

**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**

There are no required (physical) texts for this course. All readings will be provided via pdf on the course website.

### **Method of Assessment**

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

Tutorials: 15% **Due: ongoing**

Philosophical papers: 60%

Exegesis assignment: 10% **Due: Week 2**

Paper #1: 20% **Due: Week 5**

Paper #2: 30% **Due: Week 10**

Final exam: 25%

Question creation: 10%

Written exam: 15%

*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*

### *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 15% of your grade. In light of covid-related accommodations, this may take a different form than usual. Final details are TBD in coordination with your TAs, but a major component will be online group work in argument construction and defense.

### *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 pages, double spaced TNR or equivalent font.

### *Final exam*

The exam has two parts: first, creating questions/answers sets that could be used in a multiple choice/short answer exam of this iteration of this course. This will be 10% of your final grade. Second, a written exam that will ask you to demonstrate knowledge and understanding as well as model some of the philosophical skills practiced over the course of the semester. This will be 15% of your final grade.

## **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. If it looks like there's going to be a technical issue, email it to me before the deadline so as to ensure that your submission isn't late.

## 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 exclusively online, there are fewer ways for me to notice if you are distracted. Ultimately, it is up to you whether you TikTok or send memes or whatever else in class, but I hope that you focus on the work at hand.

### *Email*

I will communicate with you via email and Avenue, particularly if something changes in the course – unexpected cancellation, new or additional readings, etc. Please ensure that you are receiving these notifications. My general policy is to respond to emails within 48 hours of receiving them; 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 each of the comments – 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.

### *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.

## Please Note the Following Policies and Statements:

### Academic Dishonesty

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.

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.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at [www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity)

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.

3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

### 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.

### 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. Please note these regulations have changed beginning Fall 2015. You can find information at [mcmaster.ca/msaf/](http://mcmaster.ca/msaf/). If you have any questions about the MSAF, please contact your Associate Dean's office.

### Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or e-mail [sas@mcmaster.ca](mailto:sas@mcmaster.ca). For further information, consult McMaster University's Policy for [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#).

### Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous and Spiritual Observances

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religion and spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the Course Calendar or by their respective Faculty. In most cases, the student should contact his or her professor or academic advisor as soon as possible to arrange accommodations for classes, assignments, tests and examinations that might be affected by a religious holiday or spiritual observance.

## Schedule of Readings and Assignments

\* *indicates a suggested though not required reading.*

Week 1: What is love?

- Irving Singer, "Appraisal and Bestowal"

## Draft syllabus – May 2021

- David B. Wong, “The Confucian and Daoist Traditions on Love”

### Week 2: What is love?

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

### Week 3: Queer love

- David Halperin, “Queer love”
- Maren Behrens, “‘Born That Way?’ The Metaphysics of Queer Liberation”

### Week 4: Polyamory

- Natasha McKeever, “Is the Requirement of Sexual Exclusivity Consistent with Romantic Love?”
- C. S. I. Jenkins, “Modal Monogamy”

### Week 5: Love and race

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

## FALL BREAK

### Week 6: Sexuality

- Robin Dembroff, “What is Sexuality?”

### Week 7: Consent

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

### Week 8: Race and sex

- Robin Zheng, “Why Yellow Fever Isn’t Flattering”
- Raja Halwani, “Racial Sexual Desires”

### Week 9: Porn

- A. W. Eaton, “A Sensible Antiporn Feminism”

### Week 10: Sex work

- 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).*
- Jeffrey Gauthier, “Prostitution, Sexual Autonomy, and Sex Discrimination”
- Anonymous, “[You Can’t Say Black Lives Matter and Exclude Black Sex Workers](#)”

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

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

Draft syllabus – May 2021

Week 12: Incels & sexual entitlement pt 2

- **SPECIAL GUEST SPEAKER:** Youngbin Yoon

Week 13: Infidelity and Sex Robots

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