# Philosophy 171L: Love

## Course Description:

What is love? What, if any reasons, do we have to love others? And what is the connection (or tension) between love, on the one hand, and morality on the other? This course will use love to explore questions about the nature of reasons, moral psychology, partiality, impartiality and the foundations of ethics. We'll start with two classic papers that make the case that moral theory somehow fails to accommodate the phenomenon of love. We'll then dive into the contemporary literature on the reasons (if any) for love (the attitude) and loving action, much of which is a response, in one form or another, to the first week's papers. With various accounts of reasons for love in view, we'll return to the idea that there is some kind of tension between ethics or morality, and consider more generally what role love plays in a life well lived and in ethical theorizing. Throughout much of the course's second half, we'll focus on authors not widely represented in the contemporary philosophical literature who take love as in some way foundational to ethics.

## Permission to Enroll:

This class officially requires my permission to enroll or audit; priority will be given to upperclassmen. Some background in philosophy is highly recommended (ideally 3 or more classes).

## Meeting Times:

Class: Monday, 12-2:45 PM. Emerson 310.
Section: TBD
Office Hours with Quinn: Emerson 208. Thursday, 3:30 PM – 5:30 PM (see announcements for changes)

TF: Isaijah Shadrach (ijohnson@g.harvard.edu)
Office Hours with Isaijah: TBD

## Course Readings:

Most readings will be posted online. The following books will *not be posted*. (Let me know if you need photocopies!)

- Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good*
- bell hooks, *All About Love*

## Grading and Assessment

- Attendance, Participation (10%)
    - Attendance at all class sessions and section is required. I will excuse absences for good reason—just let me know!
    - I expect all those taking the class for credit to *contribute actively* to discussion each week. Full credit requires actually participating.
- Discussion Posts (10%)
    - Each week, students will have post a short (3-5 sentence) response on Canvas that raises one or two question about or critiques of the reading; the question can be clarificatory! The most useful posts are often those expressing confusion—ideally explaining the source of the puzzlement.
    - Posts are due on *Sunday at noon* and graded solely on the basis of completion.

    - Posts are not required the week one is presenting.
- Presentation (10%)
    - All students will give presentations with a partner in which the two will introduce the day's readings and open discussion. Presentations should be approximately 10-15 min long and use a handout or slides.
    - Students should plan to meet with me the week prior to their presentation to discuss.
- Undergraduate Papers: (15%/20%/35% or 60%)
    - There are two options for paper writing: the default three paper option, and a one paper option. *I strongly recommend the three paper option unless a) you have taken at least 6 or more courses in philosophy, and b) you are strongly considering graduate school in philosophy or a neighboring discipline.* Most people will benefit *much* more from more frequent, smaller writing, with more opportunities for feedback.
    - Three Paper Option:
        - Paper 1 Due 10/10, 11:59 PM 1250 words. (15%)
        - Paper 2 Due 11/7, 11:59 PM 1250 words. (20%)
        - Paper 3 Due [Registrar's Final Assessment Date], 2500 words (35%)
    - One Paper Option: 5000 words and 60%.
        - Topic Due 10/29
        - Final Paper Due [Registrar's Final Assessment Date]
    - Oral Component
        - For the three paper option, 1/3 of the grade of papers 1 and 2 will be given in an oral defense. Defenses will last ~15 min and pursue further lines of argument raised in the paper. Paper 3 will not have a defense; but you ***must*** meet with me or Isaijah to discuss the paper in advance (this will not be graded).
        - For the one paper option, you must meet with me or Isaijah 3 times in advance of the paper. Roughly: once to discuss a topic, once to hash out rough ideas, and once to go over something close an outline or very rough draft.
    - Late Penalties: Papers will lose 1/3 of a letter grade every day they are late. Extensions are available for papers 1 and 2! Just reach out to (both of) us and let us know *in advance* of the deadline and we will work something out. **We cannot offer extensions on the final paper.**
- Graduate Paper: 7000-10000 words (60%)
    - Meet with me to clear a topic by 11/12.
    - Outline/Abstract due by [Registrar's Final Assessment Date]
    - Finished Paper due by start of the next term. DO NOT TAKE AN INCOMPLETE.

## AI Use

I expect that all work students submit for this course will be their own. As a default, I specifically forbid the use of any other generative artificial intelligence tools at all stages of the work process, including preliminary ones. If you have a use for generative text AI (including writing an essay that engages with the its functionality), let me know and I will be happy to clear it for limited use in advance. Violations of this policy will be considered academic misconduct. We draw your attention to the fact that different classes at Harvard could implement different AI policies, and it is the student's responsibility to conform to expectations for each course.

