A Note to Students

This course is aimed at a broad range of undergraduate students and requires no prior training in philosophy. It is, however, a decidedly philosophical course: Its focus is entirely on the development of the philosophical and analytical skills necessary for thinking clearly, carefully, and effectively about issues which, burdened as they are by long histories of intense fears and desires, all too rarely receive clear-headed attention. The course is not for titillation. Students who expect otherwise will be sorely disappointed. No one under eighteen years of age is permitted in the course.

Course Description:

This course is a study of the philosophical and ethical dimensions of human social and sexual relationships. Since before Socrates, philosophers have had a keen interest in understanding the personal dimension of human relationships, a dimension which is essential to any sense of human flourishing. Following this long tradition of philosophical inquiry, the course will pursue discussions of these and other questions.
• What is love?
• What is lust?
• What kinds of personal relationships ought a person seek?
• What ethical issues enter into personal relationships?
• How does one make wise decisions about personal relationships?
• Does romantic love require sex? Does sex require romantic love?
• Is lust a vice or a virtue?
• What is ‘natural’ and what is ‘perverse’?
• Why are love and sex so often the targets of social control?
• How should society treat personal relationships?

Student Learning Outcomes:*

As demonstrated by pre and post-test, students will

1. Learn the names of at least three important philosophers who have written on these topics--e.g., Plato, Augustine, and Frankfurt.

2. Learn the names of at least three important philosophical theories on these topics--e.g., Nozick’s Welfare View of Love, Firestone’s Mutual Vulnerability View of Love, and Blackburn’s Hobbesian Conception of Lust.

* A requirement of the University for accreditation purposes. Derived from feeble but well-intentioned research in educational theory and used as the basis for a pre- and post-test in a facile attempt to demonstrate success in teaching and learning. Fails to reflect any grasp of the distinction between training and education by presupposing that understanding, discovery, and knowledge is to be poured into a mind like oil into an engine--SLO’s are presumably the marks on the dipstick. A key component in the commodification of higher education and the corporatization of its institutions. Not to be taken seriously by any sentient being capable of learning and critical analysis. An embarrassing academic fad and an affront to the towering intellects whose investigations we have the privilege of pursuing this semester.

Topic Schedule:*

Week 1 Introduction, Love in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy
Week 2 Love in Contemporary Philosophy
Week 3 Lust, Promiscuity, Exclusivity, Adultery, Homosexual Marriage
Week 4 Erotic Entertainment, Pornography, Prostitution, Perversion, Rape
Week 5 Conclusion

* Tentative, pending class pacing and interest.
Texts:*


* Useful but not required—selections from these and other sources will be provided as necessary.

Requirements:

Daily Pages

Starting on the second day of class, every class meeting will require a single page answering a specific question from the day previous. Specific instructions will be provided in class.

Policies:

The professor assumes that students enrolled in this course are sincere student-scholars. That is, the professor shall treat students with the respect due scholars, and students shall do their best to live up to the standards of scholars. To wit,

Preparation:

Scholars carefully read assignments in advance of class, take notes on their reading, explore specific issues in discussion with fellow scholars, and follow-up class by re-reading portions of the required readings and exploring suggested readings.

Participation:

Scholars are eager to respectfully, openly, and critically discuss arguments and issues raised by the readings. Scholars are adept at following a line of reasoning wherever it may lead. Most importantly, scholars welcome the insights and criticisms of their peers: A scholar understands that it is possible to entertain a proposition without believing it, just as it is possible to present an argument without personally endorsing the argument. Scholars enjoy vigorous deliberations and are always careful to treat fellow scholars with patience and good humor.

Assignments:

Scholars fully immerse themselves in assignments and never assume that an assignment is only legitimate if it will be covered on a test. Scholars are naturally
curious and see every assignment as an opportunity to explore new issues, see old issues in new light, and hone their growing skills.

Cheating:

Scholars are very careful to give proper credit and maintain the highest standards of scholarly conduct. Thus, subject to university guidelines, any instance of cheating (including plagiarism) will be vigorously prosecuted.

Attendance:

Scholars always attend class barring serious injury, illness, or disaster. Scholars view class-time as rare and valuable for the thought it evokes and the opportunities it presents. Scholars arrive early for class and never leave class early without obtaining prior approval from the professor. That said, it is important to bear in mind that some of our investigations are of such an extremely sensitive nature even the most sophisticated scholars may find it too uncomfortable for their own personal reasons to attend. Thus scholars are encouraged to make their own decisions about whether to attend on a given day. No questions will be asked. Nevertheless, scholars who miss class are responsible for obtaining class-notes, doing the readings, and fully answering any exam questions derived from class discussion. Make-up reading quizzes will be provided upon request, although the question asked may not be the question chosen in class.

Grading Formula:

There are 1000 points possible as follows:

Daily Pages 50 points each

Total Points = Sum of the Daily Pages

Course Grade is determined by the following scale:

A 900-1000
B 800 - 899
C 700 - 799
D 600 - 699
F 000 - 599

Additional Notes:

Any change in the above will be announced in class. No change will be made which would be detrimental to the student's grade.

This syllabus is not authoritative. That is, the syllabus on the course website supersedes this syllabus wherever they differ. The professor and the students are only responsible for the syllabus as it appears in its entirety on the website, including the schedule of topics and readings.

Any student missing a due date must provide a documented, acceptable reason according to university guidelines. Students with a proper excuse for missing a due date will be given a reasonable extension.

Students without a proper excuse for missing a due date will lose 20 points per day after the due date.
Required University Note to Students with Disabilities: Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act in making reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. If you suspect that you may have a disability (physical impairment, learning disability, psychiatric disability, etc.), please contact the Services for Students with Disabilities Office, located in Driftwood 101, at 825-5816. If you need disability accommodations in this class, please see me as soon as possible.

Required College of Liberal Arts Note on Academic Advising: The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. The Academic Advisor will set up a degree plan, which must be signed by the student, a faculty mentor, and the department chair. The College's Academic Advising Center is located in Driftwood 203E, and can be reached at 825-3466.

Required University Note on the Grade Appeal Process: As stated in University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, and University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. These documents are accessible through the University Rules Web site at http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Office of Student Affairs.

By accepting this syllabus the student indicates that the syllabus has been read, all requirements are understood, and all policies are acknowledged.