

ECLA of Bard
AY/BA1 Core
Winter 2012

Instructors: Brendan Boyle (University of North Carolina), David Hayes (course coordinator), Geoff Lehman, Marcela Perett

Forms of Love: *Eros*, *Agape*, and *Philia*

Mon 10:45-12:15, 13:30-15; Wed 9-10:30, 10:45-12:15; Thu 13:30-15

Love has been a value throughout Western culture. Although Western culture's first monument—the *Iliad*—declares rage rather than love as its theme, the rage of Achilles runs its tragic course because of the death of the friend he loved. Another early monument of Western culture, Plato's Socrates, holds up the life of the *lover* of wisdom—the *philosopher*—as the life most worth living, in contradistinction to the wisdom of the sophist, whose own loves or commitments seem to be in doubt.

From these Greek beginnings, the force of the idea of love has continued throughout Western culture—if not unabated, yet enough so that most of us would probably agree that a life spent without ever loving or being loved would be an empty life. This is to say that love, for most of us, is a crucial value. Love may even be the foundation of value, or the means by which value itself is created or discovered (or somehow both). (The study of love, therefore, has a special place in a programme of value studies.) Yet to say this much only raises a difficulty: not only is the potential range of objects of love bewilderingly vast, what it even means “to love” is also a question. The course title lists three of the main candidates for what it means to love: eros, agape, and philia. Each of these has been held up as an ideal of love, as the form of loving which we ought to aspire to. But it is questionable whether these ideals are compatible. It seems to make a great deal of difference whether one takes love to essentially involve submission, possession, affection, attention, charity, chastity, sexuality, spirituality, mutuality, or reciprocity or its lack.

This core class examines the concept as it is found in major sources of Western culture: Greek, Jewish, Roman, and Christian. No one of these sources is thoroughly examined, and it is not an aim of this course to describe anything like the “development” of love in history. Although the organization of texts in the syllabus is roughly historical, whether one can in fact speak meaningfully of historical development in love is a question that would take many more texts and much more time to answer.

Most of the texts in this course come from the Christian tradition, since it is generally accepted that Christianity added something—if not totally new, then certainly with a new focus—to the Western conceptualization of love:

What distinguishes Christianity, what gives it a unique place in man's intellectual life, is the fact that it alone has made love the dominant principle in all areas of dogma. Whatever Christians may have done to others or themselves, theirs is the only faith in which God and love are the same (Irving Singer, *The Nature of Love*, vol. 1 (Cambridge Mass. and London: MIT Press, 2009) p. 159).

But if God is love, what does this mean for romantic, sexual, interpersonal love? Is *that* somehow divine? Or is it fundamentally at odds with the divine? It seems that the ruling class in the Middle Ages answered such questions by retaining or transferring the Christian emphasis on love into the secular (or sexual) domain, so that:

It is impossible to overestimate the importance of the fact that the ruling class of an entire period obtained . . . its view of life and its erudition in the form of an *ars amandi* [art of love]. During no other age did the ideal of worldly erudition enter into such intimate union with the love of women than from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries (Johan Huizinga, *The Autumn of the Middle Ages*, trans. Rodney J. Payton and Ulrich Mammitzsch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996) p. 127).

The course engages with examples of this love-ideal in Troubadour poetry and Gottfried's version of the remarkably pan-European Tristan myth. Dante's early *Vita Nuova* appears to be an attempt to bridge the divide between the Christian love dogma and the secular (or heretical?) *ars amandi* of the medieval courtly world. Although the course emphasis lies on the Middle Ages, it touches upon the Renaissance (with Erasmus) and keeps in contact with modernity through a series of film screenings and discussions, a plenum session on modern music and love, and by reading part of Proust's 20th century masterpiece.

