

SEMINAR IN ETHICS AND VALUE THEORY: LOVE AND COMMITMENT
PHIL 396
Winter 2023

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| INSTRUCTOR | Angela Sun asun@wlu.edu |
| MEETINGS | Tuesdays and Thursdays 1:30pm-3:00pm |
| STUDENT HOURS | Wednesdays 12pm-3pm and by appointment |
| DESCRIPTION | In this seminar, we will examine a series of questions about love and commitment. What is the source of the normativity of our commitments? Should we always prioritize our moral commitments over our personal ones? Is our partiality toward our loved ones morally justifiable? Why is heartbreak one of the worst pains a person can feel? Is our capacity to move on after heartbreak a strength, or does it suggest we're more fickle than we'd like to be? To answer these questions, we will draw from various philosophical traditions as well as from literature, television, and film. |
| GOALS | By the end of this course, you will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explain how philosophers have theorized art and ethical issues surrounding love and commitment.• Closely and charitably read challenging texts.• Uncover and evaluate the argumentative structure for a claim, whether it is your own or someone else's.• Improve the clarity, argumentative structure, and originality of your writing.• Respectfully discuss philosophical topics with classmates from diverse backgrounds. |
| MATERIALS | There is one required text for the course: <i>The Remains of the Day</i> by Kazuo Ishiguro. Please finish reading the novel by our last class meeting. If purchasing the text would be a hardship for you, let me know and I will happily buy you a copy! We will also be watching the television series <i>Crash Landing on You</i> over the course of the semester. I will screen an episode every Monday night. If you can't make it, you are expected to watch the show on Netflix your own time and to keep up with the screening schedule. |

EXPECTATIONS

This will be a graduate-style seminar, where you will primarily learn from your peers' contributions rather than from lecture. You should aim to make at least one major contribution to discussion every class meeting (otherwise, you would be learning from your peers but not teaching anything in return!). Additionally, you are expected to be active in philosophy department programming throughout the semester, even those that are not directly relevant to our course material, unless you have conflicts with other commitments. You are expected to work not only toward mastery of course concepts, but toward intellectual edification in general. Here is what I expect of you:

- To read and make notes on the assigned texts before class.
- To come to class on time and prepared to engage.
- To make contributions to every class session.
- Not to be perfect. I am not looking for "brilliant" contributions, but a sustained effort to seriously grapple with the material and engage with your peers.
- To treat me and your fellow classmates with respect.
- To make an effort to get to know other students.
- To write early and often, and refrain from procrastination as much as possible.
- To get in touch with me if you have questions or concerns about the course and anything that comes up in your life that might impede your ability to fully participate in the course.
- To participate in philosophy department programming throughout the semester, including but not limited to talks and coffee hours.

Here is what you should expect of me:

- To challenge you to grapple with difficult questions.
- To work with you to improve your philosophical writing skills by providing clear, thorough, and honest feedback on assignments.
- To be transparent and honest with you about my expectations.
- To listen and respond to your academic needs and support you throughout the term.

ATTENDANCE

I don't take or require attendance. But if you are going to miss class (even just to take a mental health day), I ask that you email me beforehand. Otherwise, I will worry!

REQUIREMENTS

The requirements for the course are as follows:

- *Discussion prompts* (10%): by 11:00am before class meetings, post at least one discussion prompt on the discussion board for that day. The discussion prompt doesn't need to be long (in fact, it could just be a sentence!), but it should be specific and demonstrate a close reading of the text. You might simply transcribe one of your annotations from the reading for that day. You don't need to post a discussion prompt every single meeting, but you should aim to post *at least* every other class; I will check in with you if you haven't posted in a while. As long as you post regularly, you will get full credit.
- *Paper 1*: Write a 2500-word paper in the following steps:
 - Outline (2%, due Oct. 16): Submit a 2-page outline detailing your argument for feedback.
 - Draft (2%, due Oct. 27): Submit a full draft of your paper for peer review. As long as you submit a complete draft, you will receive full marks.
 - Peer review (8%, due Nov. 3): Complete a peer review of two of your classmates' papers.
 - Final draft (20%, due Nov. 8): Submit the final version of your paper.
- *Paper 2*: submit a ~3000-word paper in the following steps:
 - Outline (2%, due Nov. 17): Submit a 2-page outline detailing your argument for feedback.
 - Paper (25%, due Dec. 4): Submit your paper.
 - Comments (15%, due Dec. 12): Write a 1000-word commentary on one of your peers' papers.
- *Oral exam* (16%, Dec. 9-14): Complete a 20-minute oral exam. I will ask you questions about your papers, readings we've done in the class (and your thoughts on how they relate to the non-philosophical material we've engaged).

