

## **Phil 247: Friendship, Love and Desire**

Lecture, Fall 2022

### **Details**

When/Where: Tuesdays and Thursdays 1:30-2:45pm, MECC 220

Instructor: Prof. Carmen De Schryver

Email: carmen.deschryver@trincoll.edu

Office: McCook 326

Office Hours: Tuesdays 3:00-5:00pm (and on Zoom by appointment)

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### **Course Description**

This course provides an introduction to the philosophical study of desire, love and friendship within the Western tradition. Through an engagement with a range of philosophical texts, we will explore what our close relationships with others have to do with various areas of human life including knowledge, justice, and the good. Over the course of the semester, we will discuss a number of questions, such as: Is lack a precondition of desire? Is desire on the whole an unfavorable feature of our moral lives? Are our close attachments in tension with the demands of impartiality? Can we provide reasons for why we love another person, and, assuming that we can, should we? Do we see the world more clearly through love, or does love, instead, obfuscate reality? Is the demand to respond to injustice with love ever defensible? What is the relationship between friendship and other pursuits such as politics and theory? Do we seek “another self” in our friends, or are we instead drawn to difference? What role, if any, do friendship and love play in emancipatory social movements? As well as closely reading seminal texts in the Western philosophy of love, friendship and desire, we will also consider some prominent critics of Western philosophical attitudes about these themes. Some of the philosophers we will be reading together include Aristotle, James Baldwin, Anne Carson, Jacques Derrida, Audre Lorde, María Lugones and Iris Murdoch.

### **Learning Outcomes**

- Develop skills in closely reading and evaluating technical philosophical material
- Identify various philosophers’ views on love, friendship and desire and describe their relative strengths and weaknesses
- Learn to read texts from different historical contexts and cultivate skills in comparative analysis
- Utilize literary material to more concretely engage the central themes and questions in the philosophy of love, desire and friendship
- Learn how to write a philosophy paper and construct original philosophical arguments

## Course Assessment

Grades for this course are based on:

- Participation (15%):
  - (i) Initial one-on-one meeting with me to discuss your interests and familiarity with the course content. A sign-up sheet will be circulated during the first week of class. This is a low-stakes encounter – you will not be assessed on what you say. The point is for me to get to know you early on in the semester. You just need to show up!
  - (ii) Reading. *All the reading for this class is required.*
    - You will be expected to submit a short (one sentence) question about the reading, or respond to the posted question about the reading, *in advance* of the class meeting on the discussion board on Moodle. *These will be due at 7pm the evening before our class meeting.*
  - (iii) Attendance in both weekly sessions will be expected of you. If you cannot make it to class for some reason, you should message me *before class* to determine some way to make this up. Please do not come to class if you have or suspect you might have COVID – we will determine some alternative way for you to participate.
  - (iv) In-class engagement and participation.
    - You should be prepared to positively contribute to some combination of lecture/seminar/office hours. A positive contribution can take on a variety of forms: asking a clarificatory question, raising a discussion point, weighing in on an interpretation, offering an opinion, pointing us back to the reading, etc. *At minimum, it requires that you be a respectful and engaged listener not just to what I say but to what your peers say.*
    - Speaking up in larger group settings will be more comfortable for some than for others. I encourage you to meet with me during office hours to determine alternative modes of engagement if speaking up in larger group settings is uncomfortable for you. If you tend to be more talkative, an important component of your contributing to a lively discussion will be making space for others to speak.
- In-class presentation of literary material (20%) – 10 minutes
  - During the first week of class, a list of works of literary fiction dealing with love, desire and friendship will be circulated. You'll choose one of these texts to focus on, and read this novels alongside our in-class readings.
  - Weeks 7 and 8 will be devoted to in-class presentations – effectively a “book report”. These presentations should be about 10 minutes and include a summary of your book (3-4 minutes) and a discussion of how it relates to at least two of the issues we've debated in class (6-7 minutes). Each presentation will conclude with 3-5 minutes of Q&A.
- Two term papers of no more than 5 pages, double-spaced (17.5% each)

- Prompts and a guide to writing philosophy papers will be circulated online. We will also devote a class session to a philosophy paper writing workshop.
- Final paper of no more than 7 pages, double-spaced (30%).
  - Final papers may be devoted to a topic of your own choosing (to be discussed with me during office hours). I will also provide prompts to those who prefer them. These papers should draw on the book presentations by utilizing a literary example to make your philosophical point.

