

Philosophy of Sex and Sexual Orientation

PHI 5800 / GSW 5300 / HON 4280 – Winter 2014

Tuesdays 12:50-3:35 pm – 1171 Main

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Hours: Tues. and Wed. 10-noon, and by appt.

Description:

Sex is a crucial and pervasive aspect of human life, yet it rarely receives much attention in academic settings. This course remedies that omission by investigating ethical and conceptual issues surrounding sex and sexual orientation. Specific topics include conceptual analysis of sex and sexual orientation; sexual perversion, natural law, consent, marriage, adultery, “casual” sex, polygamy and polyamory, prostitution, and pornography.

This course includes frank discussions of sex. If these tend to offend you, you will need either to find a different course or confront your discomfort.

This course places considerable emphasis on good writing. Although most of the papers are short, you should expect to do a substantial amount of work on them if you desire good grades.

Learning Outcomes:

The successful student in this course will...

- learn major themes in contemporary philosophical debates about sex and sexual orientation
- increase skill in the methods of analytic philosophy, particularly conceptual analysis
- increase skill at developing and evaluating arguments
- increase understanding of human diversity in sexual orientation, gender, and sexual expression
- increase skill at clear and concise expression in writing

This course requires your consistent, careful preparation and active participation.

Required Texts:

- Nicholas Power, Raja Halwani, and Alan Soble, eds. *The Philosophy of Sex* 6th. ed. (Rowman & Littlefield, 2013).
- various other materials provided

Evaluation:

- Roughly half of your final grade will be determined by your various short papers (500-word maximum). At least **eight** short papers must be handed in. See last page of syllabus for detailed description of the papers.
- Roughly half of your final grade will be determined by your term paper (3000-word maximum). Due April 14.
- Class participation may increase or decrease your final grade by half a letter grade. This class will be conducted seminar-style, and your regular thoughtful involvement is essential.

Policies and Procedures

1. **Attendance:** You are required to attend class sessions regularly (and on-time) and are responsible for the material covered therein. Classes may cover material that is not in the text; therefore, when you are absent, you should obtain notes from a classmate.
2. **Office Hours:** I encourage you to visit my office to ask questions, to expand on issues raised in class, or to discuss philosophy in general. I am happy to make appointments if regular hours are inconvenient.
3. **Grading:** The following are rough criteria for each of the five grade ranges; plusses and minuses will be assigned proportionately (i.e. 90-92=A-; 87-89=B+; 83-86=B; 80-82=B-; and so on).
 - **A:** (90-100) demonstrates exceptional understanding of material (including details), contributes frequently and insightfully to class discussion, writes in a clear and compelling manner, shows considerable amount of original thought.
 - **B:** (80-89) demonstrates above-average understanding of material (including details), contributes frequently and positively to class discussion, writes in a clear and cogent manner, shows some original thought
 - **C:** (70-79) typically understands material but occasionally misses important points, contributes to class discussion, writes in a moderately clear manner.
 - **D:** (60-69) frequently misses important points, rarely contributes to class discussion, writes in a generally unclear or confused manner.
 - **F:** (failing; below 60) demonstrates serious misunderstanding of material, writes at a level unacceptable for college students.
4. **Drops and Withdrawals:** University policy imposes the following deadlines:
 - Friday January 17: Last day for tuition cancellation for courses dropped.
 - Sunday, February 2: Last day to drop without having course appear on academic record; after this date, students are assigned a WP, WF, or WN for courses from which they officially withdraw. Withdrawals after this date require a request on Pipeline and professor's approval.
 - Sunday, March 23: Last day to withdraw with professor's approval.
Note that the X grade can no longer be assigned; if you stop attending without withdrawing, you will receive an F. Students who receive approval to withdraw after the fourth week will receive a WP (withdrawal with a passing grade earned to date), WF (withdrawal with a failing grade earned to date), or WN (withdrawal with no grade earned to date).
5. **Scholastic Dishonesty:** I strictly enforce University policies on scholastic dishonesty. Violators face penalties ranging from failure in the course to dismissal from the University. See me if you are uncertain about what constitutes acceptable use and citation of research materials, and consult the Dean of Students' Office (DOSO) website for university guidelines. (Note: your short papers need only include a parenthetical page number when citing assigned readings.)
6. **Paperwork:** Barring unforeseen circumstances, I will typically hand back all work within one week of receiving it. You should keep a hard copy of all work returned.
7. **Blackboard:** All students are expected to maintain e-mail accounts and to monitor Blackboard, the course's website (blackboard.wayne.edu). Please use this site for course-related matters only.
8. **Students with Disabilities:** Students with disabilities should register with the Student Disability Services Office (formerly EAS), 313-577-1851, and see me regarding any needed accommodations.
9. **Respect:** This course will cover clashing viewpoints on sensitive topics. An attitude of mutual respect is crucial. Also, members of the class may occasionally share personal information in the course of class discussion. Unless told otherwise, you should treat these revelations as confidential.

