

PHL 243S: Philosophy of Human Sexuality

Summer 2021 (July–August), University of Toronto, Mississauga Campus

Instructor	Matthew Delhey matt.delhey@mail.utoronto.ca	Office Hours	By appointment
TA	Katherine Crone katherine.crone@mail.utoronto.ca	Office Hours	By appointment
Time	Tuesday & Thursday 5–8	Delivery	Online Synchronous on Zoom

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Love and sexuality have been subjects of philosophical reflection since its inception, even giving philosophy its name, love (*philos*) of wisdom (*sophia*). In this course, we will examine a variety of philosophical views on love and sexuality in the tradition, paying particular attention to Freud’s “Copernican revolution” in our thinking about human sexuality and its role in unconscious life. Some of the questions we will address include: What is the nature of love and sexuality? Is there such a thing as sexual morality or sexual perversion? What is the difference between sex and gender? Do our sexual categories, such as ‘sex’ and ‘gender,’ play a role in social emancipation (and, if so, what kind of role)? We will conclude our course by considering feminist and queer approaches to gender, love, and sexuality. As we will see, these critical approaches call into question many of the assumptions governing the traditional and psychoanalytic paradigms of sexuality. All texts will be made available online.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Attendance. 10%.
2. Discussion questions. 15%.
3. Two response papers. (2 x 25%) 50%.
4. Essay exam. 25%.

Attendance. This course requires a substantial amount of participation, which minimally requires your attendance. To this end, you will be required to attend each class. You are responsible for indicating your attendance. This is done by completing the corresponding attendance assignment on Quercus *after* each class. Ideally, this indication would be completed immediately after the class ends (i.e., at 8:00 pm, or when your discussion group ends); I will also remind you to do so as well. By initially the form, you acknowledge, with full academic integrity, that you attended that day’s class in full (i.e., both the lecture and the discussion session). Of course, you may be unable to attend class (things come up!). You are therefore permitted to miss *two* classes without penalty, no questions asked. However, no additional absences will be excused.

Discussion questions. This course contains a substantial discussion component (see below). Successful discussion of philosophical texts cannot be conducted *ad hoc*; instead, it requires that participants have already begun to reflect critically on these texts’ concepts and arguments. Therefore, you will be required to submit *one or two* discussion questions on Quercus *before each*

class (i.e., by 5:00 pm). These questions, which need not exceed a sentence or two, should facilitate our group discussion. That is, you should direct these questions towards deepening *our* understanding of the assigned reading for *this* class (they should therefore *not* deal with any earlier readings). The precise nature of your questions is up to you. They may point to a passage you found particularly confusing (or enlightening), an argument or concept you would like to understand better (or at all), or a concern you have with the author’s argument, among many other options. Here’s an example based on our first *Symposium* reading: “In his speech in praise of love, Phaedrus claims (180b) that the gods more impressed by a beloved who loves his lover (like Achilles) than a lover who loves her beloved (like Alcestis). I couldn’t quite figure out from his speech *why* Phaedrus thinks this claim to be true, and it seems quite strange to me. Why, exactly, should love be construed in this asymmetrical way?” The discussion questions will be marked for completion; *submitting a good faith effort on time earns you full credit*. No late discussion questions will be accepted, full stop. However, like attendance, you may likewise miss *two* submissions without penalty. You thus have two responsibilities for each class: one due beforehand (discussion questions) and one afterward (attendance).

Response papers. These are short essays (about four pages) that require you to ‘zoom in’ on one of our readings, focusing on a single idea or argument. The aim of these writing assignments is twofold. First, they provide you an opportunity to philosophically engage with our texts in more detail, giving you a chance to work through an argument or idea on your own. But they also provide an occasion for developing your writing skills, not only as they pertain to philosophy but also as general means of clear and cogent self-expression. Writing is a muscle, and the only way to strengthen it is to exercise it! Paper topics and further guidance will be distributed later in the course.

Essay exam: The essay exam will consist of two questions that must be answered in short essay form. In contrast to the response papers, the essay exam will require you to compare and synthesize arguments across multiple authors or texts. The essay exam will be *asynchronous*, meaning that you will be able to complete the exam at a time of your convenience over a multi-day window. The exam is officially due on the last day of class (August 12), but I will grant a class-wide extension until August 20. I will distribute more information regarding the essay exam later in the term.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Tuesday

Thursday

PART I: PHILIA & EROS IN THE TRADITION

WEEK 1 July 6: Introduction; Plato, *Symposium*, 1–12 (172a–180c). July 8: Plato, *Symposium*, 13–44 (180c–201c).

WEEK 2 July 13: Plato, *Symposium*, 45–77 (201d–223d). July 15: Lear, “Eros and Unknowing: The Psychoanalytic Significance of Plato’s *Symposium*.”

