

# Syllabus for PHL 415: Philosophy of Sex and Love



Furman University, Spring 2018

Monday-Thursday, 2:30-3:45

Furman Hall 127

## **My Information**

Dr. Erik A. Anderson

Department of Philosophy

Office: Furman Hall 125B

Office hours by appointment

## **Required Texts**

Nicholas Power, Raja Halwani, and Alan Soble, eds., *The Philosophy of Sex*, 6th ed.  
(Rowman & Littlefield, 2012).

Laurie J. Shrage and Robert Scott Stewart, *Philosophizing about Sex* (Broadview,  
2015).

Lisa Wade, *American Hookup: The New Culture of Sex on Campus* (Norton, 2017).

\*There will also be a number of photocopied readings.

## **Course Description**

At the heart of Western philosophy lies the Socratic maxim, “The unexamined life is not worth living.” If we take this maxim seriously, it should lead us to reflect philosophically upon *every* important area of our lives. Following Plato’s example,

this should include our sexuality, which can be the source of great pleasure and happiness, but also of great pain and misery. Unfortunately, educational institutions in the United States generally do a poor job of promoting philosophical reflection about sex. What college students study in the classroom often has little to do with what they do in the bedroom (or the dorm), and they are not often encouraged to think rigorously about their own sexual identities and activities in formal educational settings. This lack of reflection is especially unfortunate because college is the time when most young people become sexually active, enjoy an unparalleled degree of sexual freedom, and begin to develop the beliefs and values that will guide them through the rest of their lives. It is also an environment in which harmful forms of sexual behavior like sexual assault are disturbingly prevalent.

PHL 415 is designed to help remedy this defect. In this course, we will raise and discuss a number of foundational questions about sexuality including what distinguishes sexual from non-sexual acts and behaviors, what is the relationship between sex, gender, and sexual orientation, what constitutes consent to sexual activities, whether consent is the only thing that is morally relevant when it comes to sex, whether any sexual acts count as “perverse,” whether pornography is a positive or negative influence in our lives, and what constitutes rape, sexual assault, and sexual harassment and why these are morally bad things. At the end of the semester, we will relate our philosophical discussions to an in-depth look at the sexual culture that is prevalent on today’s college campuses, so that students can use their newly-acquired philosophical insights to think critically about the sexual status quo.

### **Course Requirements**

(1) Participation: You will receive a participation grade for the class determined by such things as the frequency and quality of your contributions to our discussions, your level of preparedness, your attendance, and your diligence in seeking help outside of class. (10% of your final grade.)

(2) Reading Questions: You will be required to complete a number of short assignments on the assigned readings. I will grade them on a pass/fail (✓ / -) basis. (20% of your final grade.)

(3) Essay Assignments: There will be 2 essay assignments on the main topics covered in class. (2 x 35% of your final grade)

### **Course Policies**

(1) Attendance: You will be allowed **two unexcused absences**, no questions asked. After that, unexcused absences may negatively affect your final grade. A freshman who exceeds **six** absences or an upperclassman who exceeds **ten** absences **for any reason** (excused or unexcused) will be in violation of the maximum established by the University and will be dropped from the course.

(2) Assignments: Unless I say otherwise, all writing assignments (including any do-at-home short assignments) must be typed, double-spaced, and stapled.

(3) Extensions: Unless you arrange an extension with me, course assignments that are handed in late will be penalized one grade per day that they are late. If you have a foreseeable absence, it is your responsibility to discuss the possibility of an extension with me before the due date for an assignment.

(4) Plagiarism: Academic Integrity standards are important to our Furman community and will be upheld in this class. Students should review the Academic Integrity Pledge posted in the classroom and resources available on [www.furman.edu/integrity](http://www.furman.edu/integrity). If I discover egregious instances of plagiarism in your work, you will fail the assignment and I will report it to the Associate Academic Dean in accordance with university policies. I will discuss proper methods of citation in advance of the first major writing assignment. When in doubt about how to refer to the work or ideas of others, please ask me.

(5) Laptops & Cellphones: You are not to use laptops or cellphones during class unless I give explicit permission.

(6) Course Grades:

Grade	Description
A	Excellent. The mark of highest distinction earned by those students whose work represents the best that can be expected of a student at Furman.
B	Good. The mark of distinction earned by those students whose work represents a high degree of achievement in meeting the characteristic demands of the course.
C	Satisfactory. The mark earned by those students who have attained such familiarity with the content of the course and such ability to apply this knowledge as may be expected of a student who gives to the course a reasonable amount of time, effort, and attention.
D	Marginal. The lowest passing grade representing inferior work. It indicates that the student would be seriously handicapped in attempting subsequent courses for which this work is a prerequisite.
F	Failure. The mark indicates unconditional failure. No credit earned.