Tentative Course Outline:

The following outline is tentative, since the interests and needs of the class will influence the direction of the course. I will announce specific assignments in class. Readings marked with a * will be provided via Blackboard or in class; all other readings are from the Power/Halwani/Soble anthology.

I. Sex and Perversion (Weeks 1-3)

Christina, "Are We Having Sex Now or What?"

Soble, "The Analytic Categories of the Philosophy of Sex"

Nagel, "Sexual Perversion"

Moulton, "Sexual Behavior: Another Position"

Goldman, "Plain Sex"

Morgan, "Sex in the Head"

Soble, "On Jacking Off, Yet Again"

Portmann, "Chatting is Not Cheating"

II. Orientation and Identity (Weeks 4-6)

Corvino, "Social Constructionism" (entry from *EPS*) *

Plato, selection from *Symposium* *

Boswell, "Revolutions, Universals, and Sexual Categories" *

Halperin, "Sex Before Sexuality"*

Mohr, "The Thing of It Is" (selection from *Gay Ideas*)*

Wilkerson, "What Is 'Sexual Orientation'?"

Betcher, "Trans Women and the Meaning of 'Woman'"

Overall, "Trans Persons, Cisgender Persons, and Gender Identities"

Vernallis, "Bisexual Marriage"

III. Marriage (Weeks 7-9)

Girgis, "Making Sense of Marriage?"*

Corvino, "The Definition of Marriage"*

Kurtz, "Beyond Gay Marriage: The Road to Polyamory"

Corvino, "Same-Sex Marriage: They'll Just Never Get It"*

Calhoun, "In Defense of Same-Sex Marriage"

Card, "Gay Divorce: Thoughts on the Legal Regulation of Marriage"

Warner, selection from *The Trouble with Normal**

March 10-14 Spring Break

IV. Objectification and Consent: Theoretical Issues (Weeks 10-11)

Mappes, "Sexual Morality and the Concept of Using Another Person"

Klepper, "Sexual Exploitation and the Value of Persons"

Cahill, "Why 'Derivatization' is Better than 'Objectification'"

Wertheimer, "Consent and Sexual Relations"

West, "The Harms of Consensual Sex"

Benatar, "Two Views of Sexual Ethics: Promiscuity, Pedophilia, and Rape"

V. Objectification and Consent: Applied Topics (Weeks 12-15)

Nussbaum, "Taking Money for Bodily Services"

Halwani, "On Fucking Around"

Pineau, "Date Rape: a Feminist Analysis"

Baber, "How Bad Is Rape? –II"

Brison, "Surviving Sexual Violence"

Mason-Grant, "Pornography As Embodied Practice"

Power, "Cheap Thrills: A Call for More Pornography"

Guidelines for Short Papers

Roughly half of your grade in this class will come from short (500-word maximum) papers. There are two types of such papers—summaries and critical discussions—and you must do at least four of each. Furthermore, you must hand in at least one paper for each of the five units of the course.

(1) Summaries: These provide a coherent overview of either (a) the reading as whole or (b) some significant argument within the reading. Instead of a play-by-play report (e.g. “First, she writes...then she writes...then she writes”) of every single point, aim for a concise presentation of the main points in an integrated summary. These will be graded primarily for clarity (including grammar and mechanics) and accuracy. **They are due on the day the reading is to be discussed.**

(2) Critical discussions: These are not merely summaries (although they will require some summary); instead, they are evaluations of arguments within the readings. They may address the overall argument or any sub-argument. One way to do these is to offer a thoughtful criticism of an author’s argument; another is to defend the author against some criticism offered elsewhere. In either case, you will be taking some stance on the reading (or portion thereof) that you discuss and backing that stance up with philosophical argument. These will be graded not only on their clarity and accuracy but also on their rigor (including originality and plausibility). **They are due within one week of the reading’s being discussed in class.**

Please be clear on what these papers are not. First, they are not “reflection papers” where you simply jot down your opinions without engaging in careful analysis. And they are not research papers: you need not consult any literature other than the readings assigned, although if you do so, be sure to cite it appropriately.

Guidelines for both types of papers:

All papers are to be 500-words maximum (*strictly enforced*), typed, double-spaced, left-justified only, neatly formatted, stapled, and free of spelling and grammatical errors. Your name should appear on the back of the last page of the paper only. You should include a word count at the end of the paper. Citations to assigned readings may be provided by a simple page number in parentheses. Consult “Tips on Writing” on Blackboard for pointers.

Remember: (a) you must hand in at least 8 of these papers; (b) at least four must be summaries and four must be critical discussions, and (c) you must hand in at least one for each unit.

You may hand in more than eight if you like; your short-paper grade will be an average for all handed in, with some credit being given for improvement over the course of the semester.

Do not hesitate to ask me if you have any questions concerning these papers.