Introduction

The focal question for this course is simply what is love? Readings for this course will be clustered around romantic love, though other kinds of interpersonal love are also in our sights.

Our focal question is a metaphysical one: what is the nature of the love relation (if indeed, any such thing really exists) between lovers and their beloveds? However, because metaphysics does not exist in a vacuum, our readings range across many areas of philosophy, including ethics, philosophy of language, and feminist philosophy. We will also be attentive to relevant information and ideas from outside (the academic discipline of) philosophy, which means taking note of many interdisciplinary connections and broader cultural influences.

Schedule and Readings

NB: The schedule is subject to change throughout the term based on the instructor’s judgement and/or student input.

Several of our readings are drawn from the forthcoming Routledge Handbook of Love in Philosophy (ed. Adrienne Martin), abbreviated below as RHLP. I will provide copies of these articles, in the event that the Handbook is not published in time!

Jan 8  Welcome & syllabus review
Reading

Jan 15  Ancient history?
Reading (1) Plato’s Symposium, edn. of 1989, trans. Nehamas and Woodruff
(2) Jan Zwicky, ‘Why is Diotima a Woman?’, in Alkibædes’ Love: Essays in Philosophy

Supplemental reading
(1) Phaedrus, edn. of 1995, trans. Nehamas and Woodruff
(2) Jeremy Reid, ‘Plato on Love and Sex’, in RHLP

Jan 22  **Existential crises?**
Reading
(2) Carrie Jenkins and Carla Nappi, Extracts from Symposium, in The Philosophers Magazine

Supplemental reading
(1) Shulamith Firestone, ‘Love’, Chapter 6 of The Dialectic of Sex

Jan 29  **Love nor money**
Reading
(1) Eva Illouz, ‘The Great Transformation of Love or The Emergence of Marriage Markets’, chapter 2 of Why Love Hurts

Supplemental reading
(2) ‘Money’, Episode 6 of the Labels of Love podcast, with economist Marina Adshade

Feb 5  **Coming to terms**
Reading
(1) bell hooks, ‘Clarity: Give Love Words,’ chapter 1 of All About Love: New Visions
(2) George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, ‘Some Consequences for Theories of Conceptual Structure’ and ‘New Meaning’, Chapters 18 and 21 of Metaphors We Live By

Supplemental reading
(1) Carrie Jenkins, ‘All Hearts In Love Use Their Own Tongues: Concepts, Verbal Disputes, and Disagreeing About Love’, in RHLP

Feb 12  **Biology and/or determinism**
Reading
Supplemental reading
(1) ‘To Fall In Love With Anyone, Do This’, New York Times Modern Love column

Feb 19 MID-TERM BREAK: no class
Feb 26 Politics
Reading
(1) Myisha Cherry, ‘Love, Anger, and Racial Injustice’ in RHLP
(2) Martin Luther King, ‘Loving Your Enemies’, chapter 4 of The Radical King (ed. Cornel West)
Supplemental reading
(1) ‘Politics’, Episode 2 of the Labels of Love podcast, with Myisha Cherry

Mar 5 Families of origin
Reading
(2) Simone de Beauvoir, ‘The Mother’, chapter 6 of The Second Sex
Supplemental reading
(3) Sara Protasi, ‘“Mama, Do You Love Me?”: A Defense of Unloving Parents’, in RHLP

Mar 12 Love songs and love stories
Reading
(2) Thomas Scheff, ‘Preface’ and ‘Introduction’ to What’s Love Got To Do With It? Emotions and Relationships in Popular Songs
Supplemental reading
(1) ‘Love Stories’, Episode 2 of the Labels of Love podcast, with Mandy Len Catron

Mar 19 Queerness
Reading
(1) Simone de Beauvoir, ‘The Lesbian’, chapter 4 of Vol. II of The Second Sex
(2) Maren Behrensen, ‘Queer Bodies and Queer Love’, in RHLP

