

# The Philosophy of Love & Sex

PHIL/WST 365

Tuesday and Thursday 1-2:15

1057 Swenson

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*“Erotic behavior is not simply a commotion in one’s anatomy; it is a way of relating to others.”* -Alphonso Lingis

## Course Description:

Frequently both love and sex are talked about as if they are merely a cascade of chemical reactions that have evolved simply for the benefits of having and raising the next generation. In this course we will begin with the assumption that love and sex cannot be reduced to “a commotion in one’s anatomy.” Instead we will consider them as two of the most meaningful aspects of human existence, as our most intimate and profound ways of relating to others and to ourselves.

The guiding themes of this course will be: how people intersect with one another as subjects and objects, how we live our love and sexuality through our bodies, what kind of effect our culture has on our desires, and how we might relate to our lovers and beloveds ethically. Some of the questions we will ask include: What does it mean to be a man or a woman? What does it mean to have breasts or a penis? How might our culture change the way we desire others and the way we experience our own bodies as sexual (or not)? What is love? Does it mean the sacrifice of oneself as an individual? Are even ‘normal’ relationships sadistic-masochistic? What is the relationship between desire and sexual objectification? Does pornography turn people into objects? Is being sexually objectified *always* an element of desire? How can we treat those we love and lust ethically? If true mutuality between lovers is possible, what would it look like?

## Learning Outcomes:

- Ability to make a strong, sustained philosophical argument
- Gain deeper insights into the complexity of human relationships
- Understanding the impact of gender on power dynamics in relationships

**Required Texts (All texts other than the reader and Beneke are available on reserve in the library, however, you need to always have the text or a copy with you in class):**

- Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, Trans. By Borde & Malovany-Chevallier (not Parshley!)
- Jean Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*
- Beneke, *Men on Rape*
- Eve Ensler, *The Vagina Monologues* (Extra Credit/Optional)
- Mark Epstein, *Open to Desire*
- Course Reader

## Policies:

The University of Wisconsin-Superior is dedicated to a safe, supportive and nondiscriminatory learning environment. It is the responsibility of all undergraduate and graduate students to familiarize themselves with University policies regarding special accommodations, academic misconduct, religious beliefs accommodation, discrimination and absence for University- sponsored events. For details of the Student Disciplinary Procedures:

Academic Misconduct Disciplinary Process (Chapter 14) can be found at [http://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/admin\\_code/uws/14.pdf](http://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/admin_code/uws/14.pdf)

Student Nonacademic Disciplinary Procedures (UWS Chapter 17) can be found at [http://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/admin\\_code/uws/17.pdf](http://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/admin_code/uws/17.pdf).

A comprehensive set of University policies can be found on D2L in “Content.”

- **CLASSROOM CONDUCT**

Classroom is a public space for serious work. Everybody in the classroom is thus expected to behave as a mature, respectful, thoughtful, and responsible person. The instructor reserves the right to take appropriate measures should this general rule be violated.

- **DISABILITIES**

Individuals who have any disabilities, either permanent or temporary, that might affect their ability to perform in this course are encouraged to inform the instructor at the beginning of the semester. (Contact also the Office for Disability Support Services.) Adaptations of methods, materials or testing may be made as requested to provide for equitable participation.

- **NO IN-CLASS ELECTRONIC DEVICE USE**

All cell phones and other electronic devices must be turned off or silenced AND stored out of sight. (Discuss with the instructor in advance if there is a reason to violate this rule.) Any student using such a device in class will be considered absent for the day.

- **TIMELY SUBMISSION OF THE ASSIGNMENT**

In the case of emergency, students should contact the instructor as soon as possible. Late papers will not be accepted without proof of illness or emergency. It is fully at the professor's discretion whether or not late papers will be accepted.

- **PAPER GRADING CRITERIA**

DO NOT use the internet as a resource in writing these papers. If you need help or clarification, ask me. Complete evaluation criteria are provided at the end of this syllabus.

- **RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS**

The UW-System Board of the Regents rules that students' sincerely held religious beliefs shall be reasonably accommodated with respect to scheduling all examinations and other academic requirements. Students are responsible, however, for contacting the instructor in advance, so as to make an accommodation.

- **COMMUNICATE!**

Communicating to the instructor any issue that may affect your learning is very important for your success. Visit the instructor during the office hours or e-mail the instructor with specific questions. The instructor will do her best to accommodate the needs of the students.

