200-11 Philosophical Perspectives: Erotic Philosophy

Daniel Dwyer
dwyerd@xavier.edu

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Instructor: Daniel Dwyer, Ph.D. (dwyerd@xavier.edu, 745-3035, Hinkle 220)

Time: Section 07: 8:30-9:45am (Cintas 202)
Section 11: 2:30-3:45pm (Cintas 202)

Office Hours: M 4:30-5:45pm, T 10:15-11:15am, & anytime by appointment

DIGITAL-FREE ZONE: Unless you can prove hardship during the first week of class, you may not use ANY digital or electronic devices during class sessions. Text, paper and pen only. The policy is not meant to penalize you, but rather to liberate your eyes, your ears, and your mind for undistracted philosophical discussion.

Required Texts (these editions only):
Plato on Love, ed. C.D.C. Reeve, Hackett

In this course, you will further pursue fundamental human questions about topics such as knowledge, reason and desire by investigating how great philosophers have addressed these questions. You will have the chance to read, discuss, and critique classic works of philosophy. In this way, you will be invited into a long tradition of reflection on the meaning of our shared humanity, of the world, and of our relation to it. The three main questions in the course are:

1. What is the nature of eros, the Platonic term for human desire or love, and what does it strive to attain, given that it must first become aware of its own incompleteness?
2. What is the proper relation between reason and desire, such that we can think through on the basis of Platonic thought the desires and rationality of our own era?
3. What are possible kinds of philosophical and religious transformations of our disordered desires into properly ordered desires toward the beautiful, the true, and God?

This course is part of the Xavier Core Curriculum, which aims to develop people of learning and reflection, integrity and achievement, in solidarity for and with others. The course addresses the following core learning objective at the intermediate level:

1a: Students recognize and cogently discuss significant questions in the humanities, arts, and the natural and social sciences.
2a: Students find, evaluate, and logically convey information and ideas in written and oral presentations.
3b: Students examine the nature of beauty, truth, and virtue as means of gaining a sense of the divine.
5b: Students examine the interconnections between humans and the natural environment.
**Reading:** You must read each text at least twice before coming to class the first day of the week. I suggest reading rather quickly the first time, marking up with pencil what you think are important terms and arguments. Then, a slower second read, with more attention to detail. **Reading quizzes** are always a possibility. They will most likely be announced rather than unannounced quizzes.

**Protocols:** Each student will be paired with another to recap a particular week’s class discussion and present a 2-page summary to the whole class on the following Tuesday. More details to follow.

**Writing Center:** Everyone needs help with his or her writing. Even great authors need an editor or second pair of eyes. I strongly suggest that you visit the writing center before you turn in each paper. Your grammar will improve, your prose will become crisper, and your argument stronger. Overall, your writing skills and course grade will very likely increase. There is really nothing to lose, and everything to gain. For more information, see: [http://www.xavier.edu/writingcenter/](http://www.xavier.edu/writingcenter/) In certain hardship cases, I will be happy to work with you on drafts within 48 hours of the due date, but only if we go over them in office hours, with hard copies (one for you, one for me), with you taking notes on my suggestions.

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism will result in the failing of the assignment, and it may result in the failing of the course. All cases of plagiarism will be reported to the Dean of your College and a written statement will be put in your student file. TurnItIn will be used for all papers, using Canvas. Do not underestimate how powerful Turnitin is at detecting passing off another’s words or phrasing as if they were your own.

**Participation:** Participation is required. Participation can take place in a number of ways: asking questions, responding to questions, raising objections, and making points. I do recognize that for some students talking in class and discussing philosophy can seem intimidating. Discussing the philosophical content of the readings or class discussion by email or during office hours will count in part toward your participation grade. **Socratic method** will be practiced during class time (calling on students at random in a brainstorming fashion), but I don’t want to put anyone on the spot, so you always have the option of saying “pass” without any shame.

**Papers:** You will write two papers. For each paper I will provide a handout detailing the assignment and the expectations. A late paper will be lowered a full grade for each day (not each class day) it is late. **Midterm Exam:** You will be given about 8 essay questions in advance of the exam, and I will select about 6 of them randomly to put on the exam in class.

**Attendance:** You are allowed three unexcused absences. Each unexcused absence after three will result in a lowering of your final grade by a full grade. If your final grade is an A- and you have 4 absences, then your grade for the course will be a B-. This policy will be strictly followed. Excused absences require an official note from a doctor or student affairs—of course, I am happy to discuss upcoming conflicts with you. If you have more than 7 absences then you
will fail the course. If you do miss a class you must (a) get notes from another student, (b) ask me for handouts I might have distributed and (c) ask for instructions for the next class. If you are absent, do not assume that you know where we are in the readings. *This instructor takes mental health issues quite seriously. Please feel free to approach me with any issues on this count, and be assured of absolute discretion. → Please: no eating during class.

Grade breakdown: Participation 20% / Reading Quizzes 10% / Protocol 10% / Paper 1 10% / Midterm Exam 20% / Final Paper 30%

Readings (subject to revision)

August
Week 1: 21st c. Desires and Addictions: The Bitter Taste of Dying, Audible ch. 5, 0:00-10:00); READ: Plato, Republic section, in Plato on Love, pp. 211-17
T 23
Th 25

T 30

September
Th 1

Week 3: Plato, Symposium, Aristophanes (189d-194e), Plato on Love, pp. 46-51
T 6
Th 8

Week 4: Plato, Symposium, Agathon, Socrates, and Alcibiades (194e-201c, 212c-223d), Plato on Love, pp. 52-60, 73-87
T 13
Th 15

Week 5: Plato, Symposium, Diotima (203b-212c), 61-73
T 20
Th 22

Week 6: Diotima (cont.)
T 27
Th 29

October
Week 7: T 4 Midterm Exam Th 6 no class Fall Break
T 11
Th 13

T 18
Th 20

Week 10: Augustine, *Confessions*, p. 3, Books II-III
T 25
Th 27

November
Week 11: Augustine, *Confessions*, Books IV-V
T 1
Th 3

Week 12: Augustine, *Confessions*, Books VI-VII
T 8  Paper 1 due
Th 10

Week 13: Augustine, *Confessions*, VIII-IX, and pp. 219-21
T 15
Th 17

Week 14: Descartes, *Discourse on Method* 1-2
T 22
Th 24  Thanksgiving holiday

Week 15: Descartes, *Discourse* 4-5
T 29
December
Th 1

Week 16: Descartes, *Discourse* 6
T 6
Th 8

8:30am class: final paper due by 10:30am on Tues Dec 13
2:30pm class: final paper due by 3pm on Tues Dec 13