

Syllabus

Scribner Seminar: Self and Desire

TU-TH 12:30-2:00
TU 6:30-7:30

R. Lilly
Fall, 2007

Course Description

The general purpose of this course is to examine the concept of the self as it is determined by desire. It aims to give students an appreciation both of various modes of desire and of the relevant domains, structures and dynamics of the self that come to light in desire. Ultimately, this course hopes to enable the students to think more deeply and fully and in a more nuanced manner about whether there is one basic human desire, several distinct but harmoniously coordinated desires, or perhaps several antagonistic desires constitutive of the human self. In short, students should become better prepared to ask what it means to understand oneself in terms of desire.

The "backbone" of the course will be provided by Plato's *Symposium*, which is a dialogue on the nature of love and desire. We will begin with a contemporary portrayal of the Symposium, and proceed to readings dealing with the question of desire in several contexts: historical, philosophical, literary and psychoanalytic. There will be four which raise issues about the nature of desire and its significance for the question of personal identity.

Books:

Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*
Freud, *The Freud Reader*
Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*
Bataille, *Erotism*
Plato, *The Symposium*
Handouts

WEEK ONE

9/6: Introduction

WEEK TWO

9/11: **Film**, "The Symposium"

Flex Discussion of film

9/13: Reading: de Rougemont: *Love in the Western World* (handout)

WEEK THREE

9/18: Reading: Kierkegaard: *Either/Or*, "The Immediate Stages of the Erotic," 61-84

Flex: 5:30-6:30 Glotzbach House

9/20: Reading: Kierkegaard: *Either/Or*, "The Unhappiest One, and "Crop Rotation" pp. 212-241.

WEEK FOUR

9/25: Reading: Kierkegaard: *Either/Or*, "The Seducer's Diary," pp. 247-293.

Flex Student Meetings: Stress Management & Note Taking

9/27: Reading: Freud: "On Dreams" pp. 142-172

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WEEK FIVE

10/2: **Film:** "That Obscure Object of Desire," Bunuel (102/126 min)

Flex Continue film, discussion **First Paper Assigned**

10/4 Reading: Freud, "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality," pp 252-70, 279-83, 285-86.

WEEK SIX

10/9: Reading: Freud, "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes" 562-68; "Repression," 569-72. The Unconscious," 573- 584. **First Paper Due**

Flex Student Meetings

10/11: Reading: Freud, "Three Essays ... " pp. 239-97

WEEK SEVEN

10/16: Reading: Freud, Three Essays, cont.

Flex 'What's Going On?' discussion

10/18: Reading: Stendhal, "On Love" (handout)

WEEK EIGHT

10/23: Reading: Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy (selection)

Flex Registration Advising

10/25: Reading: Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy (selection) **Second Paper Assigned**

WEEK NINE

10/30: Reading: Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, pp. 14-62

Flex Registration Advising

11/1: Reading: Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, pp. 63-116. **Second Paper Due**

WEEK TEN

11/6: **Film:** "Shortbus"

Flex Continue film, discussion

11/8: Reading: Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, pp. 117-165

WEEK ELEVEN.

11/13 Reading: Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, pp. 166-214

Flex Music Presentations

11/15: Reading: Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, pp. 215-254.

WEEK TWELVE

11/20: **Film:** "Ken Park"

Flex; Continue film, discussion

Thanksgiving

WEEK THIRTEEN

11/27: Reading: Bataille, *Erotism*, pp. 11-62.

Flex *Music Presentations*

11/29: Reading: Bataille, *Erotism*, pp. 63-108

WEEK FOURTEEN

12/4: Reading: Bataille, *Erotism*, pp. 109-146 **Third Paper Assigned**

Flex TBA

12/6 : Reading: Plato, *The Symposium*

WEEK FIFTEEN

12/11: **Film:** “In the Realm of the Senses”

Flex Continue film, discussion **Third Paper Due**

I'll be having dinner in the dining hall more or less every other week, and will be available for informal chats.

Shortbus: TheBig Yellow School bus, well this is the short one. A salon for the gifted and challenged. ... Young people are flocking to the city because of 9/11. It's the only real thing that has happened to them.

It's not your average Friday night at Fam Fuck. People seem to be enjoying themselves.

“I used to want to change the world. Now I just want to leave the room with a little dignity.” Lotus Weinstock.

Requirements

READINGS: All readings must be completed *prior* to class.

FILMS: Films will be an important part of the class. These will be also on reserve in the library, and we will use flex time to discuss the film and its relevance for the section of the course. There are four films (not counting the first, “The Symposium”); the class will be divided into sections, and each section will be responsible for conducting a discussion about the film and its relevance to the materials covered thus far in the class.

PAPERS: There will be three short papers (5 pages). The short papers will be used to help students develop those skills that are outlined in the Scribner Seminar goals and will focus on an exposition and critique of the materials we cover in the course.

Exams: There will be a final exam. As the course is a sustained reflection on the nature of the self and the role of desire in the theory and practice of a self, a reflection that takes Plato's *Symposium* as its point of departure and return, the final exam will call on students to apply synthetic thinking to the course materials.

Music Presentation: In the latter half of the course, students will be called on to present a piece of music and a short discussion of why the particular piece of music is appropriate for raising the question of desire and the self.

CLASS PARTICIPATION/PREPARATION: Students should come to class with some question/issue/commentary on the course materials and to be prepared to share this with the class (hence, having it in written form is advisable). I will often call on several students at the beginning of class to share their "issues." Students who either have no considered "issue" or who "wing it" will be considered unprepared for class. Students are expected to attend all classes.

Grading:

Film discussion: 15
Music presentation 5
Final Exam: 40
Papers: 10 each
Class Participation: 10

Office Hours

TU-TH 11:00-12:00; Wed 2:00-3:00 and by appointment.
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