



Course Syllabus: **Philosophy of Sex, Love, and Friendship**
College of Humanities and Social Sciences
PHIL-2823
Fall 2023

Contact Information

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Office hours: Mon. 3:30-4:30; Tues/Thurs 8:30-9:30, 11-12; and by appointment

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Instructor Response Policy

Emails sent during the week will receive a reply within 24 hours. Response time over the weekends and holidays will likely take longer. If you have not received a reply to an email within 48 hours, please feel free to send a follow up. Before sending an email regarding a question about our course, check to see if this syllabus answers your question. All emails should observe basic email etiquette: a greeting at the beginning, a statement of the purpose of your email, a tone of cordiality, and a signature at the end.

Textbook & Instructional Materials

Required textbooks have been ordered through campus store, but students are welcome to source the book wherever they choose. Please acquire hard copies of the texts. All other course texts will be available to download from D2L as a PDF.

- Plato, *Symposium*, trans. Christopher Gill. Penguin.
- Cicero, *On Living and Dying Well*, trans. Thomas Habinek. Penguin.
- Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality, vol 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley. Vintage.
- Malabou, Catherine. *Pleasure Erased*, trans. Carolyn Shread. Polity.
- Srinivasan, Amia. *The Right to Sex*. Picador.

Course Catalogue Description

This course provides an introduction to the philosophy of sex, love, and friendship from both a theoretical and historical perspective. Particular topics to be discussed include, but are not limited to, the existence and nature of love, the complexities of human sexuality, and the ideal and practical realities of friendship.

Course Description

Philosophical considerations of the nature of sex, love, and friendship are as old as philosophy itself. In its ancient Greek origins, “philosophy” is a compound word that, when rendered literally, means “the love [*philia*] of wisdom [*sophia*].” When distinguishing the type of love proper to philosophy, some philosophers align this love with the practicalities of friendship (*philia*), which Aristotle also develops as crucial to political life. Plato aligns it with *eros*, an erotic kind of love that sometimes (and sometimes not) has to do with what we would today call sexuality. Others still align it with a more universalized sense of *agape*. In this course we will begin with a study of exactly how the history of philosophy has described itself in terms of sex, love, and friendship: what do these terms mean, and what do they clarify about what it means to do philosophy? Then, we will study philosophically contemporary appearances of sex, love, and friendship: the function of repression in society, social standards of “ideal” intimate relationships, the impact of social forces (such as economics, markets, technology, etc.) upon human relationships, to name a few.

Student Handbook

Refer to: Student Handbook-2021-22

Academic Misconduct Policy & Procedures

Students are expected to uphold the standards of “Academic Integrity” set forth by the MSU Student Honor Creed. The instructor will notify the appropriate authority of any infringement of academic honesty.

“Cheating” includes the unauthorized use of certain information, materials, or devices in exams, papers, or assignments. Additionally, grading will abide by the University’s plagiarism policy. “Plagiarism” includes but is not limited to using the published or unpublished works of another person without recognition, either by paraphrase or direct quotation. The use of materials generated by agencies engaged in “selling” term papers is also plagiarism. A student who makes use of plagiarized material, or anyone that profits from (or abets) cheating, will be DISMISSED from the course. Cases will also be referred to the Dean of Students for possible dismissal from the university.

Academic Dishonesty: Cheating, collusion, and plagiarism (the act of using source material of other persons, either published or unpublished, without following the accepted techniques of crediting, or the submission for credit of work not the individual’s to whom credit is given). Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in the Office of Student Conduct:

Office of Student Conduct

Grading

Table 1: Final grades for PHIL-2823 will be determined according to the following distribution:

Assignments	Weight
Engagement	25%
Protocol 1	15%
Protocol 2	15%
Final Project Proposal	5%
Outline	10%
Final Project submission	30%

Table 2: Grades will be administered on an A-F scale according to the following percentages:

Grade	Value
A	100-90
B	89-80
C	79-70
D	69-60
F	59-0

Protocols

Most Mondays, class will start with a protocol presentation. Protocols will be no more than two pages long (single-spaced) and will provide a detailed, analytic summary of the course progress from the previous week. By the end of the semester, the collected protocols will give a full account of our entire course. The purpose of these protocols is twofold: (1) For the protocol writers, it is a writing assignment that tests student’s ability to present concise yet detailed exegesis of course material beyond text summarization, and (2) for the rest of the class, it draws daily engagement away from a fixation on note taking and refocuses on discussion, creativity, and thinking. By the end of the semester, every student will have written two protocols. Typically, protocols will be written in pairs (i.e., in collaboration with another student in the course). A specific assignment handout outlining protocol requirements in more detail will be provided during the first week.