# Course Calendar

This schedule is subject to change. You will be notified of any changes via UWS email.  
Readings should be completed by the day listed.

## THE LOOK, GENDER & CONFLICT

### Week 1      9/3-9/5

T: Course Introduction

TH: Hegel, "Lordship and Bondage" from *Phenomenology of Spirit* p 111-119 (Reader)

### Week 2      9/10-9/12

T: Sartre, "The Look" from *Being and Nothingness* [340-355, 358-360, 382-385]

"Aristophanes' Speech" from Plato's *Symposium* (Reader)

TH: Sartre, "The First Attitude Towards Others: Love, Language, Masochism" from *Being and Nothingness* [474-485, 491-493]

### Week 3      9/17-9/19

T: Sartre, "The Second Attitude Towards Others: Indifference, Desire, Hate, Sadism" from *Being and Nothingness* [494-512, 517-519, 524-529]

TH: Sartre continued [no reading due]

### Week 4      9/24-9/26

T: Beauvoir, "Introduction" to *The Second Sex* [3-17]

Fullbrook, "A 'Preposterous' Thesis" from *Sex and Philosophy*

TH: Beauvoir, "Sexual Initiation" from *The Second Sex* [383-416]

Phillips, "Mirror, Mirror, on the Wall" From *Flirting with Danger* (Reader)

Film: "America the Beautiful" (Optional Extra Credit)

### Week 5      10/1-10/3

Paper #1 Due Monday September 30 at 8am in Dropbox

T: Beauvoir, "The Woman in Love" from *The Second Sex* [683-708]

Phillips, "Managing Contradictions" From *Flirting with Danger* (Reader)

TH: Dines, "Leaky Images: How Porn Seeps into Men's Lives" (Reader)

Thompson, "Exposed in Iraq: Sexual Harassment and Hidden Rank Structure of the US Army" (Reader)

Ruskoff, "Picture Perfect" (Reader)

### Week 6      10/8-10/10

T: Beneke, *Men on Rape*

Phillips, "Controlling the Damage" From *Flirting with Danger* (Reader)

TH: Bordo, "Hard and Soft" & "Does Size Matter?" from *The Male Body* (Reader)

Heryford "The Real Slim Shady" (Reader)

Seraño, "Why Nice Guys Finish Last" (Reader)

Loewe, "How We Enter: Men, Gender, and Sexual Assault," (Reader)

Film: *Private Dicks: Men Exposed* (Optional Extra Credit)

**Week 7      10/15-10/17**

T Foucault, “Docile Bodies” from *Discipline and Punish* (Reader),  
Bartky, essay from *Femininity and Domination*, Ch 5 (Reader)  
TH: Bartky, essays from *Femininity and Domination* Chapters 3 & 4(Reader)  
Young, “Throwing like a girl” excerpts (Reader)  
Enslar, *The Vagina Monologues* (Optional Extra Credit)

**Week 8      10/22-10/24**

T & TH: Film: *Secretary*  
No reading due

**DESIRE: AMBIGUOUS AND FLUID**

**Week 9      10/29-10/31**

**Paper #2 Due Monday October 28 at 8am**

T: Perel, Democracy vs. Hot Sex (Reader)  
Churchill, The Alchemy of Male Desire (Reader)  
TH: Merleau-Ponty, excerpt from *Phenomenology of Perception* and the *Visible and the Invisible* (Reader)

**Week 10      11/5-11/7**

T: Chinn, “Feeling Her Way: Audre Lorde and the Power of Touch”  
Young, *Breasted Experience* (Reader)  
Irigaray, “Mechanics of Fluids” (Reader)  
Film: *Breasts: A Documentary* (Optional Extra Credit)  
TH: Beauvoir, “The Lesbian” from *The Second Sex* [417-436]  
Wilkerson, “Is it a Choice?” (Reader)

**ABJECT BODIES: SEX AND CREATIVITY**

**Week 11      11/12-11/14**

T: Film: *Scarlet Road*  
Sillers, “From the Crooked Timber of Humanity Beautiful Things Can be Made”  
*The Ultimate Guide* Chapters 1 and 2 (Reader)  
Wendell, “The Social Construction of Disability” (Reader)  
TH: Siebers, “Sex, Shame, and Disability Identity” From *Disability Theory* (Reader)  
Shuttleworth, “Defusing the Adverse Context of Disability and Desirability as a Practice of the Self for Men with Cerebral Palsy” From *Disability/ Postmodernism* (Reader)  
Amy Taylor, “Being Through Love: The Collaborative Construction of a Sexual Body” (D2L)

