

Love and Personhood

PHIL 21411

Winter 2023

Class times: Mondays and Wednesdays, 1:30-2:50pm

Location: Stuart Hall, Room 020

Course Instructor: Claudia Hogg-Blake (she, her, hers)

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Office: Stuart Hall, Room 210

Office hours: T & Th, 2:30-3:30pm. Or email for an appointment if both of those times clash with another class.

Office hours sign-up: calendly.com/claudiahoggblake. Sign up by 12pm (noon) on the day you want to meet.

Is love, in the deepest sense of the word, something that occurs only between “persons”? Contemporary philosophers often think so. And they tend to understand “personhood”, moreover, in terms of the possession of the special psychological capacity for self-reflective reasoning. But this conception of personhood notably excludes some cognitively disabled humans, infant humans, and non-human animals from the category of “persons”. This raises the questions: *who can love, and who can be loved?* To answer these questions, we will put some influential philosophical conceptions of love and “personhood” into conversation with other contemporary philosophical work, as well as personal memoirs and film, that speak to the possibility of loving “non-persons”: infants, neonates, and fetuses; the severely cognitively disabled; and non-human animals.

Course Objectives, Expectations and Assessment

By the end of this course, students will be able to identify, analyze and evaluate the role that conceptions of personhood have played in dominant philosophical accounts of love. In the evaluative mode, they will be able to put academic texts into fruitful philosophical conversation with materials outside of the traditional academic canon. Throughout the course, we will develop and hone the following skills:

- Reconstruction, analysis, and critical evaluation of philosophical arguments
- Framing philosophical problems/puzzles in a clear and compelling way
- Developing one’s own philosophical arguments with clarity and precision

No prior work in philosophy, or the philosophy of love in particular, is required to take this course. Love plays an important role in all of our lives, and our ongoing conversation about love in this course will benefit from a contribution of diverse perspectives and experiences, including those with and without a background in academic philosophy. Writing assignments will be structured in a way that will help you to develop and hone your philosophical writing skills as we progress. Nonetheless, this will be a challenging course and will require a high level of engagement. Though there will usually be only one reading per session, you should set aside a good amount of time to read it slowly

and carefully, think about it, and take notes. You will also be required to submit a short written response before each session (see below).

You are responsible for keeping up with all communications, via email and Canvas notifications, about the course. If you are having difficulties with the course, for whatever reason, please get in touch with me sooner rather than later, so that we can work together to find a solution.

Participation and Engagement

Read the Syllabus

You are expected to read the syllabus for the course. You cannot fully engage with the course if you do not know what is expected of you. **I will not respond to emails that ask questions that are already answered in the syllabus.** To ensure that you know what is expected of you, there will be a short quiz about the syllabus, to be completed by the end of first week, on Canvas.

Participation and Engagement in Class

You are expected to attend every class session unless you are unwell or have some other good reason to miss class. If you do need to miss a session, you should email me in advance to let me know. Unexcused absences will negatively affect your participation grade.

You are expected to be engaged during class time, and participation in class discussion is encouraged. During discussion, we should approach one another's contributions with curiosity and respect. Please follow these departmental norms of discussion (<https://philosophy.uchicago.edu/about/who-we-are/diversity-and-inclusion>):

1. Be **collaborative**. Don't dominate conversation; give others the space to contribute.
2. Be **charitable**. Acknowledge the reasons for, and insights in, what other people have to say.
3. Be **courteous**. Avoid condescension, dismissiveness and other varieties of rudeness.
4. Be **judicious**. When weighing whether, or how long, to press a given line, keep in mind the stakes of the discussion. Don't nitpick for the sake of nitpicking.
5. **Avoid giving needless offense**, such as in the description of cases or thought experiments.
6. **Keep in mind that tentativeness is not a confession of ignorance**, nor self-assurance a guarantee of truth.