Final Projects

Students will finish the semester by submitting a Final Project. The broadest objective of this project is to make a complicated philosophical topic clear to a defined audience—regardless of the medium used. Because PHIL-2823 constitutes a “Writing Intensive” course, all final projects must include a process of revision.

Development of the final project works in stages. Students will initially submit a proposal for their idea to the instructor and consult with the instructor over the viability of the idea. Then, the student will submit an outline of the project (either a full-sentence outline or, if the project includes research, an annotated bibliography that explains how the research done thus far will factor into the project). After feedback on these documents, the student will submit the final project, with opportunity for in-office consultation in between.

To complete these final projects, students can select from either of two broad categories:

1. A Traditional Academic Essay Project

Students have the option to write a 7-10 page (double-spaced) argumentative, analytical, or research essay on a topic of their choosing. The primary philosophical scaffold for the project must come from putting two philosophers across two time periods into conversation regarding a contemporary issue. Students are encouraged to pursue a topic that interests them the most. Those who feel “stuck” or unsure about what topic to choose are encouraged to meet with the instructor as soon as possible to brainstorm ideas. Stylistically, some essay projects might take the form of any of the following:

2. A “Public” Philosophy Project

Most students are well-acquainted with college assignments that have an audience of two: the person who created it and the person who grades it. Instead, students may elect to create a “public philosophy project,” which is a project that does philosophical work with a wider audience in mind. Students who elect to create a public philosophy project are encouraged to be creative with their ideas, so the exact design and nature of the project is left to the student (with input, approval, and some oversight by the professor, of course). All projects are required to focus on a topic, theme, figure, text, or movement covered in our course. Some ideas to consider for a public philosophy project include but definitely are not limited to:

- Create a video that analyzes a particular film by using detailed and substantive discussion from a particular philosopher from our course.
- Plan, organize, advertise, and host a philosophy event on campus. (Will require coordination with the professor to ensure that all practicalities are met. Events cannot incur financial cost and must use resources already available at/owned by the university.)
- Conduct a philosophical interview with someone whose work overlaps in some way with something from our course. Use that interview as the “source” for an essay on the subject.
- Write an op-ed that uses philosophical material to analyze your subject and prepare it for submission to *The Wichitan*. (Publication in the newspaper is not a grade requirement.)
- Create learning tutorials or other “learning objects” for future students to help them learn dense philosophical concepts, ideas, texts, etc. Can be done using video and/or slides.
- Maintain an autobiographical/journalistic blog where you attend and/or observe familiar scenes from your daily life but from the perspective of a specific philosopher. Write from the first-person perspective of that philosopher. (For example: going to the coffee shop as Descartes; waiting for the bus as Sartre; shopping at Wal-Mart as Deleuze.)
- Create an “illustrated essay” that develops a key philosophical concept.

Any project conducted as a group *must specify in the proposal* the division of labor across the group. Any project that does not produce a written final product must be accompanied by a reflective, analytical essay that elaborates the ideas behind the project, the process that went into executing it, and the philosophical (analytical) relevance of the final product. It is normal for projects, even topics, to change over time. Any substantial changes to the topic after the proposal has been submitted should include a meeting with the professor to communicate the nature of these changes.

Please note that even though this assignment specifies that it is *public*, students are not required to make their work publicly available. The “public” in the assignment title describes the *intended* audience.

Extra Credit

No extra credit will be accepted in this course. Students are therefore encouraged to keep pace with the syllabus from the start of the semester to avoid a situation in which extra credit would be desired.

Late Work

Extensions on Final Projects and Protocols will not be granted. Missed Protocols cannot be redeemed after the fact. If highly exceptional circumstances arise that prevent a student from submitting a Final Project and/or Protocol by the posted deadline, arrangements should be made with the professor ahead of time. For all other work due during this course, late work will be penalized by one-third of a letter grade per day late.

