

## **PHILOSOPHY 2ZZ3: PHILOSOPHY OF LOVE & SEX**

### **Fall 2021**

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### **Course Objectives**

#### **Course Description**

One of the things that philosophy should do is help us understand the world and our experiences of and place within it. For many of us, love and sex play a crucial role in who we are, how we live, and what we value. This course will explore some of the core questions about love and sex – what is love? How do we recognize love as love? How does consent work? – and some of the more complicated social, political, and ethical realities of love and sex – How are love and sex affected by race and racialized desires? Does polyamory challenge standard understandings of love and sexual relationships? Is it desirable or morally permissible to have sex with robots? Through these topics and many others, students will have an opportunity to reflect on and examine some of the most intimate and important values and relations in society.

#### **Course Learning Outcomes**

Over the course of this semester, you will learn how to:

- Critically read, analyze, and assess philosophical arguments;
- Discuss philosophical topics in a respectful, engaging, and constructive way;
- Engage in substantial self-reflection;
- Construct clear and persuasive arguments about topics in the philosophy of love and sex;
- Develop familiarity with philosophical views from a host of perspectives.

#### **Textbooks, Materials, & Fees**

- *Philosophizing About Sex* – Laurie J. Shrage and Robert Scott Stewart, 2015, Broadview Press
- All other readings will be provided as pdfs/links on the course website in keeping with McMaster's copyright policy.

#### **Method of Assessment**

Your grade in this course will be determined by the following:

Tutorials: 30% **Due: ongoing**

Attendance and participation: 20%

Group notes: 10%

*\*some tutorials will be in person, some online; grading expectations will reflect this and will be made clear in your tutorials.*

Philosophical papers: 70%

Exegesis assignment: 15% **Due: 20 September**

Paper #1: 25% **Due: 18 October**

## Paper #2: 30% **Due: 8 December**

*All work is to be submitted by Avenue or your McMaster email. If turning work into your TA directly, **you must also cc the instructor** at [forbeas@mcmaster.ca](mailto:forbeas@mcmaster.ca)*

### *Tutorials*

Participation is very important. Philosophy is something that we do; it is an activity. You need to attend class and be an active participant – this means listening carefully to the content of the lecture and to your classmates' questions and comments, as well as contributing your own thoughts or concerns. While it can be intimidating to speak in class, remember that your peers probably feel the same way, and that we will be careful to maintain a friendly and open-minded attitude in order that all contributions will be welcome and treated with the principle of charity – that is, we will all try our best to understand what others say in the spirit of how it is intended.

Your attendance and participation in tutorials will be 20% of your grade, and your work in a group note-taking document (online; shared with the TA and instructor) will be a further 10%. In light of covid-related accommodations, this may take a different form than usual, and may have different instantiations in online versus in-person tutorials. Grading expectations will be equal though sensitive to the differences in these two modes of learning, and more clarity and details will be discussed upon the instructor's consultation and coordination with your TAs.

### *Philosophical papers*

The first of these assignments is just exegesis: this is the practice of writing an interpretative summary of a philosophical text or position. The papers will be of the standard philosophical format: your task will be to pick one of the recent readings/topics, give an exegesis of it – demonstrate understanding of some position it holds – and then briefly critically engage with it – provide an argument about it, or an application of it in other domains (e.g., in day-to-day life, in other academic fields, etc.).

The teaching team – the TAs and I – will provide lots of feedback so that you will have some opportunity to practice your philosophical skills and get good, developmental feedback. See Avenue for rubrics and further, more detailed instructions.

The exegesis assignment will be brief, 2 pages. The papers should be approximately 5-6 pages, double spaced TNR or equivalent font. You will be required to devise your own theses for papers 1 & 2.

### **Policy on Missed Work, Extensions, and Late Penalties**

My policy on late work is for every 24 hours after the deadline, you will lose one third of a letter grade. So, if you turn in a B+ assignment, after one day it is a B, after another it is a B-, etc. That said, I know that extenuating circumstances do occur. Should you find yourself in such a situation, please contact me as soon as possible, but keep in mind that this is no guarantee of an extension.

If you anticipate needing an extension, you must email me **at least 24 hours prior to the deadline** with your request. If something comes up at the last minute, send me an email with

subject line **Urgent**. If you need an extension because of a diagnosis or disability, please see the section below on accommodations.

