

Philosophers on Sex, Love & Friendship

(PHI 214, Section A)

Colby-Sawyer College

Tuesday, 2:00-4:45PM

Professor: Chris La Barbera, Ph.D.

Office: 234 Colgate Hall

Office Hours:

Tu, 12:30PM-2:00PM

W, 11AM-12:30PM, or by appointment

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Department: Humanities

Semester: Spring 2012

We all have friends. Most of us find some form of love. And a great majority of us enjoy sex. Whether or not it's appropriate, friendship, love and sex are all practices that have entered debates in ethics, and even regulated by the laws.

In what ways is the drive to seek companionship with others a natural drive? In what ways are our relationships cultural practices? Most of us also envision romantic love as a relationship between two: can romantic, loving relationships ever be constructed by groups of three, or by entire communities? Sexuality has also been the focus of scientists and lawmakers: in what ways is heterosexuality constructed as "normal" or "abnormal?" How do we define and explain minority sexual identities?

This course examines friendship, love and sex in a variety of cultural forms, and also engages contemporary moral debates on polygamy, sexual identities, same-sex marriage, and pornography.

In this course, the student will strive to achieve the following learning outcomes:

- (a) to engage the themes of sex, love and friendship through a number of theoretical readings in the history of philosophy, religion, law, and culture;
- (b) to demonstrate knowledge of these themes and particular historical figures through a midterm examination;
- (c) to offer reflection on the importance of sex, love and friendship in our lives through in-class discussion;
- (d) to develop critical argumentation skills, including argumentative writing in two philosophical position papers addressing the themes of the course.

Texts (Available for purchase at the bookstore):

- Freud, Sigmund. *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. Basic Books, 2000
- MacKinnon, Catherine. *Only Words*. Harvard U. Press, 1993.
- Plato. *Plato on Love*. Hackett Publishing, 2006.
- Sullivan, Andrew (ed.). *Same-Sex Marriage: Pro and Con, A Reader*. Vintage, 2004.
- Supplemental Readings (marked on syllabus with **SR**), which will be posted to Moodle weekly

Films (shown in class):

Episode of *Big Love* (2008)
Live Nude Girls Unite! (2000)
Paris Is Burning (1990)
Tying the Knot (2004)

Course Calendar

NOTE: Readings are due on the day that they are listed. You should complete each assigned reading before the class for that date.

Tuesday, Jan. 17: Introduction

Friendship and Love through the Ages

Tuesday, Jan. 24: Sappho, Fragments 1, 2, 16, 17, 23, 24A, 24C, 47-52, 55-57, 71, 81, 94, 96 and associated notes: taken from Carson's translation **(SR)**
Plato, *Lysis*, from *Plato on Love*, pp. 1-25

Tuesday, Jan. 31: Plato, *Symposium*, from *Plato on Love*, pp. 26-87
Aristotle, Selection on Friendship from *Nicomachean Ethics* **(SR)**
"Song of Solomon," from *The Holy Bible* **(SR)**

Communities of Love?

Tuesday, Feb. 7: Plato, *Republic*, Excerpt from Books III & V **(SR)**
Episode of *Big Love*
First paper topics distributed

Psychoanalysis: Foundations in Sexual Development

Tuesday, Feb. 14: Freud, Sigmund. *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, pp. xxxi-li, 1-38
First paper due, beginning of class

Tuesday, Feb. 21: Freud, Sigmund. *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, pp. 39-109
Midterm review

Tuesday, Feb. 28: **Midterm**

No class March 3-11: Spring Break

Sex and Sexuality: A Normative Affair

Tuesday, March 13: Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" **(SR)**
D'Emilio, "Capitalism and Gay Identity"
La Barbera, "Walking in Our Heels?" **(SR)**
Paris Is Burning

Love & Marriage?