PART II: THE PSYCHOANALYTIC REVOLUTION: SEXUALITY & PERVERSION

WEEK 3 July 20: Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, 130–172; “Letter to an American Mother.” July 22: Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, 173–206
First paper due. **Midterm evaluation due (optional).**

WEEK 4 July 27: Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, 207–243. July 29: Freud, “The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex”; “On the Universal Tendency to Debasement in the Sphere of Love.”

PART III: FEMINISM BETWEEN SEX & GENDER

WEEK 5 August 5: De Beauvoir, *Second Sex* (selections); Firestone, *Dialectic of Sex* (selections). August 3: Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (selections).

WEEK 6 August 10: Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution.” August 12: Chu, *Females*.
Second paper due. **Essay exam due.**

EXAM PERIOD August 18–20: Final exam period.
 August 20: Last day to submit essay exam.

Summer courses move fast. Keep up with the readings, don’t fall behind!

SESSIONAL DATES (SUMMER 2021)

Please see the [UTM Registrar](#) for more information.

Classes begin in S courses	Monday, July 5, 2021
Last day to add an S course.	Sunday, July 11, 2021
Civic holiday, University closed; no classes.	Monday, August 2, 2021
<u>Last day to drop an S course from academic record.</u>	<u>Monday, August 2, 2021</u>
Classes end in S courses.	Monday, August 16, 2021
Final assessments in S courses.	Wednesday, August 18–20

LECTURE STRUCTURE

Three hours is a lot of time to be on Zoom. In order to break up this block into manageable chunks, each class will be divided into a lecture component followed by discussion groups. (You can see which discussion group you're in by going to the "People" tab on Quercus.) The *lectures* will deal with the background, arguments, and important passages from the text. During the lectures, you'll have opportunities to ask questions, but these should be oriented towards our general understanding of the material. In the *discussion groups*, however, we will all turn our cameras on and deal with the texts dialogically, which will allow us to address specific questions of a more critical or evaluative nature.

5:10–6:30		6:45–7:15		7:30–8:00
Lecture (Tuesday)	Break	Discussion Group A	Break	Discussion Group B
Lecture (Thursday)	Break	Discussion Group B	Break	Discussion Group A

COURSE CITIZENSHIP

Since this course will be held exclusively online, it is more imperative than ever to remind ourselves of the principles which facilitate productive and enjoyable intellectual engagements. In particular, I would like to underscore the following elements of course citizenship:

Address. With your permission, I would like to address you by your first name, and I would ask in return that you address me by my first name, Matt. If we conducted this seminar in German, we would use the *Du* (informal second-person) form rather than the *Sie* (formal second-person) form. This practice helps foster an atmosphere of equality and mutual respect. *NB:* I have enabled the *renaming feature* in our Zoom meetings, so please feel free to *rename* yourself to your preferred name.

Respect. In general, I expect you all to be respectful of me and one another and I consider it my duty to be respectful of you. This means that you must not interrupt, speak over, or shout down other people in the class. Philosophy (and academic investigation in general) requires a relatively dispassionate, rational engagement with the ideas and arguments of others—both living and dead. The careful but critical evaluation of ideas, arguments, and theories is essential and will be encouraged; insulting, condescending to, or otherwise attacking individuals in this class for their beliefs, views, theories, or for any other reason, will be quashed. Please remember to be courteous, humble, and open-minded.

Deep listening: As David Rome explains: "Deep Listening involves listening, from a deep, receptive, and caring place in oneself, to deeper and often subtler levels of meaning and intention in the other person. It is listening that is generous, empathic, supportive, accurate, and trusting. Trust here does not imply agreement, but the trust that whatever others say, regardless of how well or poorly it is said, comes from something true in their experience. Deep Listening is an ongoing practice of suspending self-oriented, reactive thinking and opening one's awareness to the unknown and unexpected."

Authentic engagement. By this I mean engagement that comes from a real desire to know. We practice authentic engagement, for example, by raising a question that has truly perplexed us from the reading, and we want to air this question for feedback and discussion. The most common way to practice inauthentic engagement is to show off what you know. Our task is to create space for both genuine curiosity and humility as we work together to gain a deeper understanding of the course material.

Constructive participation. Participation is constructive when you add to the discussion and help it progress further. The key to constructive participation is to ask yourself, if only tacitly, “How can I build upon what has just been said?” rather than “How can I dispute what has just been said?” Think of our conversations together as buildings: Can you offer something that will build a new level, or a firmer foundation? Bear in mind that sometimes the most effective way for building a firmer foundation is to request clarification.

Statement against Bro Philosophy. Critical thinking and sharpness of analysis are among the highest virtues of analytic philosophy. Sadly, there is a tendency for these virtues to become animated by attitudes of aggression, domination, and a spirit of winning arguments—in short, to become Bro philosophy. Since the effects of Bro philosophy are both unproductive for genuine philosophical work and alienating for many members of the community, our aim in this seminar is to cultivate a non-adversarial atmosphere for discussion. A key to sustaining this atmosphere will be to regard one another as co-participants in a group effort to understand the material better. In terms of analogies, we can then see ourselves as members embarking upon a difficult trek (where team-work is essential for reaching our common end), rather than as gladiators pitted against the text, or each other, in “bloodless battles” (to use Kant’s memorable phrase).