(7) Civility, Controversy, and Communication: Furman University's diversity statement reads in part as follows:

“Recognizing and respecting the inherent worth of each individual and respecting differences among groups, the University aspires to create a community of people representing a multiplicity of identities including, but not limited to, gender, race, religion, spiritual belief, sexual orientation, geographic origin, socioeconomic background, ideology, world view, and varied abilities. ... Most importantly, Furman expects all members of its community to honor the values implicit in this vision and to demonstrate a genuine willingness to move from an

awareness and tolerance of difference toward understanding and acceptance.”<sup>1</sup>

I share the values expressed in this statement, but I also recognize that respecting diversity is more difficult in practice than statements like this may suggest. This is especially true when it comes to the issues we will be discussing in this class. Issues relating to sex are among the most difficult for us to talk about, for at least two reasons. First, these issues implicate deeply-held values that reflect our upbringing, identity, social location, emotions, and formative experiences. It can be profoundly unsettling to encounter, much less engage in discussion with, people whose deeply-held values conflict with one’s own. Second, we live in a politically polarized society that doesn’t provide us with many incentives or resources for engaging in difficult conversations with those who disagree with us. Instead, our current political practices encourage us to insult and attack rather than to engage with those who see things differently.

My hope is that we can take some steps toward having better conversations about these issues in this class. I would stress that while we are in class, our primary aim is not to win debates or defeat opponents but to *understand* a number of different perspectives on the issues under discussion. You will of course be expected to work out views of your own on these topics, but much of your task will simply be to achieve an accurate understanding of what different authors are saying and what leads them to disagree with each other. **Perhaps the primary skill you will need to develop is the ability to accurately present, verbally and in writing, a philosophical view with which you profoundly disagree.** To some extent, this will require you to temporarily suspend your own beliefs and values, at least while engaged in the activity of interpreting and presenting the arguments of others. You will bring your own beliefs and values back “on line” when you critically evaluate and respond to these arguments, but I will insist that your criticisms rest on a fair and accurate understanding of the views you are criticizing.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.furman.edu/About/About/diversity-and-inclusion/Pages/Our-Commitment.aspx>

I cannot guarantee that our in-class discussions will always be easy or comfortable. But I will insist that people speak respectfully toward one another, genuinely try to understand each other, and try to substitute rational persuasion for snark, dismissiveness, and angry retorts. **If you become upset by things people say in class, please come and talk to me.** I will do my best to ensure that we speak civilly to one another and, to the extent possible, will try to transform visceral disagreements into more reflective, articulate, and philosophical ones. I hope that each of you, as members of our little philosophical community, will assist me and each other in this endeavor.

(8) Trigger Warnings & Title IX: Some of the material covered in this course may be disturbing or difficult for some students. As we go through the course schedule, please note that we will be talking about issues like **sexual assault, exploitation, violence, and objectification**. We will watch a particularly disturbing documentary about sexual assault (“Audrie & Daisy”) over spring break. (You will watch it on your own, not as a group.) You are welcome to use your unexcused absences to opt out of discussions you think might be too difficult for you. Obviously, if you feel unable to discuss *many* of the topics covered in the class, this class probably will not work for you. But if you feel the need to opt out of a *limited* number of readings, discussions, or activities, please talk to me and I’ll do my best to accommodate you.

Please note also that under the federal law known as Title IX, college professors are considered **mandatory reporters**, meaning that **I am required by law** to report to Furman’s Title IX office any incidence of sexual assault involving Furman students that I learn about. **If you would like to report an incident of sexual assault directly to the Title IX office, contact Melissa Nichols, our Title IX Coordinator, at x2221 or melissa.nichols@furman.edu.**

## Tentative Schedule of Readings, Topics, and Assignments

Abbreviations:

*Philosophy of Sex* = POS

<b>Date</b>	<b>Day of Week</b>	<b>Reading for Class</b>	<b>Topic</b>
<b>WEEK 1</b>			
1/8/18	M		Introduction to PHL 415
1/11/18	TH	Read Soble, "The Analytic Categories of the Philosophy of Sex" in POS	Introducing the Philosophy of Sex
<b>WEEK 2</b>			
1/15/18	M	NO CLASS – MLK DAY	
1/18/18	TH	Read Shrage & Stewart, <i>Philosophizing about Sex</i> , Chapter 1: Defining Sex  Read Nagel, "Sexual Perversion" in POS	Defining Sex
<b>WEEK 3</b>			
1/22/18	M	Read Goldman, "Plain Sex" in POS	Defining Sex
1/25/18	TH	Read Morgan, "Sex in the Head" in POS	Defining Sex
<b>WEEK 4</b>			
1/29/18	M	Read Shrage & Stewart, <i>Philosophizing about Sex</i> , Chapter 2: Sexual Attraction	Sex/Gender/Sexual Orientation