## Additional Requirements

No laptops. iPads or tablets are fine only if used with a stylus; they may not be used for anything not directly related to the class. If, however, you have some special need, send me and/or Disability Resources an email and we can work it out. If you are found using gadgets for impermissible activities (checking email, etc.), your privileges will be revoked or (if applicable) we will meet with Disability Resources.

## Schedule and Readings

### Unit I: Reasons for Love and Loving Action

**9/2: The No Reasons View**
Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love*
Grads: Yonming, "Do We Love For Reasons?"

**9/14: Loving because of the Beloved's Qualities, I**
Jollimore, *Love's Vision*, Ch. 1-2
Optional: *Love's Vision*, Ch. 3 (recommended if interested in epistemology!)
Grads: Jollimore "Love as something in between"

**9/21: Loving because of a Beloved's Qualities, II**
Jollimore, *Love's Vision*, Ch. 4
Yao, "Grace and Alienation"
Grads: Lewis, "The aesthetics of coming to know someone"
Grads: Lewis, "The Musicality of Speech" (Lewis will zoom into the grad section!)
Optional: Finish Jollimore's book.

**9/28: Loving because of one's Relationship with the Beloved**
Kolodny, "Love as Valuing a Relationship"
Grads: Scheffler, "Morality and Reasonable Partiality"
Grads: Kolodny, "Which Relationships Justify Partiality? The Case of Parents and Children"
Grads (optional): White, "Love, Partiality, and History"

**10/5: Loving because the beloved is human**
Setiya, "Love and the Value of a Life"
Lord, "Of Soulmates and Old Spouses: How To Be a Romantic Kantian about the Ethics of Love"
Grads: Velleman, "Love as a Moral Emotion" (undergrads: if you have already read the Setiya, read this)
Grads: Millgram, "Kantian Crystalization"
Grads: Pettit, "Love and Its Place in Moral Discourse"
Optional: Setiya, "Other People"

**Paper 1 Due, 10/9, 11:59 PM**

**10/12: Holiday**

## Unit II: Love as a Point of Departure?

**10/19: Love & Respect?**
Ebels-Duggan, "Learning from Love: Reasoning, Respect, and the Value of a Person"
White, "Love First"
Grads: Ebels-Duggan, "Against beneficence: A normative account of love."

**10/26: Love in Politics**
King, "Love in Action" and "Loving One's Enemies" (in *Strength to Love*)
Baldwin, excerpts from *The Fire Next Time*
Orwell, "Reflections on Gandhi"
Grads: Malcom X, "Message to the Grassroots"
Grads: Cherry, "Love, Anger, and Racial Injustice"
Grads: Preston-Roedder, "Love in Personal and Political Life"

**11/2: Climbing the Ladder**
Plato, *Symposium*
Grads: Start Reading Nehamas

**11/9: The Beautiful and the Good**
Nehamas, *Only a Promise of Happiness*, excerpts
Grads: finish the Nehamas book
Grads: Dover, "Love's Curiosity"
Grads: Dover, "Two kinds of curiosity"

**11/16: Love as seeing what's real**
Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good,* excerpts
Grads: Deihl, "Loving and Being Loved"
Grads: Setiya, "Mudroch on the Sovereignty of Good"
**Paper 2 Due, 11/6, 11:59 pm**

**11/23: A(n impossible) Demand of Love?**
Løgstrup, *The Ethical Demand*, excerpts
Grads: more excerpts

**11/30: Love Amidst Lovelessness and Loving Oneself**
bell hooks, *All About Love*, excerpts

**All final assignments due on Registrar's final assessment date for this class.**

### Some other works that might be of interest when thinking about paper topics.

- Cherry, "Love, Anger, and Racial Injustice"
- Jaworska & Wonderly, "Loving and Caring"
- Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*

- Keller, *Partiality*
- Marusic, *On the Temporality of Emotion* (the last ch. especially)
- Noddings, *Caring*
- Outka, *Agape*
- Singer, *Philosophy of Love*
- Simone Weil, *The Need for Roots*
- Spaemann, *Love and the Dignity of Human Life*
- Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice*
- Wonderly, "Love and Attachment"
- May, *Love: A History* and *Love: A New Understanding of an Ancient Emotion*
- Yao, "Eros and Anxiety"