Cluster Proposed for: Morality

Title of course: Philosophy of Sex and Love

Course Number: PHL 369

Proposing Faculty: David J. Weber

Cluster Coordinator: Aleksander Jokic

Proposal Type:

___ Cluster Course to New Cluster

X___ New Course to Cluster

___ Removal

Other clusters this course is assigned to:

Proposals are due to the University Studies office (CH 117) with 12 duplicate copies by Friday, November 9, 2007 so that they may be reviewed and forwarded to the UCC Committee for final approval.
University Studies New Cluster Course Addition

Adding a previously unapproved course to a cluster

(When addressing questions, please attach a separate sheet)

PROPOSING FACULTY (Name, signature, and department) David J. Weber

PROPOSED CLUSTER(S) Morality Sexualities

1. THE COURSE

A. COURSE TITLE, NUMBER, AND CATALOG DESCRIPTION

B. DEVELOPMENT Is the course based upon an existing course, or is it a new course under development?

C. AVAILABILITY With what regularity has the course been—or will the course be—offered?

D. PREREQUISITES List any course prerequisites beyond the cluster Sophomore Inquiry course.

2. COURSE OUTLINE. Provide a detailed outline of the proposed course, also including its preliminary reading list, and the name(s) of instructor(s) committed to teaching the course.

3. GENERAL EDUCATION GOALS.

A. COURSE CONTENT & SUITABILITY FOR CLUSTER
   Discuss the course content in relationship to the thematic focus of the cluster.

B. UNST GOALS Indicate what materials and assignments will address those University Studies goals appropriate to the course content and cluster theme (the goals are Inquiry and Critical Thinking, Communication, Diversity of Human Experience, and Ethical Issues & Social Responsibility).

C. CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT Discuss the teaching strategies employed in the course and how they articulate with the student-centered, active-learning strategies characteristic of University Studies courses.
PROPOSING FACULTY: David J. Weber (Philosophy Department)

PROPOSED CLUSTER: Morality

1. THE COURSE

A. PHILOSOPHY OF SEX AND LOVE (PHL 369)
   An examination of some of the central philosophical issues emerging from a reflection on sex and love. Topics include: conceptual or ontological ones such as the possible essence of heterosexuality, homosexuality, and asexuality; ethical ones such as the morality or immorality of different expressions of sex and love such as sadomasochism, polygamy, and philandering; existential ones such as the role of sexuality and romantic love in our self-conception and a good life; epistemological ones such as the nature of our experiences of sexuality and love and the possible influence that conceptual sources have on them.

B. DEVELOPMENT
   The course is based on an existing course taught under an omnibus number.

C. AVAILABILITY
   The course is intended to be offered annually Fall, Winter, and Spring terms.

D. PREREQUISITES
   None

2. GENERAL EDUCATION GOALS

A. COURSE CONTENT AND SUITABILITY FOR CLUSTER

   The course concerns some of the central moral issues surrounding sexual practices and forms of love. Course readings address philosophical and religious underpinnings of sexual morality and topics such as abstinence, consent, and appropriate objects of love. The dynamic between the personal and social dimensions of love and sexuality that fuels many moral concerns in this area is a central focus of the course.

B. UNST GOALS

   Inquiry and Critical Thinking: The overarching goal of the course is to help students conceptualize and articulate what are generally very inchoate experiences of love and sexuality through readings, discussions, and paper writing and through cooperative discussion examine their own & their peers articulations of the same issues in order to open the relevant experiences and preferences to rational inquiry and fuller if not authentic ownership.
Communication: Sex and love are areas of experience, decision, and action about which honest non-sensationalist communication is often difficult and perhaps even rare. Class discussions of readings provide a context that is designed to facilitate the general improvement of skills of communication. Discussion requires that students listen carefully and respectfully to others. Students' interest in the topics and each others opinions and experiences related to them, make these learning outcomes in constructive discussion achievable.

Diversity of Human Experience: Human experiences of and practices in love and sexuality are quite diverse. Homosexuality, heterosexuality, different expressions of love and affective desire are addressed in course topics and readings.

Ethical Issues and Responsibility: In our culture, sexual morality and the morality of expressions of love form the central dimension of ethics and the course examines various positions regarding this area of moral philosophy. Helping students to articulate sexual experiences, bases of sexual morality, and different experiential modes of love, allows for growth in responsible agency and stronger ownership of preferences. The final project of the course requires that students report on their philosophical growth through the term and draws their attention to the interplay of conceptual structures and raw feels in personal experience of sex and love. In short, the course is intended to help students become ethically and cognitively more aware and in that sense “better persons” not just better students.

C. CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

The class is premised on the classic philosophical maxim according to which only an examined life is worth living and this message is obviously intended to extend beyond the classroom setting to circumstances of everyday communication and practical action. Thus, different forms of student participation constitute a central performance context for the course. These include normal situational clarificatory and exploratory discussions of concepts and arguments of lectures and readings. This is customarily and most efficiently carried out through individual students’ personal interpretations and questions based on personal meanings. They also include group projects on questions posed in class for the readings which are specifically designed for the collective exploration of individuals’ views and experiences. In order to accomplish the goals in constructive and cooperative discussion, a safe and tolerant classroom environment is a necessity. Students must feel safe and respected to speak the truth about their own experiences and beliefs and to engage others on their views.
OBTAIN CHAIR AND CLUSTER COORDINATOR SIGNATURES BEFORE SUBMITTING TO UNIVERSITY STUDIES OFFICE

DEPARTMENT/CHAIR(S)  

DATE: 11/2/08  
DATE:  

CLUSTER COORDINATOR  

DATE: 11/3/08  

All changes to Clusters must be approved by PSU’s Senate Curriculum Committee.

