

Moral Philosophy II: Love and Courtship

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Spring 2008

Aims of the course: Love between a man and a woman is probably the most discussed, most celebrated, most commercially exploited, most pursued, and yet the least understood aspect of human life in modern times. In love, the individual hopes to find romance, passion, friendship, and self-transcendence. For most people, the “pursuit of happiness” is in large part the attempt to find and to love another human being. Widespread research and personal experience suggest, however, that modern men and women’s chances of finding happiness in love are precarious at best. Half of all marriages fail. Most people have had several “serious relationships” even before getting married. Sexuality among teens is common. Meanwhile, the culture tells us to have sex, lots of it, without any view of the emotional consequences of so-called “safe sex.” This course does not offer any quick-fix solutions to the current troubled relations between men and women. It does, however, attempt to offer a more traditional perspective on the nature of *eros* and marriage, one that could serve to discipline and to elevate the erotic passions and longings of man. Our readings and discussion should come to the conclusion that courtship leading to marriage is the only true and beautiful way to turn initial love and romance into a lasting unity of hearts. But how do we get there?

Readings & Discussions:

Weeks 1-2: Where Are We Now?

Anonymous, M.D., *Unprotected*, ch. 1

Wendy Shalit, *A Return to Modesty*, selections

George Gilder, “The Princess and the Barbarian,” *Men and Marriage*

T. O. Moore, “Heather’s Compromise,” *Claremont Review of Books*

Weeks 3-6: Our Future, Our Present?

Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*

Week 7: The Virtue of Temperance

Wendy Shalit on modesty and St. Thomas Aquinas on temperance

Week 8: Men and Women

David M. Buss, “What Women Want,” “Men Want Something Else”

Week 9: What is courtship?

Beth L. Bailey, *From Front Porch to Back Seat*, sel.

Leon Kass, “The End of Courtship,” www.thepublicinterest.com

Week 10: What Is Love?

Plato, Socrates’ answer in *The Symposium*

C. S. Lewis, “Eros,” *The Four Loves*

Weeks 11-16: Prudence, Love, and Courtship

Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*

Weeks 17-19: What Is Marriage?

C. S. Lewis, Kierkegaard, et al.

Assignments:

You will be required to complete two written assignments each quarter, one in class and one outside of class. In addition, you will do all of the reading and participate in class. Your grade will be figured according to the following distribution.

First quarter:	Participation 33%	Second quarter:	Participation 33%
	In-class exam 33%		In-class exam 33%
	Courtship-in-Film 33%		Major essay 33%

Courtship-in-film essay: In the first quarter you will address modern relations between the sexes by conducting an analysis of a “relationship” in a modern film. This film should not (if such films are still made) depict a traditional courtship but rather reflect on current mating and dating practices. In your analysis you should attempt to answer some of the questions we have raised in class. In particular, you should address whether the couple’s erotic practices are likely to lead to lasting happiness or not. At some level you should address the issues raised by Anonymous, Shalit, Gilder, Moore, or even Huxley. Even if this romantic film makes us cry at the end, does it fail to provide a “cultural script” that teaches us how to conduct our erotic lives in order to find (or to create) true love? The film must have my approval. 3-4 pages.

Major essay: The major essay will consider the theory and practice of courtship as seen in Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*. Your paper should consider some of these questions. How might a person “find and win the right one for marriage” given the amount of “pride and prejudice” in the world? How could someone as astute as Elizabeth be so wrong about both Darcy and Wickham? What role, if any, should friends or siblings play in the choice of a spouse? Are there compelling reasons for marriage other than love? Is everyone capable of finding happiness in marriage, or is happiness reserved for a privileged few? Is Darcy the ideal man? Is Elizabeth the ideal woman? Does Darcy need Elizabeth to become a better man? Does Elizabeth need Darcy to become a better woman? Why or why not? What role does admiration play in addition to love? In your paper, you are not required to answer all of these questions, and you may come up with your own topic, but these should serve as a good starting point. 5-7 pages.

In-class examination: At the end of each quarter you will be given a multi-question, in-class examination. The questions will address specific issues we have discussed in class. You will be given the questions a couple of days in advance, and the exam will be open-book. Example of a question: “The expectations men and women have in modern *relationships* are far too low and therefore ultimately unsatisfying. Agree or disagree.”

Class participation: Our day-to-day discussions will be the major activity of this class. To make the discussions worthwhile, every student should make thoughtful comments, listen to what others have to say, and ask questions that will stimulate further discussion.

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I understand the requirements for this course. Further, I understand that the BBC version of *Pride and Prejudice* may be shown in the class and that students will be required to watch a film outside of class and write a paper on it. That film will be of the student's choosing, but parents are invited to guide their children in making a choice if they deem it necessary. Please see the courtship-in-film essay described above.

Parent signature: _____ Date: _____

Student name (printed): _____