato, <i>Symposium</i> 201d-223d
Week 3, Day 3 (1/30)	Martha Nussbaum, "Love and the Individual: Romantic Rightness and Platonic Aspiration" ( <b>bb</b> )
Week 4, Day 1 (2/2)	continued discussion of Nussbaum and <i>Debate #1: "Soulmates" or "Other Fish in the Sea"?</i>
Week 4, Day 2 (2/4)	Plato, <i>Phaedrus</i> 227a-243b ( <b>bb</b> ) & Blackburn (pp. 29-47)
Week 4, Day 3 (2/6)	Plato, <i>Phaedrus</i> 243b-257b ( <b>bb</b> )
Week 5, Day 1 (2/9)	Discussion of "Annie Hall"
Week 5, Day 2 (2/11)	Aristotle, excerpts from <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> I-II ( <b>bb</b> )
Week 5, Day 3 (2/13)	Aristotle, selection from <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> in PW (pp. 59-66, end before section 9)

### C. Hellenistic Period

Week 6, Day 1 (2/16)	Alain de Botton, "Not Having Enough Money" ( <b>bb</b> ) (a reading about Epicurus)
Week 6, Day 2 (2/18)	Epictetus, <i>The Handbook</i>

### Unit Two: Medieval Philosophy

Week 6, Day 3 (2/20)	Blackburn (pp. 49-63) & Augustine, selection from <i>Confessions</i> in PW (pp. 111-135)
Week 7, Day 1 (2/23)	Letters from Heloise and Abelard in PW (pp. 172-187)
Week 7, Day 2 (2/25)	Blackburn (pp. 64-72) & Mark Jordan, "Redeeming Pleasures" ( <b>bb</b> )
Week 7, Day 3 (2/27)	<i>Debate #2: Is it unethical to have sex for non-procreative reasons?</i>

### Unit Three: Modern Philosophy

Week 8, Day 1 (3/9)	Blackburn (pp. 73-92) (a reading about Hobbes)
Week 8, Day 2 (3/11)	Blackburn (pp. 93-102) & Immanuel Kant, selection from <i>Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals</i> in PW (pp. 360-3, 380-392)
Week 8, Day 3 (3/13)	Kant--continued
Week 9, Day 1 (3/16)	Utilitarianism ( <b>bb</b> )
Week 9, Day 2 (3/18)	Alain de Botton, "A Broken Heart" ( <b>bb</b> ) (a reading about Schopenhauer)
Week 9, Day 3 (3/20)	G.W.F. Hegel, "Master-Slave Dialectic" passage from <i>Phenomenology of Spirit</i> : read the introduction in PW (pp. 420-423) and <u>then</u> read Hegel text on <b>bb</b> (don't bother with the translation in PW)

N.B. Hegel's writing "Master and Slave" is dense and difficult, but also extremely important for subsequent developments in, e.g., economics, politics, and feminism. So, don't expect to understand it as well as other readings, but be as earnest as you can in reading it. Make sure to read the introduction to Hegel in our textbook, though, because it will make reading the blackboard passage easier. Also, try to answer the questions on p. 423 of our textbook as well as you can while you're reading the blackboard passage. The questions will help you have a sense of what is important in the reading.

- Week 10, Day 1 (3/23) Karl Marx, selections from *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* and *Capital* in PW (pp. 435-447)
- Week 10, Day 2 (3/25) Friedrich Nietzsche, selection from *The Gay Science*, *Beyond Good and Evil*, and *Ecce Homo* in PW (pp. 473-483)
- Week 10, Day 3 (3/27) Sigmund Freud, selection from *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* in PW (pp. 484-505)  
A Visit from Dr. Gretchen Lovas, Assistant Professor of Psychology
- Week 11, Day 1 (3/30) *Debate #3: Is it unethical to refuse otherwise desired sexual contact with someone because s/he has an incurable STD?*

**Unit Four: Contemporary Philosophy (20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries)**

- Week 11, Day 2 (4/1) Jean-Paul Sartre, selection from *Being and Nothingness* in PW (pp. 547-560)
- Week 11, Day 3 (4/3) Simone de Beauvoir, selection from *The Second Sex* in PW (pp. 566-586)
- Week 12, Day 1 (4/6) *Debate #4: Are adult pornography and prostitution unethical?*
- Week 12, Day 2 (4/8) Frantz Fanon, selection from *Black Skin, White Masks* in PW (pp. 587-606)
- Week 12, Day 3 (4/15) Octavio Paz, selection from *The Labyrinth of Solitude* in PW (pp. 607-618)
- Week 13, Day 1 (4/17) Mary Catherine Bateson, "Emergent Visions" from *Composing a Life* (**bb**)
- Week 13, Day 2 (4/20) Blackburn (pp. 103-133) & Discussion of "High Fidelity"
- Week 13, Day 3 (4/22) *Debate #5: What is adultery and is adultery unethical?*
- Week 14, Day 1 (4/24) bell hooks, "Eros, Eroticism, and the Pedagogical Process" in PW (pp. 703-712)
- Week 14, Day 2 (4/27) *Debate #6: Is "boss-employee"/"teacher-student"/"counselor-camper"/"coach-athlete" sex unethical?*
- Week 14, Day 3 (4/28) Final Session: exam review

**Exam Period: TERM PAPERS DUE AT THE FINAL EXAM**

**Assignment: Read, Reflect, Write.**

*“To **read** well, that is, to read true books in a true spirit, is a noble exercise, and one that will task the reader more than any exercise which the customs of the day esteem. It requires a training such as the athletes underwent, the steady intention almost of the whole life to this object. Books [especially great books] must be read as deliberately and as reservedly as they were written.”*  
—Henry David Thoreau, Walden

*“Bigger **questions**, questions with more than one answer, questions without an answer are harder to cope with in silence. Once asked they do not evaporate and leave the mind to its serener musings. Once asked they gain dimension and texture, trip you on the stairs, wake you at night-time. A black hole sucks up its surroundings and even light never escapes. Better then to ask no questions? Better then to be a contented pig than an unhappy Socrates?”*  
--Jeanette Winterson, Written on the Body

One might mistakenly think that simply running one’s eyes over the assigned reading means that one is prepared for class. This assumption neglects **reflection**. The way to get the most out of your reading and out of class is to spend time BEFORE CLASS thinking about each reading so that you will be prepared to answer fact-type questions (e.g., During which century did Plato write?) as well as evaluation-type questions (e.g., do you agree with Plato when he has Socrates say that the unexamined life is not worth living?).

To assist in your reflection on the readings, each student must **write** a short reflection paper for each class for which a reading assignment or a film viewing assignment is given. A reflection paper must:

1. state the main point of the reading (i.e., the main thing that the author is trying to say).
  2. ask a question about the reading (make sure it is in the form of a question). This question should be an “unanswered question” by which I mean that it should be an interesting and *difficult* question (i.e., one to which there is no easy or obvious answer). If, after stating the question, you can provide a simple, snappy answer to it, then the question is not a good one.
  3. explain why your question is *interesting*, *difficult*, and/or *important to you* (not to me, not to your classmates, not Plato...just YOU!). Do **NOT** attempt to answer your question in place of this explanation, and don’t choose questions that are not interesting to you.
- These papers are due in class and NO LATE PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED FOR **ANY** REASON EVER!
  - Each paper must be clearly labeled to correspond to the reading (note the name of the author of the reading, the name of reading—books titles should be italicized, while article titles should be in quotation marks—and the pages numbers).
  - To do well on this assignment, it is important that you follow the directions strictly.
  - Reflection papers count toward the participation grade.