Engagement with the Texts

You are expected to carefully read, think about, and take notes on the assigned reading(s) before each class. To help you to do this, a few guiding questions will be given for each reading, and you are required to submit brief written responses (no more than 300 words total) to these questions in advance of each class. **Written responses should be submitted by 9am on the day of each class, via the Canvas discussion boards.** These pre-class assignments will be the primary mode of assessment of your participation and engagement with the course materials. To get full credit, these assignments should show an honest effort toward accurate textual interpretation and analysis, with

clear citation of the text, as well as improvement in response to feedback. **You will not get credit for late submissions of pre-class assignments unless you have written to me in advance and have been granted an extension.** Since the purpose of these pre-class assignments is to prepare you for class, extensions will only be granted if you have a good reason, such as sickness or emergency.

Papers

You are required to write three papers for this course. The paper assignments will be progressively more complex and are designed to help you to gradually build and hone skills in philosophical writing. For the first paper, you will be asked to reconstruct an argument from a text that we have read and discussed. This paper should be 2-3 pages in length. The second paper will require you to reconstruct more than one argument and put these arguments into conversation with one another in order to express a philosophical puzzle. This paper should be 4-5 pages in length. Finally, in your third paper you will articulate a philosophical puzzle and then develop your own philosophical argument in response to that puzzle. This paper should be 7-8 pages in length.

Assessment breakdown:

1. **Syllabus quiz, 1%.** To ensure that you have read the syllabus and understand the course policies, there will be a short quiz, on Canvas, on the contents of the syllabus. To get credit you must answer all questions correctly, which will require you to read the syllabus.
2. **Attendance and engagement in class, 8% (0.5% per session).** Be present and engaged in each class session. Follow the departmental norms of discussion.
3. **Pre-class written responses, 24% (1.5% per response).** No more than 300 words answering questions about the reading. Due **9am Mondays and Wednesdays.**
4. **First paper, 12%.** 2-3 pages, argument reconstruction. Due **Sunday 1/29** by 11:59pm.
5. **Second paper, 20%.** 4-5 pages, articulating a philosophical puzzle. Due **Sunday 2/19** by 11:59pm.
6. **Third paper, 35%.** 7-8 pages, developing your own philosophical argument. Due **Wednesday 3/8** by 11:59pm.

Citing Sources, Academic Honesty, and Plagiarism

When you are writing a paper, be sure to distinguish between when you are presenting your own ideas or thoughts and when you are presenting or drawing on somebody else's ideas or thoughts or writings. When you are presenting, drawing on, or developing somebody else's ideas, say so. You should always cite your sources, whether you are directly quoting from them or only paraphrasing. Here is some useful information on how to cite your sources from our campus library: [Home - How do I cite resources? - Library Guides at UChicago](#)

And from the Purdue Writing Lab:

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_formatting_and_style_guide/mla_formatting_and_style_guide.html

Passing another's work off as one's own constitutes plagiarism and will not be tolerated. Students found to be plagiarizing another's work will receive an F grade for the course. Students who are unsure about what constitutes plagiarism should ask the instructor. See here for more information: <https://studentmanual.uchicago.edu/academic-policies/academic-honesty-plagiarism/>. Using a bot to write your paper for you constitutes plagiarism. Do not have a bot write your paper for you! It will be a bad paper and will most likely be detected – they now have bots that can detect when something has been written by a bot, and I will use that if I suspect you have not written your own paper.

Accessibility

If you have ADA accommodations, please let's discuss what you need. I will ask you for documentation from Student Disability Services (SDS) if I haven't received it already. If you are unsure whether you qualify for ADA accommodations, by all means contact Student Disability Services at 773-702-6000, or disabilities@uchicago.edu. You can also report an access barrier, ask for services in a particular university facility, and more at <https://equalopportunityprograms.uchicago.edu/accessibility/request-an-accommodation/>

If you are concerned that you may have a learning disability or are otherwise struggling with your schoolwork, Student Health and Counseling Services has an academic skills assessment program (called by the acronym, ASAP) that may be able to help you sort out what is going on: <https://wellness.uchicago.edu/mental-health/academic-skills-assessment-program/>

If you encounter obstacles to learning, as a result of, for example, personal or life circumstances or dynamics within the classroom, please come and talk to me so that I can either address the issue or provide accommodations (such as deadline extensions) to help you to get the most out of this course.