Acknowledgement of Land. We can never work to end systematic and institutional violence if we do not centre the narratives of indigenous folks in our collective decision-making for social justice and equity. As settlers in Turtle Island, we directly benefit from the colonization and genocide of the indigenous people of this land. In order to engage in resistance and solidarity against the injustices inflicted on the indigenous people of this land, it is imperative we constantly engage in acts of decolonization. Therefore, I would like to acknowledge that we are on the traditional lands of the “Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation” peoples, the traditional caretakers of this land. I would also like to pay my respects to their elders past and present, and to any who may be here with us today, physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. (From the UTM Student Union website: <https://utmsu.ca/about-us/what-we-do/equity/>).

COURSE MECHANICS & POLICIES

Email. All course-related communication must be sent through **email** (please do *not* send me any messages through Quercus). I will do my best to respond to all emails within one working day (i.e., 24 hours); if you have not heard back from me by then, please send a follow-up reply. Note: this does not include weekends and holidays – during which we should all take a break from email! If you’re asking about course mechanics, please double-check to ensure that your question

hasn't already been answered in the syllabus or in a Quercus announcement. Additionally, substantial philosophical questions are nearly impossible to answer satisfactorily over email; in these cases, we should schedule a time to talk over Zoom instead. That being said, please do not hesitate to reach out to me if you have any concerns.

Late work. Essays submitted late will be deducted 5% of the value of the assignment for each day late, up to a total of 35%. After 7 days, the essay will no longer be accepted. Late submissions for discussion questions and attendance will not be accepted, but students may miss two of each without penalty.

Missed term work. Students are permitted two absences and may miss two discussion questions without penalty. Students may also submit the two essay assignments late in accordance with the penalty outlined above. Any further accommodations should be requested via email no later than three days before the assignment due date and should include all of the relevant supporting documentation in addition to the ROSI absence declaration (e.g., medical note).

Extensions. If you would like to request an extension, please **email** me (and *not* the TA). As mentioned above, no extensions will be granted for discussion questions, nor will additional absences be excused (except under accommodation circumstances outlined above). On the other hand, I am quite liberal with extensions for papers. Note, however, that, in fairness for the TA, feedback for late papers will be proportionally reduced. (This is especially pertinent for the first response paper.)

Recordings. I will record the *lectures* for this course, but never the discussion sessions, for students who are unable to attend class. This means that your participation during the lectures (e.g., if you choose to ask a question) will be recorded on video. These videos will not be distributed; they will only be available by request. (I will, however, post the lecture slides.) I take privacy very seriously: please do not make your own recordings of the course material. *Under no circumstances will the group discussions be recorded - please respect the privacy of the discussion sessions.* Course videos and materials belong to the instructor, the University, and/or other sources depending on the specific facts of each situation and are protected by copyright. *Do not download, copy, or share any course or student materials or videos.* Please contact me if you have any questions regarding this policy.

ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES

Students with diverse learning needs are welcome in this course. Please contact the UTM Accessibility Services for a needs assessment and to make arrangements: <https://www.utm.utoronto.ca/accessibility/welcome-accessibility-services>.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity is essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarship in a university, and to ensuring that a degree from the University of Toronto Mississauga is a strong signal of each

student's individual academic achievement. As a result, UTM treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously.

The University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters outlines behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty and the process for addressing academic offences. Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

- In papers and assignments:
 - Using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement.
 - Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor.
 - Making up sources or facts.
 - Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment.
- On tests and exams:
 - Using or possessing unauthorized aids.
 - Looking at someone else's answers during an exam or test.
 - Misrepresenting your identity.
- In academic work:
 - Falsifying institutional documents or grades.
 - Falsifying or altering any documentation required, including (but not limited to) doctor's notes.

With regard to **remote learning and online courses**, UTM wishes to remind students that they are expected to adhere to the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters regardless of the course delivery method. By offering students the opportunity to learn remotely, UTM expects that students will maintain the same academic honesty and integrity that they would in a classroom setting. Potential academic offences in a digital context include, but are not limited to:

- Remote assessments:
 - Accessing unauthorized resources (search engines, chat rooms, Reddit, etc.) for assessments.
 - Using technological aids (e.g. software) beyond what is listed as permitted in an assessment.
 - Posting test, essay, or exam questions to message boards or social media.
 - Creating, accessing, and sharing assessment questions and answers in virtual "course groups."
 - Working collaboratively, in-person or online, with others on assessments that are expected to be completed individually.

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following procedures outlined in the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters. If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or appropriate research and citation methods, you are expected to seek out additional information on academic integrity from your instructor or from other institutional resources.