		Begin reading Nussbaum, "Constructing Love, Desire, and Care" [photocopy]	
2/1/18	TH	Finish Reading Nussbaum, "Constructing Love, Desire, and Care"	Sex/Gender/Sexual Orientation
<b>WEEK 5</b>			
2/5/18	M	Read Overall, "Trans Persons, Cisgender Persons, and Gender Identities" in POS  *Guest Speaker: Deborah Allen, Associate Director of Diversity Engagement and Manager of the Center for Inclusive Communities	Sex/Gender/Sexual Orientation
2/8/18	TH	Read Shrage & Stewart, <i>Philosophizing about Sex</i> , Chapter 5: Sexual Perversion and Sodomy Laws  Read Levinson, "Sexual Perversity" [photocopy]	Sex/Gender/Sexual Orientation
<b>WEEK 6</b>			
2/12/18	M	Read Shrage & Stewart, <i>Philosophizing about Sex</i> , Chapter 3: Sexual Objectification and Autonomy  Read Mappes, "Sexual Morality and the Concept of Using Another Person" in POS.	Sex & Consent
2/15/18	TH	Read Klepper, "Sexual Exploitation and the Value of Persons" in POS	Sex & Consent

<b>WEEK 7</b>			
2/19/18	M	Read excerpt from Groff, <i>Fates and Furies</i> [photocopy]  Read West, "The Harms of Consensual Sex" in POS	Sex & Consent
2/22/18	TH	Read Pineau, "Date Rape-A Feminist Analysis" in POS  * Read Furman's Title IX policies [handout]	Sex & Consent
<b>WEEK 8</b>			
2/26/18	M	Read Hess, "How Drunk is Too Drunk to Have Sex?" [photocopy]  Read Abbey, "Alcohol-Related Sexual Assault: A Common Problem among College Students" [photocopy]	Sex & Consent
3/1/18	TH	Read Kipnis, "Sexual Miseducation" [photocopy]	Sex & Consent
<b>WEEK 9</b>		<b>*SPRING BREAK*</b>	
		Watch Netflix documentary, "Audrie & Daisy"  Read Shrage and Stewart, <i>Philosophizing about Sex</i> , Chapter 4: Sex and Violence  Read Archard, "The Wrong of Rape" [photocopy]	Sex & Consent
<b>WEEK 10</b>		<b>ESSAY #1 DUE THIS WEEK</b>	

3/12/18	M	Discuss “Audrie & Daisy” and spring break readings	Sex & Consent
3/15/18	TH	Discuss “Audrie & Daisy” and spring break readings	Sex & Consent
<b>WEEK 11</b>			
3/19/18	M	Read Mason-Grant, “Pornography as Embodied Practice” in POS	Pornography & Objectification
3/22/18	TH	Read Kimmel, excerpts from <i>Guyland</i> [photocopy]	Pornography & Objectification
<b>WEEK 12</b>			
3/26/18	M	Read excerpt from Orenstein, <i>Girls &amp; Sex</i> [photocopy]  Read Cahill, "Why 'Derivatization' is Better than 'Objectification'" in POS	Pornography & Objectification
3/29/18	TH	Read excerpt from Warner, <i>The Trouble with Normal</i> [photocopy]	Pornography & Objectification
<b>WEEK 13</b>			
4/2/18	M	NO CLASS – EASTER BREAK	
4/5/18	TH	Read Nozick, “Love’s Bond” [photocopy]	Love & “Catching Feelings”
<b>WEEK 14</b>			
4/9/18	M	Read Wade, <i>American Hookup</i> , Introduction and Chapters 1 & 2.	Campus Sexual Culture

4/12/18	TH	Read Wade, <i>American Hookup</i> , Chapters 3 & 4	Campus Sexual Culture
<b>WEEK 15</b>			
4/16/18	M	Read Wade, <i>American Hookup</i> , Chapters 5 & 6	Campus Sexual Culture
4/19/18	TH	Read Wade, <i>American Hookup</i> , Chapters 7 & 8  *Lisa Wade visit to campus! (Details TBA)	Campus Sexual Culture
<b>WEEK 16</b>			
4/23/18	M	Read Wade, <i>American Hookup</i> , Chapters 9, 10, and Conclusion	Campus Sexual Culture
4/30/18	M	<b>*FINAL ESSAY DUE</b>	