

*Syllabus – Winter 2017*  
**“Philosophies of Love”**

classes TF 11:10-12:35 in Seafox  
and lab session T 6:00-9:00 in McCormick Lecture Hall  
Office Hours: MT 2-4 and by appointment or coincidence  
Gray Cox – [gray@coa.edu](mailto:gray@coa.edu), #207-460-1163

This course investigates the intellectual history of concepts of love that provide origins for notions of it central in our time. Is love the key to giving meaning to our individual lives? Is it a transformative power that can empower and heal us and our societies? How are the many different concepts of it related? To what extent are these concepts grounded in biological, historical, philosophical or spiritual truths – or mere reflections of collective myths, self delusions or manipulative deceptions? How can we as individuals most fully realize ourselves? How can our society best promote flourishing lives and how can this be brought about?

The theme of love winds like an Ariadnean thread through the labyrinth of the history of ideas about the nature of self, Other, community, knowledge, reality and ethics. The class uses overview materials from intellectual historians like Denis de Rougemont, and Simon May. It picks a way through central passages in that labyrinth by reading key selections from Plato, New Testament writers, Medieval poets, Nietzsche, de Beauvoir, Irigaray, Gandhi, King, Levinas, Thich Nhat Hanh, Mortimer-Sandilands, pop culture and others. The one required text to purchase is Simon May’s *Love: A History*. Other materials will be made available as pdfs or online documents.

The approach taken in this course is that of intellectual history. This includes using the tools of philosophy to understand how concepts and conceptual frameworks can be defined, explicated and critically analyzed in different ways. It also includes using the tools of historians to locate texts in their social and historical contexts and understand the events, trends, and structures that help illuminate the genesis, significance and consequences of developments in intellectual history.

We will use a variety of kinds of historical documents. The approach to history taken in this course assumes that each place in the past is, in one sense, a different country, a world that can only be visited by suspending our assumptions and entering into a different world view. But the course also assumes that, in another sense, the past is prologue to the present, and we can find in it the roots of many of our current ideas, practices and problems – and illuminating insight into our own world and our most fundamental concerns. It is only by learning to move appropriately between both approaches that we can learn to see ourselves and our world, human ecologically, in the full significance of our four dimensional reality. Of course, the reality is that this is a very intimidating, difficult challenge – probably one impossible to do well. And yet we do it implicitly, all the time. The challenge is to do it better.

Class format relies on seminar discussion with occasional short lectures. Goals of the course are to: 1.) advance students’ abilities to critically analyze texts in context in intellectual history and 2.) advance understanding of nuanced ways key ideas in epistemology, metaphysics, ethics and social change theories inform and are informed by

concepts including: eros, philia, agape, courtly love (fin amour), love force/satyagraha, romantic love, ahimsa, and compassion. Students will be responsible, in pairs, for leading two seminar sessions each, one on an author, the other on a film or other kind of media text. In each case it is expected that the seminar session leaders will provide a short background reading and a text from the author or film/text to focus on as well as background information about the historical context of the text. The aim of the seminar session leadership will be to help the rest of us understand and critically engage with the text in the context of its intellectual history.

There will be a series of short homework assignments, a problem set, two short papers and a term project presented in class as well as developed in a final paper of 12-15 pages. The course includes a lab session for viewing films and television and discussing student work on Tuesday evenings. At least one prior course in intellectual history, philosophy or comparable class in human studies is required. Limit of 15 students. No lab fee. M/A

Workload: In addition to the 5 hours of scheduled class time every week, it is expected that between readings, going over notes, and doing assignments students will spend, at a minimum, at least an additional 10 hours a week on this course, for a total of at least 150 hours over the term devoted to this class.

Note: By enrolling in an academic institution, a student is subscribing to common standards of academic honesty. Any cheating, plagiarism, falsifying or fabricating of data is a breach of such standards. A student must make it his or her responsibility to not use words or works of others without proper acknowledgment. Plagiarism is unacceptable and evidence of such activity is reported to the academic dean or his/her designee. Two violations of academic integrity are grounds for dismissal from the college. Students should request in-class discussions of such questions when complex issues of ethical scholarship arise.

