IS104 Medieval Literature and Culture: Forms of Love

Seminar leaders: David Hayes, Geoff Lehman Katalin Makkai, Marcela K. Perett (coordinator)
Times: Tuesday 9-10:30 and 10:45-12:15, Thursday 10:45-12:15 and 13:30-15:00
Guests: Catherine Toal, Laura Scuriatti, Ulrike Wagner

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 Policies and Requirements

Students are expected to come to every class on time and prepared. Readings should be completed in advance of the planned discussion. Students’ class participation grade depends on meeting these requirements. Attendance at all classes is expected. More than two absences will significantly affect the grade for the course.
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.

**Grading**

Grading will be distributed as follows:

- 5%  Short Writing Assignment
- 40% Essays 1 and 2 (20% each)
- 25% Final essay
- 30% Seminar grade (Participation)

**Course books**


Dante, *Vita Nuova*, transl. by Mark Musa (Oxford University Press, 2008)
Coursepack (CP)

Class Schedule and Readings

Rotation 1

I. Platonism and the Divine Ascent
Week 1:
1/27 Plato, *The Symposium*, 1-31
1/29 Plato, *The Symposium*, 31-54
1/31 Short Writing Assignment Due by 11:59 pm

II. *Agape* and Christian Neo-Platonism
Week 2:
2/3 New Testament: Gospel of John
2/5 New Testament: 1 John

Week 3
2/10 New Testament: 1 Corinthians
Guest Lecture: Catherine Toal

2/12 The Hebrew Bible: Song of Songs

Week 4
2/17 Bernard of Clairvaux, “Sermons on love,” sermons 1,2,4,7
2/19 Julian of Norwich, *The Showings*, chapters 51-63, pp. 267-305

Rotation 2

III. Ovid and the Courtly Love Tradition
Week 5
2/24 Ovid, *Amores*, book 1 and 2
2/26 Ovid, *Amores*, book 3
2/28 Essay 1 Due by 11:59 pm
Week 6
3/3 Ovid, *Ars Amatoria*, book 1
3/5 Ovid, *Ars Amatoria*, book 2 and 3

Week 7
3/10 Troubadours and Music
3/12 Troubadours and Music

Spring break: March 16-20, 2015

Week 8
3/24 Chretien de Troyes, “Erec and Enide” in *Arthurian Romances*, 37-71

Week 9
4/2 Movie Screening at 19:30

Rotation 3

Week 10
4/7 Chretien de Troyes, “Lancelot” in *Arthurian Romances*, 207-258
4/11 Essay 2 Due by 11:59pm

Week 11
4/14 Chretien de Troyes, “Yvain, Knight of the Lion” in *Arthurian Romances*, 295-323
4/16 Chretien de Troyes, “Yvain, Knight of the Lion” in *Arthurian Romances*, 323-380

Week 12
4/21 Gottfried von Strasburg, “Tristan” in *Tristan*, 40-120
4/23 Movie Screening at 19:30

Week 13
4/28 Gottfried von Strasburg, “Tristan” in *Tristan*, 121-204
4/30  Gottfried von Strasburg, “Tristan” in *Tristan*, 197-300
Guest lecture: Ulrike Wagner

**IV. Courtly Love Transformed**
Week 14
5/5  Dante, *Vita Nuova*
Guest Lecture: Laura Scuriatti

5/7  Bard Annual Conference: No Class

Week 15
5/11  Dante, *Vita Nuova* and Final Deliberations

5/20  **Final Essay Due by 11:59pm**