**Religious Studies 3Y03E** Term 1, 2018-19, Tuesday evenings

**Love in Western Civilization (a.k.a. the Love course)**

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TA: TBA

**1. The Course**

*Description*

In this course we will discuss some of the most important accounts of love given in Western civilization – Plato’s *Symposium*, Augustine’s *Confessions*, the *Letters* of Abelard and Heloise, Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* – as well as several equally compelling recent works: Albert Camus’ *Fall*, Charlie Kaufman’s *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, and George Saunders’ “Jon.” If there is enough time and interest, we will also consider students’ favourite poems and songs.

*Objectives*

The course is not intended to provide students with information or data and test their memories; nor does it instruct students in information literacy, technological literacy or any other ersatz literacy. A basis of information will be established as necessary and assumed in our analyses and interpretations of the course texts. The primary pedagogical purpose of the course is to cultivate literacy proper and promote cultural discernment and aesthetic judgment by encouraging students to reflect on intrinsically meaningful and challenging books and works of art.

*Required course texts and editions*

Plato, *The Symposium*, in *The Dialogues of Plato* (Bantam)

Augustine, *The Confessions* (Oxford)

Abelard and Heloise, *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise* (Penguin)

Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet* (Bantam)

Albert Camus, *The Fall* (Penguin)

George Saunders, “Jon,” *New Yorker* (27 Jan. 2003)

The course texts are available at what used to be the bookstore, but is now called "The Campus Store," and will be placed on reserve at the library, for the time being still known as "The Library." All course texts are available in digital form as well, and links to the right editions will be provided to the class through Avenue. Reading digital versions might be fine for browsing purposes. My advice, however, is to resist the temptation to read everything on a screen. Paperbacks are just better than screens because you can read without all those distractions and mark the books up in an active, more fully engaged way.

*Course requirements and evaluation (details below)*

Tutorial participation 10%

Response papers (2 x 15%) 30%

Essay 30%

Final take-home assignment 30%

*Note*: This syllabus is subject to change with due notice given to in-course students.

*Class / reading schedule*

1. Sept. 4 Introduction to the course; *Romeo and Juliet* (introduction)

2. Sept. 11 *Romeo and Juliet* (continued)

3. Sept. 18 *Romeo and Juliet* (conclusion)

4. Sept. 25 *Symposium*

5. Oct. 2 *Symposium*

= Oct. 9 Reading week; no class

6. Oct. 16 Augustine, *Confessions* (selections)

7. Oct. 23 Camus, *Fall*

8. Oct. 30 Camus, *Fall*

9. Nov. 6 Abelard’s *Historia calamitatum*

10. Nov. 13 Heloise and Abelard, “The Personal Letters” (numbers 2-5)

11. Nov. 20 *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (C. Kaufman, M. Gondry)

12. Nov. 27Saunders, “Jon” <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2003/01/27/jon>

13. Dec. 4 Concluding discussion

**2. The Assignments**

*Tutorials* (10%)

The organization of the tutorials will be discussed during the first lecture. Attendance is not optional. Regular active participation is strongly encouraged.

*Response papers* (30% = 2 x 15%)

Students are required to write two short response papers, each of which deals with a specific part of a given week’s assigned reading and takes into consideration the lecture on, and tutorial discussion of the text. Each response paper will be three typed pages, approximately 900 words, of prose in standard essay format (double-spacing, normal margins, 12-point font). The topic for the first response paper is an analysis of the presentation of love in any important scene in *Romeo and Juliet*. It is due in class on September 25th. The topic for the second response paper is an analysis of the understanding of love in any one of the seven eulogies in the *Symposium*. It is due in class on October 16th.

*The essay – general requirements* (30%)

Use only the course text (in the required edition) to write your essay. In other words, do not consult secondary sources, encyclopedias (should you happen to find any), or the internet. I repeat: do **not** use the internet. Any evidence of internet use in your essay will be penalized. As well, your essay must be proof-read the old-fashioned way for spelling and grammatical errors and clarity of style: relying on spelling and grammar functions of your software will not be enough.

*The essay itself – topic, optional outline and meeting, final form*

The general topic is a comparison of the understandings of love presented in Augustine’s *Confessions* and Camus’ *Fall*. Each student is required to select his or her own specific topic, to formulate an argument, and to demonstrate it with appropriate textual exegesis, presenting everything as elegantly as possible.

The finished essay will be 8 pages (not counting title page and any apparatus), standard essay format (double-spacing, normal margins, 12-point font), or approximately 2,400 words (at 300 words per page). It is due at the beginning of class on November 21st.

As part of the process of working up the essay, a student may submit a brief outline specifying the particular topic and the ways it will be addressed and arrange to discuss the outline with her or his TA. An outline should be one or two typed pages, approximately 600 words, of prose; no point-form outlines, please. Neither the outline nor the meeting will be graded.

*Final take-home assignment* (30%)

There will not be a sit-down final exam in this course. There will, however, be a take-home assignment, to be completed at some convenient time after the end of classes. The format, content, procedures and timing of the test will be decided during the final class, with student suggestions welcome. Some things about it can be safely inferred now, though: it will certainly cover the *Letters* of Abelard and Heloise, Kaufman’s *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, and Saunders’ “Jon;” and attendance and participation throughout the course will be assumed. And one aspect of it is non-negotiable: students will be required to write answers in prose – in other words, there will be **no** multiple-choice questions on the test.

