

# IS104 Forms of Love

## Medieval Literatures and Cultures

Seminar leaders: Tracy Colony, Geoff Lehman, Katalin Makkai, Daniel Reeve, Hans Stauffacher

Course coordinator: Tracy Colony

Course times: Tuesday 14:00-15:30 and Thursday 14:00-15:30

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### Course description

“Love” is a word whose meanings seem to be known to all of us. It names a feeling, an experience, and a value whose importance appears incontestable. But did “love” always mean what we might consider it to mean today? How recent are ideals of romantic or sexual love? What kinds of prototypes did they have in earlier historical periods? To what extent is our word “love” equivalent to *agapē*, *philia*, *eros*, or other concepts used for it in the languages and cultures that have shaped European and so-called “Western” culture? This course explores the other meanings for the word “love” that contribute to our contemporary perspective or apparently diverge markedly from it.

The course begins with an examination of the roots of the spiritualization of sexual love in the “West” in the Hebrew Bible and with Plato’s philosophy. The main focus of the course, however, is on texts and ideas from the place and time that was foundational for the development of the concept of love in European societies, and yet seems distant and strange now: Medieval Christendom. Through diverse kinds of Christian texts (gospel, sermon, vision, and a cathedral), we explore the different ways in which this religion envisaged the category of love and elevated it to primacy. Beginning with its roots in the erotic poetry of Ovid, and marking its rebirth in the Arabic, Hebrew, and Provençal songs of medieval Spain and France, we also examine the equally important phenomenon of medieval “courtly love” that flourished alongside Christianity and also, perhaps, in competition with it. We consider, further, texts drawn from non-Christian traditions of the period: the mosque of Córdoba as well as writings of the Persian poets Rumi and Hafez.

## Course books

Reader

Plato, *Symposium*. Trans. Seth Bernadete. The University of Chicago Press, 2001.

ISBN-13: 978-0226042756

Ovid, *The Erotic Poems*. Trans. Peter Green. Penguin, 1982.

ISBN-13: 978-0140443608

Chrétien de Troyes, *Arthurian Romances*. Trans. William Kibler. Penguin, 1991.

ISBN-13: 978-0140445213

Thomas, *Tristan*. Trans. A.T. Hatto. Penguin, 2004. ISBN-13: 978-0-140-44098-0

Dante, *Vita Nuova*. Trans. Mark Musa. Oxford University Press, 2008.

ISBN-13: 978-0199540655

## Library and book purchase policies

The college book policy for 2018-2019 is that reserve stocks of books will be lent to students on the basis of need, or (thereafter) on a first come first served basis. Books not yet owned by the college will be purchased only to create a small library reserve collection, and for students receiving more than 70% financial aid. Otherwise, students must purchase all course books.

## Requirements

### Attendance

Attendance at all classes is expected. More than two absences (that is, absences from two sessions of 90 minutes) in a semester will affect the participation grade for the course.

### Assessment

#### Participation

Students should arrive to each class on time and prepared. Being prepared means:

- (1) having completed the assigned reading (in the specific editions indicated above),
- (2) bringing to class a non-electronic copy of the assigned reading, and
- (3) being ready to initiate and to contribute to discussion.

Engagement in class discussion should be regular as well as productive; quantity alone will not favorably affect the participation grade.

## Writing assignments

Midterm essay (2000-2500 words), due 23:59 Friday March 15

Final essay (3000-3500 words), due 23:59 Friday May 17

## Policy on late submission of papers

From the Student Handbook on the submission of essays:

*Essays that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where an instructor agrees to accept a late essay, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline and cannot receive a grade of higher than C. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.*

## Grade breakdown

Participation 30% (15% each rotation)

Midterm essay 30%

Final essay 40%

## Schedule

Classes marked “lecture hall” meet in the lecture hall.

### Rotation 1

#### Week 1

Tu Jan. 29 **lecture hall**

The Hebrew Bible: Song of Songs (Reader)

Th Jan. 31 The Hebrew Bible: Song of Songs (Reader)

#### Week 2

Tu Feb. 5 Plato, *Symposium*, 172A-193E (pp. 1-22)

Th Feb. 7 Plato, *Symposium*, 194A-212C (pp. 23-43)

#### Week 3

Tu Feb. 12 Plato, *Symposium*, 208C-223D (pp. 39-54) (i.e., reread 208C-212C)

Th Feb. 14 Ovid, *The Amores*, pp. 85-124

#### Week 4

Tu Feb. 19 Ovid, *The Amores*, pp. 125-165  
Th Feb. 21 Gospel of Matthew (Reader)

**Week 5**

Tu Feb. 26 **lecture hall**  
Gospel of John (Reader)  
Th Feb. 28 Gospel of John (Reader)

**Week 6**

Tu Mar. 5 Bernard of Clairvaux, "Sermons on Love", sermons 1, 2, 4, 7 (Reader)  
Th Mar. 7 Julian of Norwich, *The Showings*, Chapters 51-63, pp. 267-305 (Reader)

**Week 7**

Tu Mar. 12 **lecture hall**  
Troubadours and Music: Arabic, Hebrew, and Provençal (Reader)  
Th Mar. 14 Troubadours and Music: Arabic, Hebrew, and Provençal (Reader)

Midterm essay due 23:59 March 15

**Rotation 2**

**Week 8**

Tu Mar. 19 Chrétien de Troyes, "Erec and Enide", in *Arthurian Romances*, pp. 37-71  
Th Mar. 21 Chrétien de Troyes, "Erec and Enide", in *Arthurian Romances*, pp. 72-122

**Week 9**

Tu Mar. 26 Chrétien de Troyes, "Yvain, Knight of the Lion", in *Arthurian Romances*, pp. 295-337  
Th Mar. 28 Chrétien de Troyes, "Yvain, Knight of the Lion", in *Arthurian Romances*, pp. 338-380

**Week 10**

Tu Apr. 2 **lecture hall**  
Marie de France, selections (Reader)  
Th Apr. 4 Marie de France, selections (Reader)

**Week 11**

Tu Apr. 9 Thomas, *Tristan* pp. 301-353  
Th Apr. 11 **lecture hall** 19:30 film: *L'Éternel retour* (1943) Jean Delannoy

(Spring Break)

**Week 12**

Tu Apr. 23      **lecture hall**  
The mosque of Córdoba and Chartres cathedral, 1 Corinthians (Reader)  
Th Apr. 25      The mosque of Córdoba and Chartres cathedral, Avicenna (Reader)

**Week 13**

Tu Apr. 30      Rumi, selected poetry (Reader), Hafez, selected poetry (Reader)  
Th May 2        Rumi, selected poetry (Reader), Hafez, selected poetry (Reader)

**Week 14**

Tu May 7        **lecture hall**  
Dante, *Vita Nuova*, I-XXI (pp. 3-42)  
Th May 9        Dante, *Vita Nuova*, XXII-XLII (pp. 43-84)

**Week 15**        Completion week **Final essay due 23:59 May 17**