### **Note on Office Hours**

Office hours are a time for us to meet privately to discuss any aspect of your course experience. I encourage you to come to office hours regularly – this is a time that I am just sitting in my office waiting to chat with you! You can come to my office hours with any questions, ideas, or worries that were raised for you during the lectures or discussions; any difficulties that you are experiencing with the material or your own learning process; or additional help and guidance you might need for assignments. Anything pertaining to the course is on the table.

### **Note on the Readings**

In order to get the most out of the course, **it is necessary that you read the assigned texts closely in advance of the class meeting on Tuesday.** Often this will mean reading twice. The readings in this course will vary in length and difficulty. Do not be discouraged if you find the readings challenging or even confusing – philosophy is hard! I don't expect you to understand everything that you read, especially on the first try. I do expect you to make a good-faith effort to interpret the text on your own, and to participate in the class discussion on this basis. Both the lecture and the class discussion are designed to (i) collaboratively make sense of the text and (ii) equip you with the skills that you need to fully comprehend and critically interrogate the course material, and ultimately to engage difficult philosophical texts on your own. *Do not hesitate to raise clarificatory questions and be upfront about elements of the reading you found challenging; if you are confused about something, it is likely your peers will be as well, and your questions will be welcomed!*

### **Required Course Materials**

There are two required texts for this course, available via the TC bookshop. All other readings will be made available in PDF form online at least one week prior to class.

- James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*
- Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good*

## Course Schedule

*N.B. This is a tentative course schedule. Any changes to the schedule will be announced in class and via email.*

### Unit 1: Desire and the Erotic

#### **Week 1:**

*September 6<sup>th</sup>*: Introductions and discussion of the syllabus

- No reading

*September 8<sup>th</sup>*: Desire and Lack

- Plato, “The Speech of Aristophanes” (*Symposium*), pp. 25-31
- Anne Carson, “Gone”; “Ruse” (*Eros the Bittersweet*) pp. 10-11; 12-17

#### **Week 2:**

*September 13<sup>th</sup>*: Desire and the Boundaries of the Self

- Anne Carson, “Finding the Edge”; “Logic at the Edge” (*Eros the Bittersweet*), pp. 30-31; 32-38

*September 15<sup>th</sup>*: Objects of Desire: Self or Other

- Emmanuel Lévinas, “Desire for the Invisible”; “The Ambiguity of Love” and “Phenomenology of Eros” (*Totality and Infinity*), pp. 33-35; pp. 254-255; pp. 264-266

#### **Week 3:**

*September 20<sup>th</sup>*: The Ethics of Desire

- Martha Nussbaum, “Objectification”, pp. 249-291

*September 22<sup>nd</sup>*: The Ethics of Desire II

- Audre Lorde, “Uses of the Erotic” (*Sister Outsider*), pp. 53-59

### Unit 2: Love

#### **Week 4:**

*September 27<sup>th</sup>*: Bodies, Contemplation and the Good

- Plato, “The Speech of Diotima” (*Symposium*), pp. 37-50

*September 29<sup>th</sup>*: Love and Rationality I

- Harry Frankfurt, “On Love and its Reasons” (*The Reasons of Love*), pp. 34-68

#### **Week 5:**

*October 4<sup>th</sup>*: Love and Rationality II: The Conflict between Love and Morality

- Sandy Koullas, “Love, Practical Reasons, and African Philosophy” (*Routledge Handbook*), pp. 313-324

October 6<sup>th</sup>: Paper Writing Workshop

- No reading, but prepare mini-outline

**\*\*First Paper due: Sunday October 9<sup>th</sup>, midnight (via email)\*\***

### **Week 6:**

October 11<sup>th</sup>: Trinity days – no class meeting

- No reading

October 13<sup>th</sup>: Love and the Good I

- Iris Murdoch, “The Idea of Perfection” (*The Sovereignty of Good*), pp. 1-10; 16-23; 29-44.

