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Philosophy of Love and Sex

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Assignment 1: Love Eulogy

Write your own love eulogy in the style of Plato's *Symposium*. It should be 300-600 words. You may do this in pairs. A eulogy includes:

1. *What is the origin or genealogy of love?* i.e. What's your explanation for why we love?
2. *What are love's virtues?* e.g. wisdom, courage, justice?
3. *What are love's good qualities?* E.g. strength, beauty, goodwill, kindness, generosity
4. *What do lovers do?* i.e. What are the habits of people in love? What are their typical behaviors?
5. *What are the achievements/effects of loving?* i.e. What's the goal or point of love? e.g. happiness, self-improvement?

Because this is short, you may focus on one or more of these elements. You must submit it in writing to Blackboard here AND be prepared to present it to the class in our Love Symposium! 50% of the grade will be allocated to your in-class presentation, and 50% to your written submission.

Assignment 2: Philosophical Idea

Option 1: Present an opinion piece arguing "**Why** [insert philosopher of your choice] **is relevant for intimate relationships today?**"

Imagine you are writing this piece for *Aeon Magazine's* philosophy "Idea" section. These articles are journalistic in style with academic rigor. Propose what we can learn from the philosopher/philosophy. A few examples:

- The Conversation: [Are dating apps killing long-term relationships?](#)
- Aeon Idea: [Why Simone de Beauvoir's political philosophy matters today](#)
- Aeon Essay: [Why Kierkegaard still matters](#) (Julian Baggini)
- Aeon Idea: [How a hackneyed romantic ideal is used to stigmatise polyamory](#) (Carrie Jenkins)
- NY Times The Stone: [David Bowie's Vision of Love](#) (Simon Critchley)
- The Paris Review: [Advice on Love from Nietzsche and Sartre](#)

Option 2: Present a philosophical review.

Read a book, watch a film, a TV show, or a play that grapples with philosophical ideas. Choose a philosopher or philosophy that we have covered in class (or that you have found independently in your research). Apply the philosophical lens to the book or film. Examples will be discussed in class.

For both options:

- You may write this as an essay or present it as a video or a podcast.
- Written submissions should be 1,000 – 1,500 words (not including references).

- Audio/visual submissions should be 10-15 minutes.
- Use examples.
- You may do this in pairs or individually.
- You must use full academic referencing. (If you are not presenting a traditional essay, provide a reference list as a separate document.)
- Present a balanced argument, that is, look at both sides: the strengths & weaknesses of the philosophy, how it matters & how it doesn't, where it's right & wrong – and say what your opinion is.
- Select submissions will be published on CUNY Academic Commons. (Please note on your submission if you do not wish for it to be published.)

Assignment 3: Philosophical Project

Answer the question: “How should we love?” OR “What is love?”

These are broad questions that you can answer in a myriad of ways. Do we need to learn to love better? You could emphasize, as the existentialists did, that we should choose to love. Or perhaps you disagree, and prefer Hegel's “living whole” or Plato's soulmate vision. You could argue that lovers should strive towards being better friends, as Beauvoir and Nietzsche argued. You could argue that Kierkegaard was right and that we should channel love into a definitive and ethical commitment, such as marriage. You could pursue a technological angle and propose that sex robots are a great solution to an increasingly fragmented society in which more people are living alone than ever before. You could argue that the concept of romantic love is outdated and should be replaced by a broader and more inclusive conception of loving relationships. You could argue that love ought to be a natural and organic process, and we should avoid the medicalization of love. Or you could argue that love drugs are exactly what we need for better relationships.

Do not answer all of these! Choose one topic to focus on. Present a thesis and argue for it.

Option 1: Write a philosophical essay that answers the assignment question. Underline your thesis statement, which should appear in the first or second paragraph. 3,000 words.

Option 2: Create a video, podcast, fiction story, comic strip, screen play, poem, or artwork that addresses the assignment question. Audio/visual presentations should be 20-25 mins. For other projects (e.g. fiction, poem, or artwork), prepare a philosophical explanation to accompany your project. Email me or sign up for office hours if you'd like to pursue this option so we can discuss.

For both options:

- You may do this in pairs or individually.
- You must use full academic referencing. (If you are not presenting a traditional essay, provide a reference list as a separate document.)
- Present a balanced argument, that is, look at both sides: the strengths & weaknesses of the philosophy, how it matters & how it doesn't, where it's right & wrong – and say what your opinion is.
- Select submissions will be published on CUNY Academic Commons. (Please note on your submission if you do not wish for it to be published.)



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