

PHI 205 Philosophy of Love, Sex, and Friendship

UW Stevens Point at Wausau

Fall 2018

Douglas Hosler, Instructor

MW 10:35 am – 11:50 pm

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I read both emails, but I read the home one more frequently than the school email – even more so on weekends.

SYLLABUS

The course description is: “A philosophical examination of personal relationships and interactions such as family, friendship, sex, and romance, with an eye toward their relevance to the individual life and the pursuit of happiness, as well as society as a whole and the manner in which it is and ought to be structured around such relationships.”

It should help to think of the course as the beginning of an examination of interrelated topics.

On what you are to learn in philosophy

I would like very much to focus this course on exploration. More and more I like the standpoint: “Here is something we don’t know, let’s look around.” More and more I would like to help you do explorations and also to do investigations once you have found something to examine.

You should know at the outset that an important part of philosophy has been encouraging examination of alternative views.

That means there are two ways in which a traditional idea of learning is defeated in philosophy. The traditional idea is that of learning a body of material and mastering it enough for a test on it. Against that first of all we are here after improving a set of skills – not amassing a set of ideas and information. In the process you will have to gain some understanding of certain ideas and acquire certain information – but that is not the focus of the course (or any course I teach in philosophy). Rather there are skills to learn and to refine. These would be skills such as those of to defend a position with reasons, understanding someone else’s position, even if you disagree with it. Those skills are to be used in the process of investigating things by using conflicting views. Secondly, the traditional idea of learning assumes there is just one way of looking at things, and that is denied here. The point in philosophy is to learn how to develop your own views and how to support them and how to answer objections to them. The idea is for you to come to your own conclusions about the best way of looking at things.

Book to buy or have ready access to:

Nicholas Power, Raja Halwani, Alan Soble, Sarah Hoffman, and Jacob M. Held editors. *The Philosophy of Sex: Contemporary Readings*, Seventh edition. Rowman

and Littlefield, 2017.

ISBN: 978-1-4422-6143-3

The rest of what you have to read should make its way to the D2L site for the class so you can download or read it there.

Keeping track of your grade

The UW System is concerned that you know what grade you are running in your classes. Mid-term exams were instituted for that purpose. With the D2L site for this class things are even better. Your grades are kept under “Activities” then under “Grades.” First you can check on me. You can see if we agree on my record-keeping. Secondly you can see what grade you are headed towards at the point you check on it (under “Calculated Final Grade” – remember that). If you can’t find your “Calculated Final Grade” (it is always the grade to which you are headed at the time), let me know. I like both features of D2L very much.

Graded Assignments:

Again philosophy is largely a skills class, not a pack-the-information in class. So practice is what is needed. More frequent and shorter assignments should help with

- 1) 1st in-class essay [11% of course grade] September 12th
- 2) Paper 1 [22% of course grade] due October 5th
- 3) 2nd in-class essay [11% of course grade] on October 24th
- 4) Paper 2 [22% of course grade] due November 9th
- 5) 3rd in-class essay [11% of course grade] December 5th
- 6) Final exam or paper [23%] TBA

The assignments can be understood as follows:

In class essays are discussions you write in class. It is a one questions essay exam. The possible topics are announced in the previous class – usually a week ahead. Together these are 1/3rd your grade, so it is good NOT to miss any.

The papers are about 500 – 750 words in length (two to three pages). They are each worth 22%.

If you take the final as an exam it will be more than one essay question (likely just two). Study questions are given ahead of time. You can substitute a paper for the final – you will be given the topics for that – along with the study questions for the exam.

You get study questions in advance of the exams (regard the in-class essays as exams) so you know what the exam will cover. If you can answer the study questions well, you will have the background for the examination – even though I almost never put a study question as an examination question. The examinations are open-book, but if you reading it for the first time, you won’t have time to do the exam.

Before any paper is due you are invited to submit a draft of it to me for review. E-mailing it to me is handy, because you don’t have to set up an appointment *and* you can read my comments (my handwriting is very bad). I am happy to see you in my office or at the end of class to go over any draft you have. You can submit a draft twice for any paper.

Before an exam you can run your idea of answers past me.

Office Times

My office is Room 329. That is upstairs at the north end of the main building. One up there look for the narrow hallways off the main hall. Room numbers in each direction should be posted. If you want a map of campus buildings and rooms, click on this (or paste into your browser):

http://uwmc.uwc.edu/sites/uwmc.uwc.edu/files/imce-uploads/about/overview/map/campus_building_map_wrooms-ro82512.pdf

My schedule is packed because I commute to Marshfield on Tuesdays and Thursdays and I am also taking choir here, Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday.

