

Philosophy of Love and Care

Instructors: Austen McDougal & Hannah Kim

Mondays 2:30-4:00 and Fridays 1:00-2:30 / Summer 2019 / Hope House

“What is love? Baby don’t hurt me, don’t hurt me, no moreeeeeee” – so go the immortal words of Haddaway. But, really: what is love, what different kinds of love are there, and what are their distinctive qualities, challenges, and rewards? In this class, we will discuss these and other philosophical questions that arise in relation to the various kinds of love we give and receive in our lives, with a special focus on friendship and romantic love. Midway through the course, we will shift to focus on *caring*, a particular kind of love that has helped contemporary feminist philosophers think about ethics differently. Part of our task will be to see how thinking about caring influences our views on what we owe to others. Another idea to explore is that demonstrating caring requires us to be willing to pay attention to others in new ways.

Below you will find an outline of the topics and readings for our course. We ask that you read the excerpts for each meeting beforehand so that we can be prepared to discuss our views and reactions with one another. A big part of our class-- and of philosophy in general-- consists in testing the philosophical ideas that we read about by seeing how well they work with examples from our own lives. After some of the classes, we will hand out prompts for writing assignments, which will be due at the start of the following class. The aim of these is to exercise our writing muscles, not to achieve perfection. The two major components of philosophical writing that we want you to practice are: a) clearly articulating complex ideas; and b) offering reasons in support of what you think.

Schedule:

Session 1 (6/7): What kinds of love are there?

C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*

Questions to consider: What different kinds of love are there, and what are their distinctive qualities, challenges, and rewards?

For next class: Read excerpts from Aristotle

Session 2 (6/10): The value of friendship

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* Books VIII and IX

Questions to consider: Does Aristotle accurately capture the different kinds of friendships? Why does it matter which kind of friendship you find yourself in? How do you decide whether to enter (or exit) a friendship?

For next class: Complete writing assignment #1

Read excerpts from Protasi and Howard

Session 3 (6/14): Are there good and bad reasons for loving someone?

Protasi “Loving People for Who They Are” and Howard “Fitting Love and Reasons for Loving”

Questions to consider: Are there better or worse reasons to love someone? Or is it something we don’t have control over? Is unrequited love valuable?

For next class: Read excerpts from van Norden

Session 4 (6/17): Do we owe the same level of care to everyone?

van Norden, selection from *Introduction to Classical Chinese Philosophy*

Questions to consider: Do we owe more to our loved ones than we do to strangers? Or should we love everyone equally?

For next class: Complete writing assignment #2

Read excerpts from Tronto

Session 5 (6/21): Caring--a new way of thinking about ethics

Tronto, "Women and Caring: What Can Feminists Learn about Morality from Caring?"

Questions to consider: Does Tronto help resolve questions from last time--or just create new questions? What are the different kinds of challenges that we encounter in the everyday activities of "caring-for" vs. the more abstract "caring-about"? Is Tronto right that "caring-for" does not rely on following rules? What might be good or bad about not using rules to decide how to act?

For next class: Read excerpts from Murdoch and Lugones

Session 6 (6/24): Caring--a way of perceiving others

Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good*

Questions to consider: Is caring primarily a physical action or a way of thinking about others that takes place inside our minds? Can we even control how we think about others, for that matter? If so, how should we choose between seeing someone in a positive light versus in a negative one?

María Lugones, "Playfulness, 'World'-Travelling, and Loving Perception"

Questions to consider: What are some of the "worlds" that we inhabit, and that our loved ones inhabit? How do we travel to others' worlds while maintaining our individuality?

Final assignment: You decide who to love and how!