This class is intended as a beginning to reflection on the concept of love. One may ask: what can be gained from such reflection? Even if love is of paramount significance in life, even if it were true that how and what we love make us who we are—still, how and what we love may not be up to us. Like taste, there may be no accounting for it, and therefore it is unclear why anyone should study it. However, the same question can be asked about the relation of thought and action in every domain. What is the relation, for example, between the study of philosophical ethics and actually being an ethical person? It would be naïve to think that the relation is a direct one; yet perhaps it is also true that only a cynic rules out a potential relation. Reflection on the concept of love, therefore, and the various forms which have been proposed for its meaning and fulfillment, may help us to expand, deepen, or improve our own capacities as individuals who love and are loved—and who therefore live lives full of value.

Class Preparation and Participation:

Regular attendance and careful preparation is essential to the success of this course. **There will be an attendance sheet for each lecture to be signed before each lecture begins. Because late arrival may disturb the concentration of the lecturer and other students, it counts as an absence.**

Please be aware of the college policies as described in the student handbook. You cannot receive credit for a course if you have more than 30% absences, for any reason. More than 15% overall absences in the school will result in academic probation. Seminar grades may be reduced because of frequent absences. This is because the capacity to make meaningful contributions to a seminar depends upon one's presence in prior sessions. Lectures, seminars, and film screenings and discussions, are all separate “classes” for the purposes of counting absences.

Written Assignments:

Within each segment of the term you will be assigned one substantial essay **due at the end of weeks 3, 7, and 11**, to be submitted electronically. Each written assignment will be followed by a tutorial lasting at least one-half hour. Please be aware of the guidelines in the student handbook, especially concerning lateness due to medical reasons.

Essay deadlines: 23:59 on Saturday Jan. 28, Saturday Feb. 25, and Friday Mar. 23

Grading:

Essays (2x20%): 40%

Final essay: 30%

Seminar grade: 30%

January

<i>Sun</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tue</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thu</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sat</i>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8 Week 1	9 Intro + Symposium (through Aristophanes) (DH)	10	11 Symposium (through end) (BB)	12 Symposium	13	14
15 Week 2	16 Nicomachean Ethics Book 8 (DH)	17	18 Nicomachean Ethics Book 9 (BB)	19 Film + Discussion 19:30-22:30 (Capra: "It Happened One Night" (DH)) (no seminars)	20	21
22 Week 3	23 Ovid (Jennifer Clarvoe, Kenyon College)	24 Poetry reading 5-6:30pm (Jennifer Clarvoe)	25 Ovid (MP)	26 Film + Discussion 19:30-22:30 (Bergman: "Scenes from a Marriage" (BB)) (no seminars)	27	28 Paper 1 due (23:59)
29 Week 4	30 Garden of Eden (DH)	31				

2012

February

Sun

Mon

Tue

Wed

Thu

Fri

Sat

1

Gospel of John
(MP)

2

Gospel of John

3

4

5

Week 5

6

State

7

of

8

the

9

World

10

Week

11

12

Week 6

13

Song of Songs
(GL)

14

15

Monasticism
(MP)

16

Film +
Discussion
19:30-22:30
(Kieślowski:
"Decalogue 1"
(GL)) (no
seminars)

17

18

19

Week 7

20

Troubadours
(GL)

21

22

Tristan
(BB)

23

Modern Music
and Love
(plenum
session) (no
seminars)

24

25

Paper 2 due
(23:59)

26

Week 8

27

Tristan
(GL)

28

29

Aquinas
(BB)

2012

March

<i>Sun</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tue</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thu</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sat</i>
				1	2	3
				Film + Discussion 19:30-22:30 (Almodóvar: "Talk to Her" (MP)) (no seminars)		
4 Week 9	5 Vita Nuova (DH)	6	7 Vita Nuova (TBA)	8 Erasmus	9	10
11 Week 10	12 Swann in Love (Catherine Toal)	13	14 Swann in Love (TBA)	15 Swann in Love	16	17
18	19 No	20 Classes	21	22	23 Final paper due (23:59)	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

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