### **Week 7:**

October 18<sup>th</sup>: Love and the Good II

- Iris Murdoch, “On ‘God and ‘Good’” & “The Sovereignty of Good Over Other Concepts” (*The Sovereignty of Good*) pp. 49-59; 62-69; 82-89; 96-101

October 20<sup>th</sup>: Love and the Good III

- David Velleman, “Love as a Moral Emotion”, pp. 338-374

### **Week 8:**

October 25<sup>th</sup>: Love and Justice

- Audre Lorde, “The Uses of Anger” (*Sister Outsider*), pp. 124-133
- James Baldwin, “My Dungeon Shook: Letter to my Nephew on the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Emancipation” (*The Fire Next Time*), pp. 3-10

October 27<sup>th</sup>: Love and Justice II

- James Baldwin, “Down at the Cross” (*The Fire Next Time*), pp. 15-106

### **Week 9:**

November 1<sup>st</sup>: Love, World-Travelling, Decolonization

- María Lugones, “Playfulness, World-Travelling, and Loving Perception”, pp.3-19

November 3<sup>rd</sup>:

- No Reading

## Unit 3: Friendship

### **Week 10:**

November 8<sup>th</sup>: Types of Friendship

- Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, BOOK VIII

November 10<sup>th</sup>: Friends as Other Selves

- Montaigne, *Of Friendship*, pp. 79-87

**\*\*Second Paper due: Monday November 14<sup>th</sup>, midnight (via email)\*\***

### **Week 11:**

November 15<sup>th</sup>: Nietzsche's Free Spirits

- Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, pp. 3-11; pp. 193-194
- Nietzsche, "The Free Spirit" (*Beyond Good and Evil*), pp. 23-30
- Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, §14

November 17<sup>th</sup>: Friendship, Politics and Alterity

- Jacques Derrida, "Politics of Friendship", pp. 353-391

### **Week 12:**

November 22<sup>nd</sup>: Friendship, Theory and Alterity

- María Lugones & Elizabeth Spelman, "Have we Got a Theory for You! Feminist Theory, Cultural Imperialism and the Demand for the Woman's Voice", pp. 573-581

November 24<sup>th</sup>: Thanksgiving Vacation – no class meeting

- No Reading

### **Week 13:**

November 29<sup>th</sup>: Book Report Presentations

- No Reading

December 1<sup>st</sup>: Book Report Presentations

- No Reading

### **Week 14:**

December 6<sup>th</sup>: Book Report Presentations

- No Reading

December 8<sup>th</sup>: Book Report Presentations

- No Reading

**\*\*\*Final Paper Due: Thursday, December 15 midnight\*\*\***

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## **Course Policies**

### **Norms of Conduct**

During the first week of class, I will circulate a document of agreements to set the tone for our mutual engagement over the course of the semester. This document is open-ended and subject to your revisions.

### **Note on Religious Holidays**

Trinity College does not observe all religious holidays. If you cannot attend a session because of a religious holiday, please let me know at least a day in advance and we can work out some alternate form of engagement for that week.

### **Policy on Late Submissions**

I expect you to submit your work in a timely fashion. If you think you won't be able to complete the assignment by the deadline, you should contact me at least one day before the deadline to discuss your situation and possibly arrange an alternate schedule for completion. Legitimate reasons for an extension include illness and family emergency (having other deadlines doesn't count). If you simply submit an assignment without notifying me 24 hours in advance this will impact your assessment. Depending on the circumstances, late submissions may not receive detailed commentary.

### **Accessibility and Accommodations**

Trinity College is committed to creating an inclusive and accessible learning environment consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Like many things, the need for disability accommodations and the process for arranging them may be altered by the COVID-19 changes we are experiencing and the safety protocols currently in place. Students who may need some accommodation in order to fully participate in this class are asked to contact the Student Accessibility Resource Center, as soon as possible, to explore what arrangements need to be made to assure access. Student Accessibility Resources can be reached by emailing [SARC@trincoll.edu](mailto:SARC@trincoll.edu). If you already have academic accommodations, please reach out to me by the end of week two of classes to let me know. For those students with accommodations approved after the start of the semester, a minimum of 10 days' notice is required.

### **Academic Integrity**

Any written work you submit should be your own. This means that you should not copy/paste, paraphrase or borrow ideas from a text or internet source without proper citation

(*i.e.* presenting them as though they are your own). Failure to do so amounts to plagiarism, and the college takes violations of plagiarism very seriously. For further information, you should consult the [Student Handbook's](#) policies and procedures regarding academic integrity and plagiarism. If you have any questions about how to use/ cite material appropriately, please do not hesitate to ask – it is better to be sure than to risk a violation. You are welcome to use either parenthetical or footnote citations in this course, in either Chicago or MLA format.