Make Up Work/Tests

Assignments more than a week late cannot be submitted and/or made up. Protocols can only be submitted on the day due and cannot be made up retroactively.

Desire-to-Learn (D2L)

Extensive use of the MSU D2L program is a part of this course. Each student is expected to be familiar with this program as it provides a primary source of communication regarding assignments, examination materials, and general course information. You can log into [D2L](#) through the MSU Homepage. If you experience difficulties, please contact the technicians listed for the program or contact your instructor.

Attendance

Students are expected to attend all meetings of the classes in which they are enrolled. Although in general students are graded on intellectual effort and performance rather than attendance, absences may lower the student's grade where class attendance and class participation are deemed essential by the faculty member. In those classes where attendance is considered as part of the grade, the instructor should so inform students of the specifics in writing at the beginning of the semester in a syllabus or separate attendance policy statement (see next two paragraphs below). An instructor who has an attendance policy must keep records on a daily basis. The instructor must give the student a verbal or written warning prior to being dropped from the class. Instructor's records will stand as evidence of absences. A student with excessive absences may be dropped from a course by the instructor. Any individual faculty member or college has the authority to establish an attendance policy, providing the policy is in accordance with the General University Policies.

Students in this course are graded on "Engagement," which includes but is not limited to attendance. You must be in attendance to be engaged, but attendance alone does not constitute engagement. "Engagement" describes the *minimum expectations* for good standing in this course: participating in class discussion, active listening, bringing the text with you to class, having done the assigned reading before coming to class, and refraining from disruptive and/or disrespectful behavior.

There is no distinction in this course between "excused" and "unexcused" absences (with the exception of absences for official university business, like, but not limited to, athletics). Students can miss class for any reason without penalty to their grade, but any student whose cumulative absences amount to three weeks of missed class will be dropped from the course. A student who misses class on the day of his or her protocol presentation (without prior arrangement with the professor) will receive a zero on the protocol and their overall Engagement grade will be reduced by a full letter grade.

Online Computer Requirements

Portions of this course make use of online materials. It is your responsibility to have (or have access to) a working computer in this class. ****Assignments and tests are due by the due date, and personal computer technical difficulties will not be considered reason for the instructor to allow students extra time to submit assignments, tests, or discussion postings.*** Computers are available on campus in various areas of the buildings as well as the Academic Success Center. ****Your computer being down is not an excuse for missing a deadline!!*** If you have any computer problems, a student helpdesk available to you. The college cannot work directly on student computers due to both liability and resource limitations however they are able to help you get connected to our online services. For help, log into [D2L](#).

Instructor Class Policies

Help — Students should discuss any concerns with the instructor as soon as possible. Many of the readings will be difficult, so *please* ask questions in class for clarification. Office hours are available throughout the week. An appointment is not required for office hours consultation, since they're "drop-in" hours. Appointments can also be made on a case-by-case basis.

Recordings — Lectures, lecture notes, assignments, etc. remain the intellectual property of the instructor. Students are not permitted to record class or disseminate the content of our class.

Conduct — Actions that diminish the quality of other students' learning will not be tolerated. Insults, slurs, or attacks of any kind will be grounds for permanent removal from the course. Every student is expected to engage with the course material in a responsible and respectful manner. This course will include open discussion of a diverse array of philosophical ideas. Students are likely to find some ideas popular and others unpopular. That's normal; and the course does not defend any one philosophical viewpoint. Therefore, disagreement is normal in classes of this nature; disagreement is conducive to positive learning outcomes, regardless of whether this disagreement pertains between texts themselves, between texts and readers, or between students. Disagreement or debate that turns negative, derogatory, hostile, or otherwise demeaning *in any way* will not be tolerated in class.

Course Texts — Please acquire *hard copies* of the required course texts. This will allow us greater movement through the text during our in-class discussions. E-texts are permitted if you have a device equipped to treat the e-text like a regular book. Please do not access your e-texts through your cell phone. All students are expected to come to class having (a) the text to be discussed in hand, and (b) read that text before class starts.