Homework: This course will involve substantial amounts of reading. In some cases it will be classed as “required” vs. “recommended” to help guide people and make it possible to suggest things for folks who have the time to read extra materials. A short writing assignment (typically of a paragraph or two but sometimes more) will be assigned for class to help you engage with the readings and provide preparatory materials for the class discussion. Typical prompts will ask for a sketch of a key argument in the text, an example of how the ideas or images in it are reflected or echoed in current cultural artifacts or observations about the cultural/historical context of the text that might illuminate it and further a critical analysis of it.

Seminar leadership: Students will be responsible, in pairs, for leading two seminars session each, one on an author, the other on a film. In each case it is expected that the seminar session leaders will provide a short background reading and a text from the author or a clip from the film to focus on as well as background information about the historical context of the text. The aim of the seminar session leadership will be to help the rest of us understand and critically engage with the text in the context of its intellectual history. In the case of presentations on films, the student team will be responsible leading the entire discussion. In the case of seminar sessions on specific authors or texts, the team will be responsible for leading half the class session, that is, for 40-45 minutes.

Normally the background would include a reading of 5 to 20 pages of historical and social criticism that provides context to accompany a reading of 5 to 25 pages of primary material from the author or 5 to 10 minutes of clip from the movie to review and focus on. Materials supplied should include an executive summary (normally a bullet list or outline functions well for this) along with an annotated bibliography/resource list. The seminar leaders can structure their presentation and the discussion in whatever way they think would be most interesting and helpful. It can be very helpful to meet with Gray the week ahead of time to think through plans for the presentation.

The topic for a term project could take a wide variety of forms. It might be, for instance: a study of the concepts, images, myths or other understandings of love in a particular thinker such as Simone de Beauvoir or Luce Irigaray or a poet such as Rumi or a novelist such as Jane Austen. Or it might be a comparison and contrast of two texts that might be films, poems, novels, television shows, sacred religious works or songs. Or it might be a historical or social study of a concept of love or practice or institution from some specific time period and community, looking at its origins, nature and consequences. Or it could take the form of a study of the history, over time, of a thread of ideas or images associated with love, looking at its origins and transformations through a series of thinkers and social settings – like the concept of the “princess” or the “white knight in shining armor” or “the mystic” or “the saint”.

For students who take this course for a letter grade, the weighting for evaluation will be as follows: class participation and homework (20%), a problem set (20%), two seminar presentations (25%) a term project which includes a short draft paper, an in-class presentation and a final essay of 12-15 pages (35%).

### Philosophies of Love

#### ***DRAFT Class Schedule***

(NOTE: This will be revised in light of student interests and background readings and film viewings.)

1/4 “Tuesday” morning on a Wednesday ;-)

Introductions, Syllabus Review, some preliminaries about defining terms with a handout and mini-lecture on phenomenological variation as a method of definition

1/4 “Tuesday Night” on a Wednesday ;-)

Film TBD

1/6 Friday

Reading: Simon May, *Love: A History* (LH), pp. 1-37;

Bible: Stories of Abraham and Isaac, Book of Ruth, (available at:

[www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com))

Søren Kierkegaard, selections from *Fear and Trembling, Preface, Prelude and Panegyric on Abraham* – also available as pages 1-10 at:

<http://www.solargeneral.org/wp-content/uploads/library/fear-and-trembling-johannes-de-silentio.pdf>

Recommended: Bible Story of David and Jonathan; Song of Solomon

1/10 Tuesday

LH pp. 38-55;

Plato's *Symposium*

Recommended: Rainer Maria Rilke' Duino Elegies, "The First Elegy"

1/10 Tuesday night – Wim Wenders' film, Wings of Desire

1/13 Friday – **NO Class session**

LH pp. 56-68;

selection from Aristotle on friendship

1/17 Tuesday

Selections from Plato's Phaedrus and the Republic, pdf

Michel Foucault, from The History of Sexuality, Volume Two: The Uses of Pleasure, "True Love"

LH ch. 5 "Love as Sexual Desire: Lucretius and Ovid"

1/17 Tuesday Night TBD

1/20 Friday

LH ch. 6 "Love as the Supreme Virtue: Christianity"

