The Forms of Love

Seminar Leaders:
David Hayes
Katalin Makkai
Marcela Perrett (coordinator)

Times:  
Tuesday 09:00 – 10:30 and 10:45 – 12:15  
Thursday 10:45 – 12:15 and 13:30 – 15:00

Course Description
The first year spring semester core course is devoted to an exploration of the category of love in medieval European Christianity. The study of the distinctive manifestations of the concept and its accompanying social rituals offers a primary guide to the achievements of the medieval civilizations (between 400 and 1500 C.E.), as its encompassing and differentiation was often their highest intellectual value and aim. Taking our departure from the fundamental forms of love (eros) posited in antiquity by Plato in the *Symposium*, we examine the medieval revision of these terms in a range of different contexts (e.g., the monastery, the court, the city) and genres (e.g., romance, lyrical poetry) both sacred and secular. Principally, the course investigates how the arrival of Christianity as a state-sponsored religion in most of Europe revitalized and transformed the Greek understanding of love into new categories (such as *agape*, the love with which God allegedly loved his creation, and *amour courtois*, the romantic love between members of the nobility), which ranged from the metaphysical and the erotic, to social and institutional designations. Secondly, the course will examine the interactions between different ideas and traditions with respect to the category of love, and show how its formulation reflects their wider convictions and norms. Emphasizing the heritage and origins of the texts which articulated these debates, we will also attend to the fact that the works of Greek Antiquity were only available to medieval writers in translation, and to the ways in which authors borrowed from or reiterated one another’s assumptions and frameworks. Finally, the course addresses the transformation of genre that reflection on the concept of love effected; the connections between religious belief and an array of other cultural productions and practices.

Course Readings
Dante, *Vita Nuova*, transl. by Mark Musa (Oxford University Press, 2008)  
Coursepack (CP)
Requirements
Students are expected to come to every class on time and prepared. Readings should be completed in advance of the planned discussion. Participation grade depends on meeting these requirements. Attendance at all class meetings is essential, and absences can only be excused if a medical note is submitted to the registrar’s office.

There will be an attendance sheet for each lecture to be signed before each lecture begins. Late arrival counts as an absence. For the purposes of counting absences, lectures and seminars are considered separate classes even if they take place on the same day. Absence from or lateness to class, or instances of lack of preparation for class will not only severely affect a student’s grade, but may entail academic probation in conformity with the policies and procedures specified in the Student Handbook. Over the courses of the term students will participate in three seminar groups, each led by a different seminar leader.

Written Assignments
Every student will write one short writing assignment and three essays in the course of the term. The short writing assignment should be between 500 and 750 words in length, and essays 1 and 2 between 1,750 and 2,250 words in length while the final essay should be significantly longer, between 3,000 and 3,500 words in length. At the center of the essay-writing endeavor should be an intelligent analysis of the text; only the relevant primary text (or texts) is needed in writing your essays – no further research is required. Students are encouraged to consult the writing tutors prior to submitting their essays.

Policy on Late Submission of Papers
Essays that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (for example, from B+ to C+). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late, and when a late essay is accepted, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline and cannot receive a grade of higher than C. After that, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.

Grade Breakdown
Grading will be distributed as follows:
5%  Short Writing Assignment
40% Essays 1 and 2 (20% each)
25% Final essay
30% Seminar grade (Participation)
Schedule of Classes

Rotation 1

**Platonism and the Divine Ascent**

Week 1:
1/28  Plato, *The Symposium*, 1-31
1/30  Plato, *The Symposium*, 31-54
2/1   **Short Writing Assignment Due by 11:59 pm**

**Agape and Christian Neo-Platonism**

Week 2:
2/3   Guest Lecture: Christopher Shields
2/4   New Testament: Gospel of John
2/6   New Testament: 1 John

Week 3
2/11  New Testament: 1 Corinthians
Guest Lecture: Catherine Toal
2/13  The Hebrew Bible: Song of Songs

Week 4
2/18  Bernard of Clairvaux, “Sermons on love,” sermons 1,2,4,7
2/20  Julian of Norwich, *The Showings*, chapters 51-63, pp. 267-305

Rotation 2

**Ovid and the Courtly Love Tradition**

Week 5
3/1   **Essay 1 Due by 11:59pm**

Week 6
3/4   Ovid, *Ars Amatoria*, book 1
3/8   Ovid, *Ars Amatoria*, book 2 and 3

Week 7
3/11  Troubadours and Music
Guest Lecture: Geoff Lehman
3/13  Troubadours and Music

**Spring break**
Week 8
       Guest Lecture: Volker Mertens
3/27  Bard College Berlin Annual Conference: No Class

Week 9
4/1   Chretien de Troyes, “Erec and Enide” in *Arthurian Romances*, 85-122
4/3   Movie

Rotation 3

Week 10
4/10  Chretien de Troyes, “Lancelot” in *Arthurian Romances*, 258-294
4/12  Essay 2 Due by 11:59pm

Week 11
4/15  Movie
4/17  Chretien de Troyes, “Yvain, Knight of the Lion” in *Arthurian Romances*, 295-323

Week 12
4/21  Chretien de Troyes, “Yvain, Knight of the Lion” in *Arthurian Romances*, 323-380
4/24  Gottfried von Strasburg, “Tristan” in *Tristian*, 40-120

Week 13
4/29  Gottfried von Strasburg, “Tristan” in *Tristian*, 121-204
       Guest lecture: Ulrike Wagner
5/1   Federal Holiday: No Class

Courtly Love Transformed

Week 14
5/8   Dante, *Vita Nuova*
       Guest lecture: Laura Scuriatti

Week 15
5/12  Dante, *Vita Nuova* and Final Deliberations
5/22  Final Essay Due by 11:59pm