

IS104 Medieval Literature and Culture Forms of Love

Seminar leaders: Tracy Colony, David Hayes, Geoff Lehman, Katalin Makkai, Hans Stauffacher

Course coordinator: David Hayes

Course times: Tuesday 9:00-10:30 and Thursday 10:45-12:15

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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. For comparison, we look outside the borders of Europe during this time-period at the erotic-religious 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

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

ISBN-13: 978-0199540655

Library and book purchase policies

The college book policy for 2016-2017 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. Students who attend class without the relevant book will be marked as “absent.”**

Requirements

Attendance

More than two absences (that is, absences from two sessions of 90 minutes) in a semester will affect the participation grade for the course. Late arrival at lectures will be marked as an absence. Students should be aware of the college attendance policies in the Student Handbook. Reminder: “Medical documentation is not accepted to excuse absences and will not be accepted for shorter periods under any circumstance. Students should submit medical documentation only in cases where illness has caused or is likely to result in a prolonged absence from class, i.e., three or more consecutive sessions. Documentation should be submitted to the College Registrar within one week of the first absence.”

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 March 18

Final essay (3000-3500 words), due May 19

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. 31 **lecture hall**
The Hebrew Bible: Song of Songs (Reader) [lecture: Katalin Makkai]

Th Feb. 2 The Hebrew Bible: Song of Songs (Reader)

Week 2

Tu Feb. 7 Plato, *Symposium*, 172A-193E (pp. 1-22)

Th Feb. 9 Plato, *Symposium*, 194A-212C (pp. 23-43)

Week 3

Tu Feb. 14 Plato, *Symposium*, 208C-223D (pp. 39-54) [i.e., reread 208C-212C]

Th Feb. 16 Ovid, *The Art of Love*, Book 1

Week 4

Tu Feb. 21 Ovid, *The Art of Love*, Books 2 & 3

Th Feb. 23 Gospel of Matthew, 1-14 (Reader)

Week 5

Tu Feb. 28 Gospel of Matthew, 15-28 (Reader)

Th Mar. 2

lecture hall
Gospel of John, entire (Reader) [lecture: Hans Stauffacher]

Week 6

Tu Mar. 7 Gospel of John, entire (Reader)

Th Mar. 9

lecture hall
Troubadours and Music: Arabic, Hebrew, and Provençal (Reader) (pp. 1-54)
[lecture: Geoff Lehman]

Week 7

Tu Mar. 14 Troubadours and Music: Arabic, Hebrew, and Provençal (Reader) (pp. 55-81)

Th Mar. 16 Troubadours and Music: Arabic, Hebrew, and Provençal (Reader)
(specific assignment by seminar leaders)

Sat. Mar. 18 **Midterm essay due before midnight**

Rotation 2

Week 8

- Tu Mar. 21 Bernard of Clairvaux, "Sermons on Love", sermons 1, 2, 4, 7 (Reader)
- Th Mar. 23 Marie de France, "Lanval" and "Yonec" (Reader)

Week 9

- Tu Mar. 28 Chrétien de Troyes, "Erec and Enide", in *Arthurian Romances*, pp. 37-71
- Th Mar. 30 Chrétien de Troyes, "Erec and Enide", in *Arthurian Romances*, pp. 72-97

Week 10

TBA **Film screening/discussion:** *It Happened One Night* (dir. Frank Capra, 1934)

- Th Apr. 6 **lecture hall**
Chrétien de Troyes, "Erec and Enide", in *Arthurian Romances*, pp. 98-122
[lecture: David Hayes]

Spring Break: April 10-17

Week 11

- Tu Apr. 18 Chrétien de Troyes, "The Knight with the Lion (Yvain)", in *Arthurian Romances*, pp. 295-337
- Th Apr. 20 Chrétien de Troyes, "The Knight with the Lion (Yvain)", in *Arthurian Romances*, pp. 338-380

Week 12

- Tu Apr. 25 **lecture hall**
The mosque of Córdoba and Chartres cathedral / "1 Corinthians" (Reader)
[lecture: Geoff Lehman]
- Th Apr. 27 The mosque of Córdoba and Chartres cathedral / "1 Corinthians" (Reader)

Week 13

- Tu May 2 Dante, *Vita Nuova*, I-XXI (pp. 3-42)
- Th May 4 **lecture hall**
Dante, *Vita Nuova*, XXII-XLII (pp. 43-84) [lecture: Tracy Colony]

Week 14

- Tu May 9 Rumi (selected poetry) / Hafez (selected poetry) (Reader)
- Th May 11 Julian of Norwich, *The Showings*, Chapters 51-63, pp. 267-305 (Reader)

Week 15
F May 19

Completion week
Final essay due before midnight