

Philosophy of Sexuality PHL 243 H1S

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Office Hours: TBD or by appointment

Email Policy: If you would like to email me about the class, please put 'PHL 243' in the subject of the email. Emails that ask for information that can be found on the syllabus, Blackboard announcements, or assignment sheets will not be answered. During the week I will respond to emails meeting the above conditions within 24 hours. If I haven't, send me a reminder—perhaps after checking the syllabus once more. Substantive philosophical discussions are not possible over email. Come to my office hours or raise the issues in class.

Course Description

Sexuality occupies a unique position in our lives and the cultural imagination. It also presents a unique suite of philosophical questions. This course is an introduction to some of these questions and philosophical approaches to answering them. Some are metaphysical: What is love? What is sex? Some are ethical: To what extent should we restrict pornography? And some are a bit of both: What is objectification and is it always morally problematic? What is the difference between flirting and being creepy? The philosophy readings will be supplemented with cultural criticism, short fiction, and even a scientific study or two.

Course Materials

All readings will be made available through the course website.

Course Requirements

Papers (3x20%): You will be asked to write three 500 word papers for this class. For each, you will have to explain the argument from a short excerpt of one of our readings and then raise an objection. This will be explained in more detail on the assignment sheets. There is no preferred citation style, as long as you cite responsibly and consistently. Unless other arrangements have been made prior to the due date, late papers will be assessed a 1/3 grade penalty for each 24 hours they are late (note that this policy makes no distinction between weekdays and weekends). Submitted via blackboard

Final Exam (40%): The final exam will be a number of short answer questions. It will be on material that has been covered in lecture. Material from optional readings is examinable if and only if it is discussed in lecture.

Attendance and Participation (0%): I would very much like you to attend this class, and participate in discussions. Generally, students who attend and participate wind up with much better grades. And the more the class feels like a conversation, the more fun we will have. Nonetheless, I will not be taking attendance or grading

participation (who wants to have a coerced conversation?). I will just ask nicely that you attend and engage in discussion, and appeal to your self-interest.

Readings (0%): For each meeting, there will be some required reading. Different students find different approaches to reading work best. For some, doing the reading before it is covered in class works best. Others find it helpful to go through the reading in class first, and then go to the text. Some prefer a bit of both. I will not assume prior familiarity with the assigned texts during my lectures. Additionally, each meeting features optional readings. These are suggestions for further reading if you find a particular topic interesting and would like to learn more. They will be discussed in lecture at my discretion. All material covered in lecture is examinable.

Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty is not okay. It is also not in your best interests. If you cheat, you will very likely be caught. Violations of academic integrity will be referred to the relevant disciplinary bodies. They are unkind.¹ If you are worried about a deadline, please come talk to me. I am kind.

A Note On Content

There are many reasons people talk and write about sexuality—prurience, titillation, humor, advocacy of various sorts, and so on. I am not one to denigrate any of these reasons. In this class, though, our goal is to foster understanding. To that end, frank discussions about sexually explicit topics—perhaps involving coarse language—are necessary. And disagreement about topics we feel strongly about is to be expected. Disagreement is an extremely valuable learning opportunity, whether or not we are ultimately convinced. It is incumbent on each of us to participate in these discussions in a responsible way, keeping in mind both our goal and respect for our colleagues. Forceful arguments can be made without being rude, aggressive, demeaning, or otherwise a jerk. Any student who feels uncomfortable during a discussion should feel free to leave the classroom at no academic penalty. You are responsible for the course material you miss, and should make arrangements with me or a classmate to be caught up. If you have any concerns, I encourage you to talk to me about them.

Course Schedule

July 4: 'I'm a Flirt'

Required Reading: Carrie Jenkins 'The Philosophy of Flirting'

Optional Reading: Daniel Nolan 'The Varieties of Flirtatious Experience', Nano is Huge 'Bayesian Flirting' on Tumblr

July 6: 'Hey Mami'

Required: Bonnie Mann 'Creepers, Flirts...'

¹ Not as people; it's their job.

Optional: Ole Martin Moen 'Checking People Out'; Eleanor Gordon-Smith 'Hollaback Girl' on *This American Life*; 'American Bitch' *Girls* episode

July 11: 'Body Party'

Required: Martha Nussbaum 'Objectification' (especially parts II and III)
Optional: Audre Lorde 'Uses of the Erotic'; Gray et al 'More than a body: Mind perception and the nature of objectification'; Wesley Morris 'Last Taboo: Why Pop Culture Just Can't Deal With Black Male Sexuality' in *The New York Times*

July 13: 'You Don't Own Me'

Required: Lois Pineau 'Date Rape: A Feminist Analysis'
Optional: Amanda Hess 'How Drunk is Too Drunk to Have Sex?' in *Slate*

July 18: 'Video Girl' ****First Paper Due**

Required: Rae Langton 'Speech Acts and Unspeakable Acts'
Optional: Joshua Cohen 'Freedom, Equality, Pornography'; Emily Witt 'Internet Porn' in *Future Sex*

July 20: 'Let's Talk About Sex'

Required: Alan Goldman 'Plain Sex'; Seriou Morgan 'Sex in the Head'
Optional: Greta Christina 'Are We Having Sex Now or What?'

July 25: 'For Today I Am A Boy'

Required: Sally Haslanger 'Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them To Be?'
Optional: Juliet Jacques 'On the "Dispute" Between Radical Feminism and Trans People' in *The New Statesman*; Rebecca Kukla 'Philosophers on Rachel Dolezal' on *The Daily Nous*

July 27: 'Love on the Brain'

Required: C.S.I. Jenkins 'Knowing Our Own Hearts: Self-Reporting and the Science of Love'
Optional: Rae Langton and John Dupré 'Gender differences all in the mind' in *The Guardian*; Hannah Smothers 'Why Guys Get Turned on When You Orgasm—and Why That's a Bad Thing' in *Cosmopolitan*; Cordelia Fine Selections from *Delusions of Gender*

August 1: 'What is Love' ****Second Paper Due**

Required: Robert Nozick 'Love's Bond'
Optional: David Velleman 'Love as a Moral Emotion'; Lydia Davis 'Break It Down'

August 3: 'I Choose You'

Required: Harry Frankfurt 'Autonomy Necessity and Love'

Optional: Ruth Chang 'Commitment Reasons and the Will'; Alain de Botton 'Why You Will Marry the Wrong Person' in *The New York Times*

August 8: 'I'm His Girl'

Required: Carrie Jenkins 'Modal Monogamy'

Optional: Emily Witt 'Polyamory' in *Future Sex*; Susan Dominus 'Is an Open Marriage a Happier Marriage?' in *The New York Times*

August 10: 'Looking Back On Love' ****Third Paper Due**

Review and Catch Up