Please let me know if you need to miss class or adjust deadlines to accommodate religious observance. We will work something out.

Campus Resources

There is information here about the resources available to you on campus: [Campus resources | University of Chicago \(uchicago.edu\)](#)

And see here for resources offered specifically by the Center for Diversity and Inclusion: [About Us | Center for Identity + Inclusion | The University of Chicago \(uchicago.edu\)](#)

COVID-19 Precautions and Mask Policy

In light of the ongoing danger of coronavirus – where even seemingly mild cases of infection can cause long-term, adverse neurological effects, chronic illness and long-term disability – I want to minimize the risks associated with participating in this class. In order to make the classroom accessible to everybody, including those who are immunocompromised or have health conditions that make them more vulnerable, I ask you all to please take the following precautions:

- Wear a face mask when you are in the classroom.
- Do not come to class if you are sick with cold- or flu-like symptoms, even if you don't think it is coronavirus.
- Do not come to class if you are testing positive for coronavirus, even if you do not feel unwell.
- Do not come to class if you have been exposed to coronavirus in the past five days, even if you do not feel unwell and/or have tested negative (the CDC advises waiting five days after an exposure before testing, in order to avoid false negatives).

I really appreciate your vigilance – it shows respect and concern for your classmates and lays the ground for a good learning environment. **If you feel well enough to attend class but cannot attend in person due to these policies, you may attend over Zoom – please give me a few hours' notice.**

Schedule of Readings

Note: The readings/movies listed under each session should be read/watched *in advance* of that session. All readings will be available on Canvas.

Week 1	1/4	INTRODUCTION: THINKING ABOUT LOVE AND PERSONHOOD No reading <i>Written response due 9am to the question "What does it mean to be a person?"</i>
I. Love and Personhood		
Week 2	1/9	Harry Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person" <i>Written response due 9am</i>
	1/11	Harry Frankfurt, "On Caring" <i>Written response due 9am</i>
Week 3	1/16	MLK DAY: NO CLASS
	1/18	Harry Frankfurt, "Necessity, Volition, and Love" <i>Written response due 9am</i>

FIRST PAPER ASSIGNED FRIDAY 1/20

- Week 4 1/23 Susan Wolf, “Love: The Basic Questions”
Robert Nozick on “The Experience Machine” (short excerpt)
Written response due 9am
- 1/25 Movie: *Lars and the Real Girl*
Written response due 9am

FIRST PAPER DUE SUNDAY 1/29 BY 11:59PM**II. Love for “Rational Persons”**

- Week 5 1/30 Niko Kolodny, “Love as Valuing a Relationship”
Written response due 9am
- 2/1 Bennett Helm, “Love, Identification, and the Emotions”
Written response due 9am
- Week 6 2/6 David Velleman, “Love as a Moral Emotion”
Written response due 9am
- 2/8 David Velleman, “Beyond Price”
Written response due 9am

SECOND PAPER ASSIGNED FRIDAY 2/10**III. Love Beyond Rational Personhood**

- Week 7 2/13 Jeannette Kennett, “True and Proper Selves”
Written response due 9am
- 2/15 Eva Kittay, *Love’s Labor*, Chapter 6
Written response due 9am

SECOND PAPER DUE SUNDAY 2/19 BY 11:59PM

- Week 8 2/20 *Dogs* (Netflix docuseries), Season 1, Episode 2: “Bravo Zeus”
Written response due 9am
- 2/22 Barbara Smutts, “Encountering Animal Minds”

Written response due 9am

THIRD PAPER ASSIGNED FRIDAY 2/24

Week 9 2/27

Francesca Segal, *Mother Ship* (excerpt)

Written response due 9am

3/1

Hilde Lindemann, "Miscarriage and the Stories we Live By"
Byron J. Stoyles, "The Value of Pregnancy and the Meaning of
Pregnancy Loss"

Written response due 9am

Week 10

THIRD PAPER DUE WEDNESDAY 3/8 BY 11:59PM