Here are the times I plan to be sitting in my office and you don't need to schedule anything:

Mondays and Wednesdays from 11:15 to 11:50 am

The 3rd and 4th Tuesdays of the month from 12:30 to 1:00 pm.

My last class on Mondays and Wednesday is over at 3:45, so you can set something up after that.

What about Fridays? Set something up between 1 and 2 pm at the campus. As it gets colder I can be there more times (I do mowing for the Monk Botanical Gardens Friday mornings, and when the grass stops growing I don't do that! I also have departmental meetings at Point every three weeks, but that 1-2 pm period should be good even then.

I really like going over class work with students, so don't be shy about setting something up.

And certainly use email to ask me questions or get help!

Trigger issues

In the section of the course where we discuss issues related to sexual activity there may well be issues that contain "triggers" for you. Triggers are things in discussion that set off difficult reactions inside you because of traumatic experiences you have had. If looking at the syllabus you can see that you really don't want to be in class for a certain topic, please let me know and I can supply notes for what is covered. If you are caught in a class discussion that brings on too much, leave and let me know afterward by email that you would like the notes.

After my daughter died, I am pretty used to things that trigger reactions I don't want. So far triggers for me (but I don't know they are coming!) are the very, very few plays or movies that really *get* what child loss amounts. Most stories written with child death in them have little clue what it is really about. In the ones that don't get it, child loss is treated as something sad, very sad. I would say loss of you by your parents is not close to sad for them; it is overwhelming and they do the best they can for years and years until things stabilize more.

I have seen two plays that really got child death for parents; both were made into movies. They are "Dead Man Walking" and "Steel Magnolias." My chest tightened up during these performances and I could watch to the end but then I had to be alone. For "Steel Magnolias" I called up a younger friend who had survived being sexually abused by her mother's boyfriends. Just talking to her helped.

Course schedule:*The part of the course on love*

- 1) Sept 5: Plato's *Symposium* (a translation is in D2L)
- 2) Sept 10-12: continued discussion of the *Symposium*; Discussion of culture in relation to love *1st in-class essay [11% of course grade] September 12th*
- 3) Sept 17-19: Hosler on love (The discussion is in D2L)
- 4) Sept 24-26: More issues on defining love and what it is about

The part of the course on sex

- 5) Oct 1-3: "The Analytic Categories of the Philosophy of Sex" by Alan Soble (This and the next articles are in the anthology *The Philosophy of Sex*. This one is pages 1 to 28) *Paper 1 [22% of course grade] due October 5th (Friday) by 6:00 pm*
- 6) Oct 8-10: "Are We Having Sex Now or What?" by Greta Christina (pages 31 to 37) and "Sexual Perversion" by Thomas Nagel (pages 39 to 50)
- 7) Oct 15-17: "Sexual Behavior: Another Position" by Janice Moulton (in D2L in Week 7 under "Content")
- 8) Oct 22-24: Discussion of previous articles. *2nd in-class essay [11% of course grade] on October 24th*
- 9) Oct 29-31: "An Essay on Masturbation" by Alan Soble (*Phi of Sex*, pages 103 to 116) and "Beyond Gay Marriage: the Road to Polyamory" by Stanley Kurtz (in D2L in Week 9 under "Content")
- 10) Nov 5-7: "Trans 101" by Tailie Mae Bettcher (pages 119 to 135) and "Date Rape: A Feminist Analysis" by Lois Pineau (in D2L in Week 10 under "Content")
- 11) Nov 12-14 "Surviving Sexual Violence" by Susan Brison (in D2L in Week 11 under "Content"). *Paper 2 [22% of course grade] due November 9th (Friday) by 6:00 p.m.*

The part of the course on friendship

- 12) Nov 19-21: Showing of the first part of the movie, "The Broken Hearts Club."
- 13) Nov 26-28: Showing of the second part of "The Broken Hearts Club." Discussion.
- 14) Dec 3-5: Elizabeth Telfer on friendship (this article is in D2L). *3rd in-class essay [11% of course grade] December 5th*
- 15) Dec 10-12: Summary review – going over questions people wanted to see discussed further.

Final examination [23% of course grade] is TBA (it is not likely to take two hours). If you do a paper in place of the final exam it is due at the end of time for the final exam, but there is no need to come to the final if you are doing a paper and not taking the final exam. The paper is usually turned to Dropbox in D2L.