**Week 12      11/19-11/21**

T: “Eros and One-Dimensionality,” Gaelynn Lea  
Guest Speakers: Gaelynn Lea and Brandon St. Germaine  
TH: “Divergence or Disorder: the politics of naming intersex” Elizabeth Reis  
Film: *Orchids* (film by Phoebe Hart)  
Film: *Two Spirits* (Optional Extra Credit)

**Week 13**      **11/26-11/28**

T: Guest speaker: Phoebe Hart

TH: NO SCHOOL

**DESIRE, NEED AND COMPASSION**

**Week 14**      **12/3-12/5**

Final Paper Proposal Due: Monday, December 2 @ 8am in Dropbox on D2L

T: “Socrates questions Agathon,” “Diotima Questions Socrates,” “The Speech of Diotima” (excerpt) from Plato’s *Symposium* (Reader)  
“Desire for the Invisible,” “Freedom Called into Question,” “Living From,”  
“Enjoyment and Independence,” “Need and Corporeity,” & “The Ambiguity of Love” from Levinas’s *Totality and Infinity* (Reader)  
Excerpt from Levinas’s *Otherwise Than Being* (Reader)

<http://goodmenproject.com/ethics-values/brand-men-must-be-needed-because-we-cant-be-wanted/>

TH: Levinas continued (No reading due)

**Week 15**      **12/10-12/12**

T: Epstein, *Open to Desire* (read entire book)

TH: Course evaluations; Discussion of paper proposals

**Final Exam Week**

December 17, 1-3pm: Warner, *Sex Sin and Zen* (excerpts) Reader

Final paper due: in Dropbox on D2L at 1pm

**Evaluation Tools:**

- 1) **Class attendance and participation** (10% of final grade)  
Lectures will presuppose familiarity with the texts. Coming prepared to discuss the assigned text and participating in class discussions are requirements. This portion of your grade includes all in-class writing assignments and quizzes. Except in extraordinary circumstances absences will not be excused. It is fully at the professor’s discretion whether or not absences will be excused. **Every student must attend 70% of class sessions or more, or she/he will fail this course.**

Level	Criteria
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Present, not disruptive.</li> <li>▪ Tries to respond when called on but does not offer much.</li> <li>▪ Demonstrates sporadic involvement in discussion.</li> </ul>
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Demonstrates adequate preparation.</li> <li>▪ Offers straightforward information (e.g., straight from the reading).</li> <li>▪ Regularly contributes to discussion</li> </ul>
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Demonstrates good preparation</li> <li>▪ Offers interpretations and analysis</li> <li>▪ Contributes well to discussion in an ongoing way: responds to other students' points, thinks through own points, questions others in a constructive way, offers and supports suggestions that may be counter to the majority opinion.</li> <li>▪ Demonstrates consistent ongoing involvement.</li> </ul>

A+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Demonstrates excellent preparation.</li> <li>▪ Contributes in a very significant way to ongoing discussion: keeps analysis focused, responds very thoughtfully to other students' comments, contributes to the cooperative argument-building, suggests alternative ways of approaching material and helps class analyze which approaches are appropriate, etc.</li> <li>▪ Demonstrates ongoing very active involvement.</li> </ul>
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2) **2 Midterm Papers** (20% of final grade per paper, total 40%)

Paper #1 Due: Monday, September 30, 8am in Dropbox.

Paper #2 Due: Monday, October 28, 8am in Dropbox.

3) **Final Paper Proposal** (10% of final grade)

Proposal Due: Monday, December 2 @ 8am in Dropbox.

4) **Final Paper** (40% of final grade)

See syllabus page 8.

Final Paper Due: December 17 @ 10:30am in Dropbox.

5) **Extra Credit Opportunities**

If completed thoughtfully, extra credit will increase one of your paper grades as follows A 'B+' will become an 'A.' An 'A' will become an 'A+' and so on.

The assignment is to write a two page paper (double spaced, Times New Roman 12 Point font) about one of the optional extra credit films listed on the syllabus. You must consider what at least two of the philosophers read so far might have to say about the film.

Otherwise it is up to you what you would like to write about. **The paper is due in the class on the day the film is listed.**

Late extra credit papers will not be accepted. You can complete as many as you would like.