Personal technology — Cell phones, earbuds, and all other personal electronic devices must remain stowed and hidden for the duration of the class session. Unless permitted in order to accommodate a disability officially recognized by and registered with the Office of Disability Support Services, all notes must be taken by pen/pencil on paper rather than a laptop.

Email — Check emails regularly, since that will be the only method by which students are informed about class cancellations or any changes to the course. Your instructor will email you via D2L. Therefore, either make sure you check your D2L email regularly, or change the settings of your D2L inbox to reroute your D2L emails to a preferred email address. When emailing your professors, please ensure that proper etiquette and professionalism is being observed. Always check the syllabus and the course schedule first to ensure that any questions are not already answered there. Your instructor will not respond at length to emails about writing assignments after the assignment has been posted. Please allow 24 hours for an email reply.

Change of Schedule

A student dropping a course (but not withdrawing from the University) within the first 12 class days of a regular semester or the first four class days of a summer semester is eligible for a 100% refund of applicable tuition and fees. Dates are published in the [Schedule of Classes](#) each semester.

Refund and Repayment Policy

A student who withdraws or is administratively withdrawn from Midwestern State University (MSU) may be eligible to receive a refund for all or a portion of the tuition, fees and room/board charges that were paid to MSU for the semester. HOWEVER, if the student received financial aid (federal/state/institutional grants, loans and/or scholarships), all or a portion of the refund may be returned to the financial aid programs. As described below, two formulas (federal and state) exist in determining the amount of the refund. (Examples of each refund calculation will be made available upon request).

Services for Students with Disabilities

In accordance with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Midwestern State University endeavors to make reasonable accommodations to ensure equal opportunity for qualified persons with disabilities to participate in all educational, social, and recreational programs and activities. After notification of acceptance, students requiring accommodations should make application for such assistance through Disability Support Services, located in the Clark Student Center, Room

168, (940) 397-4140. Current documentation of a disability will be required in order to provide appropriate services, and each request will be individually reviewed. For more details, please go to [Disability Support Services](#).

College Policies

Campus Carry Rules/Policies

Refer to: [Campus Carry Rules and Policies](#)

Smoking/Tobacco Policy

College policy strictly prohibits the use of tobacco products in any building owned or operated by MSU TEXAS. Adult students may smoke only in the outside designated-smoking areas at each location.

Alcohol and Drug Policy

To comply with the Drug Free Schools and Communities Act of 1989 and subsequent amendments, students and employees of Midwestern State are informed that strictly enforced policies are in place which prohibits the unlawful possession, use or distribution of any illicit drugs, including alcohol, on university property or as part of any university-sponsored activity. Students and employees are also subject to all applicable legal sanctions under local, state and federal law for any offenses involving illicit drugs on University property or at University-sponsored activities.

Campus Carry

Effective August 1, 2016, the Campus Carry law (Senate Bill 11) allows those licensed individuals to carry a concealed handgun in buildings on public university campuses, except in locations the University establishes as prohibited. The new Constitutional Carry law does not change this process. Concealed carry still requires a License to Carry permit, and openly carrying handguns is not allowed on college campuses. For more information, visit [Campus Carry](#).

Active Shooter

The safety and security of our campus is the responsibility of everyone in our community. Each of us has an obligation to be prepared to appropriately respond to threats to our campus, such as an active aggressor. Please review the information provided by MSU Police Department regarding the options and strategies we can all use to stay safe during difficult situations. For more information, visit [MSUReady – Active Shooter](#). Students are encouraged to watch the video entitled “*Run. Hide. Fight.*” which may be electronically accessed via the University police department’s webpage: [“Run. Hide. Fight.”](#)

Grade Appeal Process

Students who wish to appeal a grade should consult the Midwestern State University [MSU Catalog](#)

Changes to Syllabus

Changes in the course syllabus, procedure, assignments, and schedule may be made at the discretion of the instructor. All details of any changes made to the course will be made available to students via email.

Mandatory Reporting

Under Title IX, all MSU faculty are “mandatory reporters” of any disclosure from a student of sexual assault, abuse, harassment, dating violence, stalking, or other forms of sexual misconduct. It is the legal responsibility of a “mandatory reporter” to notify the Title IX coordinator if a student reports being the victim of any of the aforementioned abuses. For more information, please visit the [Sexual Misconduct Resource](#).