THE ORIGINAL + 3 COPIES OF THE PROPOSAL MUST BE RECEIVED AT UNIVERSITY STUDIES (CH 117) BY NOVEMBER 7 2008.

Proposals submitted by this due date will be reviewed for inclusions in clusters beginning in AY 2009 - 2010.
COURSE APPROVED FOR CLUSTER INCLUSION

CHAIR, CLUSTER COORDINATORS: ____________________________

DATE: 11/25/06

CHAIR, UNST COMMITTEE: ____________________________

DATE: 12/01/06
Sample syllabus:

Required texts: A packet of readings for the class is available at the University Bookstore. [See Schedule of Readings for readings included in packet.]

Aim of the course: This class will focus on the ways that we both conceive of and imagine love. Inevitably this inquiry leads to considerations of how we see ourselves in and through love. How do we see ourselves as romantic beings? How do we experience ourselves as sexual beings? Are romance and sexuality a necessary part of a good life? Or are they just luxuries, not entirely necessary for the health of the individual? What makes a relationship good? When is sexuality an acceptable part of a relationship and when not? Should we only have sex within a marriage? Is casual sex with multiple partners acceptable, even praiseworthy? What about homosexuality? Or bisexuality? Or asexuality? These questions, and many others like them, are difficult even to pose, much less answer. Some of us regularly evade questions like this, perhaps because we surrender to fear and shame over their being asked. Many of us have found our own way of being comfortable with sex and love and don't see any need to examine or explain it. Yet these questions seem fundamental to our self-conception and self-regard; as such they demand examination.

Love and desire are, after all, at the root of philosophizing too.

Love and sexuality are usually seen as private, indeed as being in some way emblematic of the private sphere. And yet there is a very ancient and powerful cultural discourse concerning both love and sex that impacts us very deeply as individuals. In an important sense, the private and the public merge in our experience of love and sex, but this occurs silently, even insidiously. This class will attempt to bring some of this interface into the light.

The terms with which we speak of sexuality are freighted with deeply felt value judgments; they often seem to spring from a space of experience deeper than reason. We become familiar with the terms of this discourse very early in life, but we rarely subject either the terms or the discourse as a whole to critical inspection. This class will attempt to begin such an inspection. We will read selections from the Western tradition of philosophy that exemplify developments in conception of love and sex. We will also try to take note of connections between conceptual structures and cultural images by looking at both poetic and cinematic expressions of love and sexuality.

In this class we will sometimes speak very explicitly about sex and sexual acts. Some of the texts we will read are sexually explicit and use profane language. Students should be prepared for this.

Assignments and Grades: Your grade in the class will be based upon three writing assignments. Two of these will be short (3 - 4 pages) and one longer (6-7 pages). These papers will be on assigned topics. The three shorter papers will each be worth 25% of your grade, and the longer term paper will count for the remaining 50%. Unless you have made prior arrangements with the instructor, your paper should be handed in on time.

Attendance: Attendance will be taken in this class. You may miss up to Three classes with no excuse, but if you miss more than this your final grade will be reduced by a proportionate amount.

Any students who miss more than half the class meetings will not pass the class.
Schedule of Readings

Our time in class will be spent discussing the readings we have done. Please come to class having read the assignments and prepared to discuss the issues raised by them.

Tues. 9/30: Course introduction
Thurs. 10/2: Colegrave, *Cosmic Masculine and Feminine*

Tues. 10/7: Apuleus, *Amor and Psyche*
Thurs. 10/9: Plato, *Symposium*

Tues. 10/14: Aristotle, selection from *Nicomachean Ethics*; Plotinus, selection from *Enneads*
Thurs. 10/16: St. Augustine, selection from *Confessions*

Tues. 10/21: St. Thomas Aquinas, selection from *Summa Theologica*; Hadewijch, selection from *Letters*
Thurs. 10/23: Heloise and Abelard, selection from *Letters*; St. Theresa of Avilla, selection from *Life and The Way of Perfection*; St. John of the Cross, selection from *Dark Night of the Soul*

Tues. 10/28: Descartes, selection from *The Passions of the Soul*; Elizabeth of Bohemia, selection from *Correspondences*
Thurs. 10/30: Freud, selection from *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*

Tues. 11/4: Rousseau, selection from *Emile*; Wollstonecraft, selection from *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*
Thurs. 11/6: Marquis de Sade, selection from *Philosophy in the Bedroom*

Tues. 11/11: Marx, selection from *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*; Kollontai, selection from *Winged Eros*
Thurs. 11/13: J.P. Sartre, selection from *Being and Nothingness*; De Beauvoir, selection from *The Second Sex*

Tues. 11/18: Merleau-Ponty, selection from *The Visible and The Invisible*
Thurs. 11/20: Marcuse, selection from *Eros and Civilization*; Levinas, selection from *Time and the Other*

Tues. 11/25: Foucault, selection from *The Ethics of Concern for the Self*; Butler, selection from *Sexual Inversions*
Thurs. 11/27: *Thanksgiving Holiday* No Class Meeting

Tues. 12/2: Nussbaum, selection from *Constructing Love, Desire, and Care*
Thurs. 12/4: Soble and Kittay, exchange on Antioch’s Sexual Offense Policy