In addition to those films we will be watching in class, you have the option to write such a paper about *The Vagina Monologues* (due at the next class after the book is read). Some special events may also qualify for extra credit.

**Midterm Paper #1**

**This paper should be 4-5 pages long, double-spaced. It is due Monday, September 30, 8am in Dropbox.**

Describe the character of a certain type of relationship in light of Sartre's understanding of our relations with others. For example, you might choose one of the following: husband and wife, parent and child, siblings, friends, lovers, politician and citizen, employer and employee, pornography model/actor and pornography user, student and teacher. Use this relationship as your example in explaining *three* of each following themes in Sartre's work (each bullet point counts as one theme):

- The look and how it objectifies
- Disintegration of the self-centered point of view
- Shame
- Masochism
- Love
- Seduction

- Indifference
- Sadism
- Desire

If you think that Sartre is missing some vital element of our relations with others (as illustrated by your example relationship) you may argue against some part of his theory. However, this is *not* required as part of the assignment. And if you choose to do so, above all, be sure to demonstrate that you understand what Sartre means by each of the themes you discuss.

### **Midterm Paper #2**

**This paper should be 4-5 pages long, double spaced. It is due on Monday, October 28, 8am in Dropbox.**

In The Second Sex Simone de Beauvoir says the following:

“...Each separate conscious being aspires to set himself up alone as sovereign subject. Each tries to fulfill himself by reducing the other to slavery....It is possible to rise above this conflict if each individual freely recognizes the other, each regarding himself and the other simultaneously as object and as subject in a reciprocal manner.”

The readings from weeks 4-7 explain or describe how *difficult* it is to achieve reciprocity between men and women (doesn't have to be a romantic relationship you are discussing). Explain *in detail*, how *two* of the philosophers would describe this difficulty. That is, why is it so difficult? What makes it difficult?

In light of these philosophers, explain why you think it is either possible or impossible for men and women to relate to each other in a reciprocal manner. Draw on *at least one more* reading from weeks 4-7.

Note: You will cite a minimum of three different philosophers in this paper.

### **Final Paper**

8-10 pages, double spaced.

The final paper will be on a topic of your choosing. You will be required to write a proposal for this paper which includes the following:

- 1) The question that motivates the paper.
- 2) Approximately 3-4 philosophers/essays you will examine on this topic. On each author you will give a 3-4 sentence description of her/his view on the subject. These should be essays that you read *for this class*.
- 3) The thesis you expect to argue.
- 4) At least 3 supporting claims for your thesis. (See Hacker, “Constructing Reasonable Arguments” on D2L).

You will receive feedback on the proposal that will help you with the final paper.

Proposal Due: Monday, December 2 @ 8am on D2L

Proposal Presentation: Thursday, December 12 in class

Final Paper Due: Tuesday, December 17 @1pm on D2L

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Paper evaluation criteria

Assignment: \_\_\_\_\_

Basics:

- Is in 12 pt Times New Roman font and is double spaced
- Paper was on time (if not, days late\_\_\_\_)
- Includes an attached outline of thesis statement and supporting claims

Writing:

- Has a clearly stated thesis in the opening paragraph that is supported by the rest of the paper
- Is the appropriate length, and is concise, not redundant
- Has few or no spelling and/or grammatical errors (misspellings will be circled)
- Is clearly written at the paragraph level
- Is clearly written at the sentence level
- Paper is well organized overall
- Words have been used appropriately (awkwardly used words will be noted)
- Quotes are well integrated into paper, appropriately chosen, understood, introduced, and followed-through with an explanation
- Ideas or passages are attributed to their author, and page # is provided.

Content:

- Answers all aspects of the question(s) in the paper prompt
- Makes use of the required number of sources/readings
- Fairly and accurately represents the views of the authors mentioned
- Paper includes a genuine conversation with the authors engaged

**'B' level papers will have done all of the above.**

**'C' level papers will have done most of the above.**

**'D' level papers will have done only some of the above.**

**'A' level papers will have gone beyond the usual expectation in at least three of the following (in addition to all of the above):**

- Contains your own original and creative insights
- Demonstrates extraordinarily strong grasp of theory
- Uses compelling personal (or other) examples
- Gives the subject thought beyond what was required
- VERY clearly written
- Demonstrates a willingness to challenge your previous assumptions