

PHI 7440

Philosophy of the Human Condition: Life, Death, Love & Desire

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Course Description:

The main themes of this seminar course are *eros* and *thanatos*. It is a philosophical reflection of our *conditio humana*: sex, love, desire and death. Through intensive study of major Western and Chinese philosophical thought on these topics, the meaning of life will be the focus of discussion. Students are expected to read significant amount of primary texts and related articles so that fruitful discussion can be achieved in class.

Course Outline:

1. Introduction: Between Birth and Death – Mortality vs Immortality
2. All Begin with Plato: *Eros* in *Symposium* and *Thanatos* in *Phaedo*
3. The Epicurean and the Stoic Reaction
4. The Christian Answer to Death and Lust
5. The Chinese Ways of Life and Death: Confucianism and Daoism
6. The Psychoanalysis of *Eros* and *Thanatos*: Freud
7. The Extremity of Eroticism: the Marquis de Sade and Georges Batielle
8. The Phenomenon of Death and the Phenomenology of Dying: Heidegger and Sartre
9. Reflections: On the Possibility of a Meaningful Life

Assessment:

Term Essay / Final Examination / Open Book Examination

Primary Texts:

Plato. *Symposium*. Trans Alexander Nehamas & Paul woodruff. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989.

Plato. *Phaedo*. Trasn. R. S. Bluck. London: Routledge, [1955] 2001.

The Stoic and Epicurean Philosophers: The complete extant writings of Epicurus, Epictetus, Lucretius, Marcus Aurelius. Ed. Whitney J. Oates. New York: Random House, 1940

Seneca. *Dialogues and Letters*. Trans. C. D. N. Costa. London: Penguin Books, 1997

Sigmund Freud. *Three contribution of the Theory of Sex*. Trans. A A Brill, New York: The Modern Library, [1938] 1995.

Sigmund Freud. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Trans. James Strachey, Standard Edition Vol. XVIII. London: The Hogarth Press, 1953.

The Marquis de Sade. *The 120 Days of Sodom*. Trans. Austryn Wainhouse & Richard Seaver. New York: Grove Press, 1966.

Georges Batielle. *The Tears of Eros*. Trans. Peter Connor. San Francisco: City Lights Book, 1989.

- Georges Batille. *The Bataille Reader*. Ed. Fred Botting & Scott Wilson. Oxford: Blackwell, 1997
- Martin Heidegger. *Being and Time*. Trans. John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson. New York: Harper & Row, 1962.
- Jean-Paul Sartre. *Being and Nothingness*. Trans. Hazel Barnes. London: Methuen, 1958.

Major References:

1. Aries, Philippe. *Western Attitude toward Death: From the Middle Ages to the Present*. Trans. Patrica Ranum. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974.
2. Avis, Paul. *Eros and the Sacred*. Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1989.
3. Bergmann, Martin. *The Anatomy of Loving*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1987
4. Carse, James. *Death and Existence*. New York: John Wiley & son, 1980.
5. Clack, Beverley. *Sex and Death*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002.
6. Dastur, Francoise. *Death: an Essay on Finitude*. Trans. John Llewelyn, London: Athone, 1996.
7. Dollimore, Jonathan. *Death, Desire and Loss in Western Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1998.
8. Evola, Julius. *The Metaphysics of Sex*. London and the Hague: East-West Publications, 1983
9. Hadot, Pierre. *The Inner Citadel*. Trans. Michael Chase. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998.
10. Giddens, Anthony. *The Transformation of Intimacy*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992.
11. Lingis, Alphonso. *Libido: The French Existential Theories*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985.
12. Malpas, Jeff & Solomon, Robert ed. *Death and Philosophy*. London & New York: Routledge, 1998.
13. Morgan, Douglas. *Love: Plato, the Bible and Freud*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1964.
14. Nussbaum, Martha. *The Therapy of Desire*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.
15. Pieper, Josef. *Death and Immortality*. Trans. Richard & Clara Winston. South Bend: St. Augustine's Press, 2000.
16. Ragland, Ellie. *Essays on the Pleasure of Death: From Freud to Lacan*. New York: Routledge, 1995
17. Scruton, Roger. *Sexual Desire: A Philosophical Investigation*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1986.
18. Santas, Gerasimos. *Plato and Freud: Two Theories of Love*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988.
19. Silverman, Hugh ed. *Philosophy and Desire*. New York: Routledge, 2000.
20. Singer, Irving. *The nature of Love*. 3 Volumes. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960/1984.