Philosophy 304: Philosophy of Sex and Love
Instructor: Mary I. Bockover
Email: mib1@humboldt.edu

Office: BSS 558 Hours: TWR 9am-10:30am or by appt. Class: TR 3pm-4:20pm in FR 201

SYLLABUS for Spring 2015

This upper division GEAR (area C) course will introduce some basic philosophical problems pertaining to ‘sex’ and ‘love’ from a comparative perspective. It will not be a survey of diverse opinions; rather, we will examine topics such as the following to see how they can be variously understood: rape, love, feminism, marriage, adultery, homosexuality, concepts of nature and perversions, sexual identity and responsibility, the connection between thought and language, and the deeper concept of what it means to be a person. The authors’ views (below) will be critically analyzed and evaluated, and students are expected to exercise their reason and not just state a point of view. In effect, students will learn how any view, even their own, can be supported and critiqued. As a philosophy course, any intelligent discussion, spoken or written, must first clearly define principles and distinctions taken to be relevant so arguments can be given that explicitly express that relevancy (or lack thereof). This philosophical method can be applied to diverse perspectives, but their justifiability depends on whether they can be rationally supported. This class satisfies an elective requirement for both the Philosophy Major and Ethics and Values Minor.

TEXT: Philosophy and Sex (4th edition), edited by Baker and Wininger

CALENDAR

Week 1: 35, Brison – Surviving Sexual Violence: A Philosophical Perspective
Week 2: 36, May and Strikwerda – Men in Groups: Collective Responsibility for Rape
Week 3: 6, Thomson – A Defense of Abortion
Week 4: 1, Firestone – Love: a Feminist Critique
Week 5: 2, Solomon – Love and Feminism; Exam 1 on R, Feb. 19
Week 6: Wininger – On Spinsters
Week 7: 10, Wasserstrom – Is Adultery Immoral?
1st required paper and due in hard copy only, on R, Mar. 5
Week 8: 14, Ouellette – Moral Reasoning in Judicial Decisions on Same-Sex Marriage
Week 9: Spring Break
Week 10: 22, Levin – Why Homosexuality Is Abnormal
Week 11: 17, Baker – “Pricks” and “Chicks”: A Plea for “Persons”; Exam 2 on R, Apr. 2
Week 12: 25, Trebilcot – Taking Responsibility for Sexuality
Week 13: 27, Fausto-Sterling – The Five Sexes: Why Male and Female Are Not Enough
Week 14: 28, Dreger – A History of Intersex: From the Age of Gonads to the Age of Consent
Week 15: 32, Jensen – Patriarchal Sex; Exam 3 on R, Apr. 30
Week 16: NO CLASS; Second (optional) paper due: F, May 7 (electronic copy only)
Week 17: NO FINAL; PLR project due (electronic copy only): F, May 15

COURSE CONTENT and METHODOLOGY

PLEASE BE AWARE that many of the topics we cover are controversial and may trigger discomfort, and for some even painful memories of past experiences. I will try hard to have us all approach this subject matter with sensitivity, but understand that it is the nature of this course to grapple with difficult, often personal issues critically and in depth in order to increase awareness about them.
In addition to the assigned course readings as stated above, we will also cover theoretical principles and supplementary material from a variety of philosophical traditions (both Eastern and Western) in class. All of the material we cover will be incorporated into the exams. We will also be looking at examples from the media on the topics and problems we will cover, and you are encouraged to keep your eyes open for these and share them with the class. See my Moodle page!

**REQUIREMENTS**

1) **One or two formal philosophy essays: 1st paper due on Oct. 9 (R) is required.** Both must be approximately 5 pages, double-spaced, typed and frequently revised before the final version is turned in. You must clearly and concisely identify the main thesis and arguments of the articles you analyze, as well as evaluate them with reasoned argument (explaining what is meritorious or problematic and why). There is much direction on how to read and write philosophically on the class Moodle page. If you only write the 1st paper, it will count as 50% of your written grade; if you write the 2nd one too, each will count 25%. The 1st paper must be submitted in hard copy while the 2nd paper must be sent electronically. Late papers are not accepted. **The PLR project has a separate writing requirement!**

2) **Three exams** given in class; cumulatively worth 50% of your written grade.

3) **Attendance, participation, and reading** that must be done prior to Tuesday classes so you can be prepared and can engage in the material in a responsible fashion.

4) **PLR or Practical Learning Requirement and paper** for which you will spend no less than 5 hours (e.g.) participating in events, viewing movies, doing Internet searches, or reading other material relevant to the class. You may also do a combination of these. You will discuss your activity in a PLR paper, approximately 5 pages of double-spaced type: graded CR/NC. This requirement can only hurt you if you do poorly on it or do not hand it in, in which case a full 10% will be deducted from your overall grade. See PLR directions on Moodle for complete information about this requirement.

**Grading Scale for Exams: Points to Letter Grades (for Grade Point System see HSU Catalog)**

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**Area C – Arts and Humanities General Education Student Learning Outcomes**

*Upon completing this requirement, students will:*

1) Apply discipline-specific vocabulary and central discipline-specific concepts and principles to a specific instance, literary work or artistic creation.
2) Respond subjectively as well as objectively to aesthetic experiences and will differentiate between emotional and intellectual responses.
3) Explain the nature and scope of the perspectives and contributions found in a particular discipline within the Arts and Humanities as related to the human experience, both individually (theirs) and collectively.

*Humanities-specific SLO:*

4) Discuss the intellectual, historical, and cultural elements of written literature through their study of great works of the human imagination.