- Tuesday, March 20: Russell, Excerpts from *On Ethics, Sex and Marriage* (SR)
- Tuesday, March 27: Sullivan, *Same-Sex Marriage, Pro and Con*, pp. 3-81, 117-134
- Tuesday, April 3: Sullivan, *Same-Sex Marriage, Pro and Con*, pp. 145-196, 239-289
Tying the Knot

Pornography as Liberation and Exploitation

- Tuesday, April 10: MacKinnon, *Only Words*
****Second paper topics distributed****
- Tuesday, April 17: Strossen, Excerpt from *Defending Pornography* (SR)
Live Nude Girls Unite! (first half)
****Second paper due by 9:00AM on Wednesday, April 18th****
Reminder: Deliver printed, stapled paper to 234 Colgate
- Tuesday, April 24: *Live Nude Girls Unite! (second half)*
Discussion of film

Class Policy & Grading:

- 10% Attendance & Participation
- 30% Midterm
- 30% First position paper
- 30% Second position paper

Attendance and Participation (10%):

This class depends on student participation and engagement with the material, so you are encouraged to attend and participate in every class. Attendance will be considered both before and after the class break. Each absence lowers your grade on this section by one point, each lateness or early departure constitutes half an absence. If you are absent three times, you automatically fail the course. There are no exceptions to this rule. Participation is also a component of this grade. If you do not actively participate, expect to lose points for this section.

In cases of possible failure due to absence or performance, it is the student's responsibility to withdraw through the registrar. If you have a medical illness or emergency that requires your absence from the class, please contact Burton Kirkwood the Academic Dean, who will document your situation and contact me.

Midterm (30%):

On Tuesday, Feb. 28th all students will take a 30-point, in-class midterm exam. This exam has two parts: Ten Identify the Philosopher Questions, and Five Short Answer Questions. Though the exam is designed to be completed in 90 minutes, all students will have the full class time to complete the exam. The exam is based on the course material, and class

discussion. The exam is closed book and closed notes. The midterm may not be made up in cases of absence.

Two Papers (60% total; 30% each):

Paper 1: Due 2/14 at 2:00PM (bring printed, stapled version to class)

Paper 2: Due 4/18 at 9:00AM (place printed, stapled version under my office door, 234 Colgate)

You are responsible for writing two philosophical position papers (about four pages, double-spaced). You will be given a choice of multiple topics for each paper. The topics are based on the course material and lectures. You will have one week to complete each paper, and I encourage students to bring early drafts to my office hours for editing, brainstorming or review. I also encourage use of the ADC for paper editing.

On Paper Format: Papers must be typed and double-spaced. They must use a standard 12-point font and standard margins. Papers must be stapled. I do not accept e-mailed papers; hence, you must print your paper and hand it in. I grade based on both the content of your argument and the composition of the paper, so papers should strive to have a clear thesis, be well defended, be well composed, and be clear.

Papers are graded out of 30 points. If your paper is late, you will receive a grade penalty of 3 points per day of lateness. If you intend to hand in your paper late, both email your paper and hand in a physical paper to my office, 234 Colgate. I determine the degree of lateness based on the timestamp of the email.

I will review citation style briefly in class before the first paper is due. No outside resources are required for your papers, and I prefer that you use only the course texts. Students will be expected to create their own arguments. Do not plagiarize or submit uncited materials that are robbed/paraphrased from online or other resources. Please see the section on academic honesty below regarding my expectations.

***Nota bene:* There is no final exam during the final exam period for this course.**

On Classroom Etiquette & Responsible Use of Technology

Please be respectful of other students, and avoid distracting them and hindering their opportunity to learn. This means you should arrive to class on time and be an active participant in class. Be respectful of others who are speaking. Finally, **turn off your cellular/digital phones**. Texting or answering your phone in class is not acceptable, and I will stop class and ask you to leave if you use it during the course. Use of laptop computers for note-taking must be pre-approved by the professor.

All Colby-Sawyer College students are expected to understand the meaning of academic honesty and to behave in accordance with the college's policies on academic honesty as published in the student handbook and college catalog. Do not plagiarize, which means do not "take and use as one's own thoughts, writings, or inventions of another" (Oxford English Dictionary). Plagiarism includes unapproved group collaboration on take-home assignments, copying (verbatim or by paraphrase) from other students, or copying (verbatim or by paraphrase) from published sources of material,

including internet resources. Cases of plagiarism will lead to academic discipline, up to and including failure of the course.

Students are responsible for meeting all of their academic obligations, even if they are engaged in college-sponsored activities, i.e. theatre, athletics, or field trips. There are no 'excused absences' for such activities. In the case of a scheduling conflict between two classes, students should make appropriate arrangements with the course instructors, being mindful that a regularly scheduled class has the higher priority.

Students with disabilities who believe that they need accommodation in this class are encouraged to contact the disabilities specialist or learning specialist by calling extension 3711 as soon as possible.

This syllabus is subject to change.