Selections from the Gospels

Walter Wink, The Powers that Be: Theology for a New Millenium, ch. 5 "Jesus' Third Way" and ch. 6 "Practical Nonviolence"

DUE: Short Paper (3 pages double spaced) – first draft of ideas and research for final paper (plot or argument summary and initial bibliography and resource list)

Seminar leaders: \_\_\_\_\_

1/24 Tuesday

LH ch. 7 "Why Christian Love Isn't Unconditional"

Marcus Borg, The First Paul, pp. 181-213, Bible (Selections From Paul's Letters)

Martin Luther King Jr., "Love in Action" and "Loving Your Enemies"

Seminar leaders: \_\_\_\_\_

1/24 Tuesday Night: Of God's and Men (or Nashville and Little Town of Bethlehem)

1/27 Friday:

LH ch. 8 "Women as Ideals: Love and the Troubadors";

LH ch. 9 "How Human Nature Became Loveable: from the High Middle Ages to the Renaissance"

Selections from Denis de Rougemont's *Love in the Western World*

Seminar leaders: \_\_\_\_\_

1/31 Tuesday: LH ch. 10 " on "Love as Joyful Understanding of the Whole: Spinoza"; ch. 11 "Love as Enlightened Romanticism: Rousseau"; and ch. 12 "Love as Religion: Schlegel and Novalis"

Selection from Rousseau

Seminar leaders: \_\_\_\_\_

1/31 Tuesday Night: Tristan und Isolde NOTE This video is long and will run over our usual time!!!!!!!!!!

2/3 Friday: LH 176-198; Schopenhauer and Nietzsche  
Alison Jaggar, "Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology"  
Recommended: selections from the Bhagavad Gita  
Seminar leaders: \_\_\_\_\_

2/7 Tuesday: LH pp. 199- 234; Freud and Proust, LH ch. 17 "Love Reconsidered"  
Selection from Freud  
Seminar leaders: \_\_\_\_\_

2/7 Tuesday Night TBD

2/10 Friday: Slavoj Zizek, "Che Vuoi?" in The Sublime Object of Ideology  
Recommended: Slavoj Zizek, "Courtly Love, or Woman as Thing"  
Recommended films: Casablanca, Play It Again Sam, and The Crying Game

2/14 Tuesday: Selections from Gandhi and Sara Ruddick's Maternal Thinking:  
Toward a Politics of Peace  
Seminar leaders: \_\_\_\_\_

DUE: Problem Set

2/14 Tuesday Night: TBD NOTE: This is Valentines Day ;-)

2/17 Friday: Selections from Thich Nhat Hanh

2/21 Tuesday: David Levy, Love and Sex with Robots, pp. 1-104  
Seminar leaders: \_\_\_\_\_

2/21 Tuesday Night -- TBD

2/24 Friday – Love and Sex with Robots, pp. 105-176  
Blay Whitby, "Do You Want a Robot Lover? The Ethics of Care Technologies"  
in Robot Ethics

Seminar leaders: \_\_\_\_\_

2/28 Tuesday – Student Project presentations  
Tuesday Night: TBD

3/3 Friday – Student Project presentations

- 3/7 Tuesday – Student Project presentations  
Tuesday Night: TBD
- 3/10 Friday – Student Project presentations  
Closing  
Final Paper Due (students presenting on this day can turn their paper in the following Monday)

Some suggested films and videos that seminar leaders might choose amongst – bearing in mind that the choice is quite open and should focus on a work of interest to you and there are lots and lots of others that could be added to the list:

The Mission  
Eyes on the Prize  
Carmen Jones  
Sense and Sensibility (1995)  
Cyrano de Bergerac (1990)  
Breathless  
It's a Wonderful Life  
I, the Worst of All  
Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown  
Tristan und Isolde  
Hedwig and the Angry Inch  
Brokeback Mountain  
Mother and Son  
The Sacrifice  
Gandhi  
A Force More Powerful  
Gilmore Girls  
Modern Family  
NCIS  
Duck Dynasty  
Casablanca  
Play It Again Sama  
The Crying Game  
Her  
The Princess Bride  
Frozen  
Jesus of Nazareth (Franco Zeffirrelli)  
King Lear  
Wings of Desire