

# IS104 Medieval Literature and Culture: Forms of Love

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Times: Tue/Thu 14:00 – 15:30

## Course Description

Bard College Berlin's first-year core curriculum continues with an examination of love in the European Middle Ages, a culture intensely devoted to the concept of love in both its religious and secular spheres. In order to aim at a meaningful diversity of ideas, we also engage with the Classical Indian tradition of art and thought about love. The purpose of such comparative work is not to prefer one thing to another, but to broaden and deepen one's own understanding of a phenomenon that is likely to matter to all of us.

The course is organized in four thematic sections: 1) Philosophy/Theology of Love, 2) Art of Love, 3) Songs of Love, and 4) Stories of Love. This organization reflects the hypothesis that different forms of art and thought may suggest or be associated with different forms of love.

Some questions to be considered in this course include: How is love conceived, constituted, sustained, and fulfilled? What role do beauty, goodness, or other qualities play in love? What is the love for or from a god? Do different genders love differently? Is love something that can be understood and practiced as an "art" or technique? Can loving or being loved make us happy?

## Course Readings

**Required books (you must have your own copy of the specific edition with this ISBN)**

\* Course Reader

\* *Vatsyayana Kamasutra*. Trans. Wendy Doniger and Sudhir Kakar. Oxford World Classics: Oxford University Press, 2002, 2009.

ISBN-13: 978-0199539161

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

ISBN-13: 978-0140443608

\* Chrétien de Troyes, *Arthurian Romances*. Trans. William W. Kibler and Carleton W. Carroll. Penguin, 1991.

ISBN-13: 978-0140445213

## Library and Book Purchase Policies

Students are expected to purchase the required books. Students on financial aid can request to loan required books from the library. All other readings will be in the course reader. Students who attend class without the relevant text, in a printed form, will be marked as "absent."

## Requirements

### Class preparation

Preparing for class means reading thoughtfully and engaging with the text. Do underline and take notes in the texts themselves as you read. When the text is a story, master the names of the characters and the plot before the seminar begins. Ask yourself, “What is this text’s idea or vision of love? What do I think about this idea or vision?”

### Attendance and participation

Regular attendance and active participation is essential to the success of this course. Missing more than two 90-minute sessions in a semester will reduce your participation grade. Late arrival or leaving during class time will count as an absence. Missing more than 30% of all sessions may result in failing the course. Consult the Student Handbook for regulations governing periods of illness or leaves of absence.

### Use of Electronics

To facilitate a focused and engaging seminar discussion, the use of electronic devices during class time is only allowed for disability accommodation. Using electronics in class will negatively affect your seminar grade. If you have a disability accommodation please inform your instructor at the beginning of the rotation.

### Writing Assignments and Assessment

Over the course of the term you will participate in **two** seminar groups, each led by a different seminar leader. In each of these “rotations” you will submit an essay and be graded for your participation.

**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)
- (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.

**Essays:** In this core class, like Plato’s Republic and Its Interlocutors, our focus is upon our direct encounter with primary texts. Please avoid the use of secondary material. However, if you do use secondary sources whether electronic or printed, you must provide clear citations to avoid plagiarism.

**Writing Exercises:** Individual seminar leaders may also assign short writing tasks or give reading quizzes. Grades for these tasks will be included in class participation for that rotation.

### Late Submission of Papers

Please note the following policy 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.*

### Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the staunchest regard for academic integrity and expects good academic practice from students in their studies. Failing to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section III Academic Misconduct.

## Grade Breakdown

Seminar participation grade: 30% (15% per rotation); Midterm Essay (2000 words): 30%; Final Essay (3000 words): 40%

| Semester week                      | Tuesday session<br>14-15:30  | Thursday session<br>14-15:30  | writing assignments                  |
|------------------------------------|--|---|--------------------------------------|
| <b>Philosophy/Theology of Love</b> |  |   |                                      |
| 1. Jan 28, 30                      | Plato, <i>Symposium</i> (selection), Lecture: David Hayes<br><b>Lecture hall</b> | Plato, <i>Symposium</i> (selection)   |                                      |
| 2. Feb 4, 6                        | Gospel of John, 1-12   | Gospel of John, 13-21   |                                      |
| 3. Feb 11, 13                      | Julian of Norwich, The Showings (selection)<br>Chapters 51-55, pp. 267-288       | Julian of Norwich, The Showings (selection)<br>Chapters 56-63, pp. 288-305                        |                                      |
| <b>Art of Love</b>                 |  |   |                                      |
| 4. Feb 18, 20                      | Ovid, Art of Love, Book 1  | Ovid, Art of Love, Book 2   |                                      |
| 5. Feb 25, 27                      | Ovid, Art of Love, Book 3  | Guest Lecture: "Is There an Art of Love?" Nora Kreft, Humboldt University,<br><b>Lecture Hall</b> |                                      |
| 6. Mar 3, 5                        | Kamasutra, Books 1-2   | Kamasutra, Books 3-6  |                                      |
| Seminar Rotation Change            |  |   |                                      |
| <b>Songs of Love</b>               |  |   |                                      |
| 7. Mar 10, 12                      | Song of Songs, Lecture: Katalin Makkai<br><b>Lecture Hall</b>                    | Song of Songs   | Midterm Essay due Sat, Mar 14, 23:59 |
| 8. Mar 17, 19                      | Classical Tamil Love Poems   | South Indian Devotional Poems   |                                      |

|                        |  |  |  |
|------------------------|--|--|--|
| 9. Mar 24, 26          | Songs from al-Andalus and Provence, Lecture: Geoff Lehman<br><b>Lecture Hall</b> | Songs from al-Andalus and Provence   |  |
| 10. Mar 31, Apr 2      | Rock / Pop Love Songs (assignments vary by seminar leader)                       | Marie de France, "Prologue," "Lanval" and "Yonec"                                  |  |
| Spring Break           |  |  |  |
| <b>Stories of Love</b> |  |  |  |
| 11. Apr 14, 16         | Chrétien de Troyes, Erec and Enide, pp. 37-71                                    | Chrétien de Troyes, Erec and Enide, pp. 72-97                                      |  |
| 12. Apr 21, 23         | Chrétien de Troyes, Erec and Enide, pp. 98-122                                   | Film: "It Happened One Night" (1934, dir. Frank Capra), <b>19:30, Lecture Hall</b> |  |
| 13. Apr 28, 30         | "Nala," from the Mahabharata   | Guest Lecture on Nala and Damayanti: Wendy Doniger, <b>19:30, Lecture Hall</b>     |  |
| 14. May 5, 7           | "Nala," from the Mahabharata   | Students' choice   |  |
| 15. May 11-15          | <b>Completion Week: Final Essay due: Friday, May 15 by 23:59</b>                 |  |  |