LATE WORK

Those who know me know that I don't believe in deadlines. However, in this class, the deadlines for outlines and drafts must be observed because your peers' work depends on it—if you don't submit a draft, then your peer reviewer or commentator will have nothing to review or comment on! Therefore, everything must be turned in on time. Out of respect to peer reviewers and commentators, the final grade for late drafts will be deducted by 10% per day. And out of respect to those whose papers you're reviewing or commenting on, the final grade for late peer reviews and comments will be deducted by 10% per day.

ELECTRONICS

You can use electronics at your own discretion, but keep in mind **all the research** that shows that the use of electronics detracts from your own learning and the learning of those around you. This is a discussion-based class, not a lecture-based one. Out of respect to your peers, do not multi-task on your laptop while they're speaking; give them your full attention. I will speak to you if I feel as though your use of electronics is hindering class discussion.

ACCOMMODATION I will work with every student interested in taking this course to ensure it's possible to. If you have a disability, are struggling with mental or physical health, or if there is anything else that might prevent you from fully participating in this course, let me know as soon as you can, and we will figure something out.

SCHEDULE Sept. 7: No reading

TOPIC: THE NORMATIVITY OF COMMITMENT

Sept. 12: Samuel Scheffler, "Valuing"

Sept. 14: Christine Korsgaard, "The Authority of Reflection" in *The Sources of Normativity*

Sept. 19: Ruth Chang, "Reasons, Commitments, and the Will"

Sept. 21: Jean-Paul Sartre, excerpts from *Existentialism is a Humanism*

Sept. 26: Bernard Williams, "Persons, Character, and Morality"

Sept. 28: Harry Frankfurt, "Rationality and the Unthinkable"

Oct. 3: Angela Sun, "Practical Death"

Oct. 5: Sarah Buss, "Some Musings About the Limits of an Ethics That Can Be Applied"

Oct. 10: Flex day

Oct. 12: No class (Washington break)

Oct. 16: Paper 1 outline due by 11:59pm

TOPIC: PERSONAL VS. MORAL COMMITMENTS

Oct. 17: Dean Cocking and Jeanette Kennett, "Friendship and Moral Danger"

Oct. 19: Susan Wolf, "Moral Saints"

TOPIC: LOVE

Oct. 24: David Velleman, "Love as a Moral Emotion"

Oct. 26: Harry Frankfurt, "On Love, and Its Reasons"

Oct. 27: Paper 1 draft due by 11:59pm

Oct. 31: Plato, excerpts from *The Symposium*

Nov. 2: Guest lecture by Laura Soter on partiality (reading TBD)

Nov. 3: Peer review due by 11:59pm

Nov. 7: Erich Hatala Matthes, "Love in Spite of"

Nov. 8: Paper 1 due by 11:59pm

Nov. 9: Natasha McKeever and Luke Brunning, "Sexual Jealousy and Sexual Infidelity"

Nov. 14: Carrie Jenkins, "Modal Monogamy"

TOPIC: AFTER LOVE

Nov. 16: Dan Moller, "Love and Death"

Nov. 17: Paper 2 outline due by 11:59pm

Nov. 21 & 23: No class (Thanksgiving)

Nov. 28: Excerpts from Florence Williams, *Heartbreak: A Personal and Scientific Journey*

Nov. 30: Berislav Marušić, "Do Reasons Expire? An Essay on Grief"

Dec. 4: Paper 2 due by 11:59pm

Dec. 5: Pilar Lopez-Cantero and Alfred Archer, "Lost Without You: the Value of Falling out of Love"

Dec. 7: Kazuo Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day*

Dec. 12: Comments due by 11:59pm

Dec. 9-14: Oral exams