*Optional class presentation*

For a few brave souls, another sort of assignment is possible. With the prior approval of the professor, of course, a student can volunteer to play a song or recite a poem during class, give an interpretation (no more than 5 minutes of lecturing), and lead a short class discussion afterwards. Only one such presentation per week will be possible, but at any time in the term. For any student who takes this option, the class presentation will be worth 10% of the overall course grade and the remaining assignments will be worth 90%.

**3. The Word**

*Spelling counts*

Written work will be marked on grammar, clarity of writing, organization and presentation as well as on the quality of its content and analysis. Students who wish to improve their writing skills might visit McMaster’s “Student Success Centre” to ask about its “Academic Support” services. There are no shortcuts, however. The best way to learn to write well is to write a great deal, and more importantly, to read a great deal – "indiscriminately and all the time with [your] eyes hanging out" (Dylan Thomas).

*Words and power*

In everything they write, students should follow five fundamental rules recommended by George Orwell in "Politics and the English Language:"

1. Never use a long word where a short one will do.

2. If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out.

3. Never use the passive where you can use the active.

4. Never use a foreign phrase, a scientific word or a jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent.

5. Break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous.

*41 other rules for writing good stuff*

 1. Allways check your speling.

 2. Proof-read to see if you any words out.

 3. Verbs has to agree with their subjects.

 4. Verb tense, today and always, was important.

 5. Prepositions are terms one should not end sentences with.

 6. Steer clear of incorrect forms of verbs that have snuck in the language.

 7. The right way to use "is" is, is that it shouldn't be used this way.

 8. Muster the courage to boldly refuse to incorrectly split an infinitive.

 9. Don't use contractions in formal writing.

10. Use the apostrophe in it's proper place and omit it when its not needed.

11. Verb's and simple plural's don't require them.

12. Don't use no double negatives.

13. The adverb usually follows the verb.

14. Statements, like, aren't similes or guesses?

15. Write all adverbial forms correct.

16. Place pronouns as close as possible, especially in long sentences, as of ten words or more, to their antecedents.

17. Everyone should be careful to use a singular pronoun with singular nouns in their writing.

18. Avoid run-on sentences they are hard to read.

19. No sentence fragments.

20. And don't start a sentence with a conjunction.

21. If you write well and I write well, how is it that you and me don't? If this is a lesson to you, and to me as well, then why isn't it a lesson to you and I?

22. Don't overuse exclamation marks!!!

23. "It is best not to use too many 'quotation "marks,"'" he said.

24. Avoid commas, that are not necessary, and un-necessary hyphens, too.

25. Use the semicolon properly, always use it where it is appropriate; and never where it isn't.

26. Writing carefully, dangling participles must be avoided.

27. Don't string too many prepositional phrases together unless you are one of those walking through the valley of the shadow of death.

28. If you reread your work, you will find on rereading that a great deal of repetition and redundancy can be avoided by rereading and editing.

29. Never, ever use repetitive redundancies.

30. A writer must not shift your point of view in mid-sentence.

31. It's really unfair, but things such as human beings, which are animate, get to begin their subordinate clauses differently than other things such as rocks, who are not.

32. Eschew dialect, irregardless.

33. Also, avoid awkward and affected alliteration.

34. Of course, it is incumbent upon everyone to avoid archaisms.

35. Always pick on the correct idiom.

36. Take the bull by the hand and say no to mixed metaphors.

37. Avoid trendy elocutions that sound flaky.

38. From the dawn of time, we have been commanded not to utter sweeping generalizations.

39. Resist hyperbole, even if you have to remind yourself a thousand times.

40. Last but not least, avoid clichés like the plague.

41. First, lists are not arguments; and thirdly, they are often numbered inconsistently.

42. Great green dragons might exist, but green great dragons certainly don’t because the mysterious rule about adjectival order in English is opinion-size-age-shape-colour-origin-material-purpose before the noun. If you don’t believe me, check out my lovely little old rectangular green French silver whittling knife.

**4. The Law**

*Departmental Law*

Staff in the office of the Department of Religious Studies will not date-stamp or receive papers and assignments.

*University mandated statements:*

*1. Statement on Academic Dishonesty*

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity. The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty: (1) Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one’s own

or for which other credit has been obtained. (2) Improper collaboration in group work. (3) Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

*2. Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities*

Students who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or e-mail sas@mcmaster.ca. For further information, consult McMaster University’s Policy for Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities.

*3. Policy for Modifying a Course*

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course

during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all

courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary,

reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with

explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of

students to check their McMaster email and course websites weekly during the

term and to note any changes. Announcements will be made in class and by using

the course email distribution list.

*4. Social Sciences Faculty E-mail Communication Policy*

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student’s own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

*5. McMaster Student Absence Form:*

The McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF) (http://www.mcmaster.ca/msaf/) is a self-reporting tool for Undergraduate Students to report MEDICAL absences that last up to 5 days and provides the ability to request accommodation for any missed academic work (that is less than 30% of the course grade). Please note, this tool cannot be used during any final examination period. You may submit a maximum of ONE Academic Work Missed request per term. It is YOUR responsibility to follow up with your instructor immediately regarding the nature of the accommodation. If you are absent for more than 5 days, exceed one request per term, are absent for a reason other than medical, or have missed work worth 30% or more of the final grade, you MUST visit your Faculty Office. You may be required to provide supporting documentation. This form should be filled out when you are about to return to class after your absence.