Supplemental reading
(1) Amir Srinivassan, ‘Does Anyone Have the Right to Sex?’, in London Review of Books

Mar 26  Normativity

Reading
(1) Elizabeth Brake, ‘Special Treatment For Lovers: Marriage, Care, and Amatonormativity’, chapter 4 of Minimizing Marriage

Supplemental reading
(1) Carrie Jenkins, ‘What Needs To Change’ and ‘It’s Love, Jim, But Not As We Know It: The Future (via The Past)’, chapters 6 and 7 of What Love Is And What It Could Be

Apr 2  Wrap-up & workshopping final papers

Assessment

Final paper: 50%
Presentations: 30%
Short papers: 10%
Participation: 10%

Instructor discretion may tip the balance of the final grade.

Final paper (50%)

Length: 5000 words (+/- 500)

Requirements: The paper should consist in a sustained presentation and defence of a clearly stated philosophical thesis about love. Students are strongly advised to run their proposed title/topic by the instructor, before undertaking the bulk of the writing. The paper need not directly address specific issues raised in the course readings, but in the event that it does not, checking in with the instructor before commencing the work is (not merely strongly advised but) mandatory.

Option: a magazine article, podcast episode script, or piece of short philosophical fiction may be substituted for half of your final paper grade. Other forms may also be accepted; please check with the instructor if there is something else you’d like to try. The piece should be 1000 words in length (+/-100). If you select this option, your paper should be 4000 words (+/-
400), but the paper requirements are otherwise the same. If you wish to take this option, you should check in with the instructor before undertaking any serious work. Tailored guidance and resources will then be provided to support your project. A useful place to start is this Diagrammatic Guide to the Use of Narrative in Public Philosophy by Barry Lam, creator of the Hi-Phi Nation podcast.

Presentations (20%)

Each week, one member of the class will present to the group on some topic(s), question(s), or issue(s) arising from the week’s reading. Each presentation should be 15-20 minutes long, and prepared with the primary aim of encouraging further discussion of the reading.

Short papers (20%)

These are 500-word critical reflections on each week’s reading, to be submitted at the beginning of class, in hard copy. They should not be mere summaries (and, indeed, it is not necessary to summarize the material), but should engage substantively with some point or points raised in the reading. Short papers are marked on a pass/fail basis. In a week when you are presenting, you do not need to submit a short paper.

Participation (10%)

This portion of the grade is earned by well-prepared attendance at all seminars, and thoughtful contribution to class discussions.

Policies

**Extensions:** These will be granted where needed, but must be requested in advance.

**Grade penalties:** Unexcused late work will incur grade penalties (5 marks per day or part day late) unless circumstances are exceptional. Non-attendance, lateness, and/or poor preparation will incur penalties to the participation grade, in addition to their impact on other parts of the grade.

**Academic integrity:** I always assume and trust that my students will conform to the highest standards of academic integrity.
Plagiarism, which is intellectual theft, occurs where an individual submits or presents the oral or written work of another person as his or her own. Scholarship quite properly rests upon examining and referring to the thoughts and writings of others. However, when another person's words (i.e. phrases, sentences, or paragraphs), ideas, or entire works are used, the author must be acknowledged in the text, in footnotes, in endnotes, or in another accepted form of academic citation. Where direct quotations are made, they must be clearly delineated (for example, within quotation marks or separately indented). Failure to provide proper attribution is plagiarism because it represents someone else's work as one's own. Plagiarism should not occur in submitted drafts or final works. A student who seeks assistance from a tutor or other scholastic aids must ensure that the work submitted is the student's own. Students are responsible for ensuring that any work submitted does not constitute plagiarism. Students who are in any doubt as to what constitutes plagiarism should consult their instructor before handing in any assignments. A link about academic misconduct is below:


**Respect:** these seminars fall within the scope of UBC’s discrimination and harassment policy, and its respectful environment statement. To familiarize yourself with these, visit: