**PHILOSOPHY OF SEX & LOVE  
Monday/Wednesday/Thursday, 11am-1pm, Room 9-165**

**INSTRUCTOR**

Henry Shevlin (hfshevlin@gmail.com, @dioscuri)

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Love and sex are hugely important personal phenomena: they shape our lives, occupy our thoughts, and consume our emotions. They are also important as social and cultural phenomena, helping to determine the structure and values of societies, and freedoms relating to love and sex are some of the things we value most. In this course, we'll explore a range of issues relating to love and sex from a variety of philosophical perspectives. Along the way, you'll also become more familiar and more skilled with a range of philosophical methods.

**GRADE**

Your grade will be a function of three things: quizzes, two papers, and participation.

**25% quizzes (5% per quiz)** – every Thursday of the course, we'll have a quiz on a piece of assigned reading. We'll also have a bonus quiz at some point in the course. These quizzes are designed to test your reading comprehension and ensure that you read the most important articles in the course.  
  
**50% two papers** (20% short paper, 30% long paper)– I will ask for two papers from each of you. The short paper (suggested length 1500 words) is due August 3rd. The long paper (suggested length 2500 words) is due August 20th. Note that papers should be on assigned questions only. If there is a topic you wish to write about that's not on one of the papers, please ask me in advance to prepare a suitable question. A list of questions and more detailed guidelines will be provided later in the course.  
  
**25% participation, punctuality, and attendance** – I expect all students to attend every class, arrive on time, and participate in class. A lot of the class will consist in debates and discussions. Please try to keep your contributions on topic, and try not to dominate discussion to the exclusion of other students. Personal reflections are welcome, but try to be clear and concise. Contribution to discussion is the main way to get a high participation score, but you can also boost your score by being engaged and on time.

Please note that these topics covered in the course will touch on issues that may have strongly affected you or your classmates. For this reason, try to avoid cracking bad jokes or using potentially offensive expressions. All opinions are permissible, but I expect you to approach discussion soberly and sensitively. For my part, I will also attempt to be sensitive in handling material. However, if anyone feels that a topic we are due to discuss may be problematic for them, they are free to leave for those portions of the class. However, please notify me you'll be absent in such cases, preferably before class.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

No texts will be required for the course. All readings will be sent by email.

**CLASS ID NUMBERS**

We will grade quizzes together on Thursdays. To protect anonymity, I’ll also assign you an ID number. Please use this ID number rather than your name when completing quizzes.

**POLICIES**

- Be on time at the start of class and when returning from breaks.

- Cell phones are banned in class. Please refrain from using other electronic devices.

- Be polite and respectful in class discussion. Listen carefully to your classmates' opinions.

- Treat email correspondences with me professionally.

- Academic honesty: Plagiarism, cheating, copying from others, handing in work that isn’t one’s own or isn’t in one’s own words, and all other types of academic dishonesty will result in the offender’s immediate failure of the course. If you are unsure about what counts as academic dishonesty, please consult either me or the following website: http://goo.gl/t0Yvhf

**TIPS**

- Attend every class and make careful notes.

- Do all of the required reading, ideally 1-2 days before class (so your brain has time to digest it). Make notes to help you remember.

- Participate in discussion, and think of something smart to say when I call on you.

- Start thinking about your paper early in the semester so that you can write a good draft.

- If you find yourself struggling with reading or writing philosophy papers, I recommend that you consult the following guidelines: <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/index.html>.

- For assistance with citation formats, see here: <http://goo.gl/D5xFVn>

**SCHEDULE**

The course will be divided into three parts. The first will focus on fundamental issues relating to sex and love. The second will focus on personal issues involved in sex and love. The third will focus on issues in culture and politics.

**Part 1 (Weeks 1-2): Understanding sex and love**

- What is love? Are there different kinds of love? What does sex have to do with love?

- How should we understand the concepts of gender and sexuality in relation to sex and love?

- How can science help us understand love? Does science reveal anything about sex?

- Are our ideals of sex and love influenced by our culture?

**Part 2 (Weeks 2-4): Sex and love in life**

- Is there a clear line between flirting and harassment?

- Is it ever acceptable to cheat on a partner? When is honesty the best policy?

- What kind of partner should we seek if we want happiness?

- What are our obligations to our sexual partners? What do we have an obligation to disclose?

- What is seduction, and is it immoral? What is sexual consent? What kind of consent matters ethically?

- Do we ever have obligation to 'come out' to our friends and family about our sex lives?

- Are non-monogamous relationships emotionally viable for people? When, if ever, are they appropriate?

**Part 3 (Weeks 4-5): Sex and Love in culture and politics**

- Is pornography morally problematic? If so, in which cases? Which pornography should be legal?

- Is prostitution immoral? Should it be illegal?

- How should we as a society approach fetishes and perversions? When might they be problematic?

- What is 'rape culture'? Are we living in one?

All readings for Thursday quizzes will be provided. I will also assign lighter readings, documentaries, or debates for discussion in class. Reading these will be compulsory, and I expect you all to be able to discuss their content in class.

**MY GOALS**I hope that by the end of this course,you will have honed your philosophical skills and learned new methods. I hope you'll have new insight into a variety of issues and debates that profoundly affect you and others. Finally I hope that your minds will be more open to a range of different perspectives.