When uploading assignments to Avenue, make sure to allow a couple of minutes before the deadline in case of internet/Avenue issues. **Everyone receives a five-minute grace period after the deadline**, i.e., if the deadline is 12am, no late penalty will be applied up to 12:05am, though 12:06am and after will be subject to the late penalty.

## **Other Course Information**

### *Behaviour*

It is deeply important that we maintain an attitude of respect for one another and for the subjects we cover in this class, especially because many of them are quite personal/sensitive/important. Philosophy is, at its core, a practice of critical thinking. This often consists in making arguments and responding to one's interlocutors in ways that interrogate their positions and claims; we will consider reasons for and against views in a way that incorporates an underlying commitment to trust, empathy, and cooperative inquiry. Throughout our discussions of some sensitive issues and concerns, we will maintain an attitude of respect even – especially – when we disagree with the views at hand. We will discuss specific practices of class conduct in the first class.

### *Electronic Devices*

I would usually include a section here on the evidence that suggests that distractions via one's devices undermine academic success through interference with attention, learning, participation, etc. Since we are meeting online, such reminders are moot.

### *Email*

I will communicate with you via email and Avenue Announcement, particularly if something changes in the course. Please ensure that you are receiving these notifications. My general policy is to respond to emails within 48 hours of receiving them, not including weekends; however, I will not discuss grades over email, and would prefer that longer questions about assignments are addressed in virtual office hours. Please check the syllabus and the (forthcoming) detailed instructions on assignments, etc. before emailing me about them.

### *Grades*

I am committed to a fair and unbiased grading process. As such, all assignments must be submitted with no identifying information other than your student number. This allows the teaching team to grade anonymously. If you have concerns about this process, please contact me and we will discuss possible solutions. If you are unsatisfied with your grade and would like to appeal it, the process is as follows. Between 24 and 72 hours after the grades are posted, explain in writing – in a way that responds to every single comment – how you think the grade/comments are inappropriate for your assignment. I promise to consider these appeals and, if the appeal is accepted, to re-examine your assignment. Please note, however, that a successful request for regrading can result in your mark going up or down.

### *Accessibility and Support Services*

I want all of you to succeed and flourish philosophically. There are, of course, many ways to

learn; I will strive to adapt to your needs, but this means that you must tell me how you learn best. Please feel free to contact me via email or in office hours to let me know what works for you.

Students with disabilities or relevant diagnoses are strongly encouraged to make use of services here at the University. If you require any accommodations in light of any diagnoses or disabilities, please contact Student Accessibility Services. You do not need to disclose any details of any of these matters with me; once you've been in contact with SAS, we will only discuss how to accommodate your needs given practical details of the class.

### *Turnitin*

In this course we will be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal plagiarism. Students will be expected to submit their work electronically to Turnitin.com so that it can be checked for academic dishonesty. Students who do not wish to submit their work to Turnitin.com must still submit a copy to the instructor. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to Turnitin.com. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, etc.). To see the Turnitin.com Policy, please go to [www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity)

### *Covid-19*

These are obviously strange and frustrating times. When we do meet, it will be via Zoom (provided by McMaster). You do not need to have your cameras on in large group meetings, though it would be nice to be able to see you when we meet privately in office hours. Please make note of the degree of privacy afforded by Zoom virtual backgrounds.

## **Academic Integrity**

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at <https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/>

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

- plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- improper collaboration in group work.
- copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

## **Authenticity / Plagiarism Detection**

Some courses may use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For courses using such software, students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via Avenue to Learn (A2L) plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

Students who do not wish to submit their work through A2L and/or Turnitin.com must still submit an electronic and/or hardcopy to the instructor. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to Turnitin.com or A2L. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). To see the Turnitin.com Policy, please go to [www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity).

## **Courses with an On-Line Element**

Some courses use on-line elements (e.g. e-mail, Avenue to Learn (A2L), LearnLink, web pages, capa, Moodle, ThinkingCap, etc.). Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of a course using these elements, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in a course that uses on-line elements will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

## **Online Proctoring**

Some courses may use online proctoring software for tests and exams. This software may require students to turn on their video camera, present identification, monitor and record their computer activities, and/or lockdown their browser during tests or exams. This software may be required to be installed before the exam begins.

## **Conduct Expectations**

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities (the "Code"). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, whether in person or online.

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students' access to these platforms.