Course Schedule

Week One

8/28: Course introductions and overviews

8/30: Plato, *Symposium* 172a-178a

Week Two

9/4: No class. Labor Day.

9/6: Plato, *Symposium* 178a-198a

Week Three

9/11: Plato, *Symposium* 198a-212c

9/13: Plato, *Symposium* 212c-223d

Week Four

Due: Group 1 Protocol

9/18: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (PDF)

9/20: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (PDF); & Reeves, "Friendship Recession" (A/V Content folder)

Week Five

Due: Group 2 Protocol

9/25: Cicero, *Laelius* (in *On Living and Dying Well*)

9/27: Augustine, *Confessions* book VII (PDF)

Week Six

Due: Group 3 Protocol

10/2: Foucault, *History of Sexuality, volume 1*, pp. 3-13, 17-49

10/4: Foucault, *History of Sexuality, volume 1*, pp. 53-73

Week Seven

Due: Group 4 Protocol

10/9: Foucault, *History of Sexuality, volume 1*, pp. 77-114

10/11: Foucault, *History of Sexuality, volume 1*, pp. 115-131

Week Eight

Due: Group 5 Protocol

10/16: Foucault, *History of Sexuality, volume 1*, pp. 135-159

10/18: Malabou, *Pleasure Erased*, chapters 1-3

Week Nine

Due: Final Project Proposals by 11:59 p.m. on 10/22 in D2L dropbox

Due: Group 6 Protocol

10/23: Malabou, *Pleasure Erased*, chapters 5-6, 8, 10-11

10/25: Malabou, *Pleasure Erased*, chapters 12, 14-15

Week Ten

Note: Last day to drop Spring courses with a "W" is 10/30. Later drops will receive "F."

Due: Group 7 Protocol

10/30: Srinivasan, *The Right to Sex* pp. 149-179

11/1: Dworkin, "Prostitution and Male Supremacy" & "Pornography Happens to Women" (PDF)

Week Eleven

Due: Group 8 Protocol

11/6: Srinivasan, *The Right to Sex* pp. 33-71

11/8: Srinivasan, *The Right to Sex* pp. 73-91; and Barthes, "Striptease" (PDF)

Week Twelve

Due: Final Project Outlines by 11:59 p.m. on 11/12 in D2L dropbox

Due: Group 9 Protocol

11/13: bell hooks, "Heart to Heart" and "Good Sex" in *Teaching Community* (PDF)

11/15: Srinivasan, *The Right to Sex* pp. 123-148 (also recommended pp. 1-31)

Week Thirteen

Due: Group 10 Protocol

11/20: Overthink ep. 15 "Marriage"; Reeves, "Is Marriage Dying?" (A/V Content folder)

11/22: No Class. Thanksgiving.

Week Fourteen

11/27: Overthink ep. 16 “Monogamy” (A/V Content folder)

11/29: Overthink ep. 17 “Open Relationships” (A/V Content folder)

Week Fifteen

12/4: Overthink ep. 18 “Polyamory” (A/V Content folder)

12/6: Final project symposium and course conclusions

Final Projects due in D2L dropbox no later than 11:59 p.m. on 12/13

Course Content Warning and Student Acknowledgement

This syllabus has been distributed to all enrolled students and discussed in class on the first day of the semester. All students who remain enrolled in this course after the first session acknowledge the terms, requirements, content, and expectations outlined in this syllabus.

Course content will include discussions of human sexuality and will use terminology that, while always respectful, might not be common in other classes. At times, course content will also address certain structures of sexual violence. At other times, the course will evaluate the nature and possible criticisms of various forms of intimate relationships. It is inevitable that students will be exposed to ideas with which they disagree. At all times, these ideas will be treated with respect because the ability to engage thoughtfully with ideas with which you disagree is a hallmark of intellectual maturity. Students who already know themselves to be inherently unwilling to expose themselves to these topics, or to treat them with the intellectual seriousness that this course requires, should consider dropping the class.

Students with concerns about possible course content should bring these concerns to the attention of the instructor during the first week of the semester to determine whether this course is right for them. Additionally, any student struggling with the course content later in the semester is encouraged to consult with the instructor.