## **Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or sas@mcmaster.ca e-mail to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University's Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities policy.

## **Email correspondence policy**

It is the policy of the Faculty of Humanities that all email communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from each student's own McMaster University email account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. Instructors will delete emails that do not originate from a McMaster email account.

## **Modification of course outlines**

The University reserves the right to change dates and/or deadlines etc. for any or all courses in the case of an emergency situation or labour disruption or civil unrest/disobedience, etc. If a modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with an explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. Any significant changes should be made in consultation with the Department Chair.

## **Request for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF)**

In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar "Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work".

## **Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous and Spiritual Observances (RISO)**

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the RISO policy. Students should submit their request to their Faculty Office normally within 10 working days of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

## **Copyright and Recording**

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright

law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, including lectures by University instructors.

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

## **Extreme Circumstances**

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.

## **Topics and Readings**

\* indicates an *OPTIONAL* reading.

### **Week 1: What is love?**

- Sept. 8: Irving Singer, “Appraisal and Bestowal”
- Sept. 8: David B. Wong, “The Confucian and Daoist Traditions on Love”

### **Week 2: What is love?**

- Sept. 13: Brook J. Sadler, “Love as Emotion and Social Practice: A Feminist Perspective”
- Sept. 15: bell hooks, excerpt from *All About Love*

### **Week 3: Queer love**

- Sept. 20: David Halperin, “Queer love”
- Sept. 22: Megan Burke, “Love as a Hollow: Merleau-Ponty’s Promise of Queer Love”

### **Week 4: Love and race**

- Sept. 27: Grant J. Silva, “Racism as Self-Love”
- Sept. 29: Myisha Cherry, “Love, Anger, and Racial Justice”

### **Week 5: Polyamory**

- Oct. 4: Natasha McKeever, “Is the Requirement of Sexual Exclusivity Consistent with Romantic Love?”
- Oct. 6: Justin Leonard Clardy, “‘I Don’t Want to be a Playa No More’: An Exploration of the Denigrating effects of ‘Player’ as a Stereotype Against African American Polyamorous Men”

## **FALL BREAK**

### **Week 6: Sexuality**

- Oct. 18: *Philosophizing About Sex: Chapter 1*
- Oct. 20: *Philosophizing About Sex: Chapter 2*
- OPTIONAL \*Robin Dembroff, “What is Sexual Orientation?”

#### **Week 7: Consent**

- Oct. 25: Tom Dougherty, “Sex, Lies, and Consent”
- Oct. 27: Quill R. Kukla “That’s What She Said: The Language of Sexual Negotiation”

#### **Week 8: Racial fetishization, racial sexual desires**

- Nov. 1: Robin Zheng, “Why Yellow Fever Isn’t Flattering”
- Nov. 3: Raja Halwani, “Racial Sexual Desires”

#### **Week 9: Sexual autonomy & objectification**

- Nov. 8: *Philosophizing About Sex: Chapter 3*
- Nov. 10: *Philosophizing About Sex: Chapter 8*
- OPTIONAL but recommended: \*Video: [Philosophy Tube: Sex Work](#)
  - *Please note that this video was made prior to Abigail Thorn’s public transition on her YouTube channel. Please use her correct pronouns (she/her).*
- OPTIONAL but recommended: \*Anonymous, “[You Can’t Say Black Lives Matter and Exclude Black Sex Workers](#)”

#### **Week 10: Porn & Perversion**

- Nov. 15: *Philosophizing About Sex: Chapter 5*
- Nov. 17: Mimi Marinucci, “What’s Wrong with Porn?”

#### **Week 11: Incels & sexual entitlement pt 1**

- Nov. 22: Video: ContraPoints, “[Incels](#)”
- Nov. 24: Amia Srinivasan, “[Does Anyone Have the Right to Sex?](#)”
- Nov. 24: Jia Tolentino, “[Rage of the Incels](#)”

#### **Week 12: Incels & sexual entitlement pt 2**

- **No reading: live session with special guest speaker Youngbin Yoon**

#### **Week 13: Infidelity and Sex Robots**

- Dec. 6: Robbie Arrell, “Should We Biochemically Enhance Sexual Fidelity?”
- Dec. 8: Laura Bates, “[The Trouble with Sex Robots](#)”
- OPTIONAL \*Romy Eskens, “Is Sex with Robots Rape?”