

840:240 Love as Ethic and Idea
Spring, 2011
TTh4, DC (2:15-3:35)

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Shape of the course: This course is concerned with how love, as a theological idea and as the source of a religious ethic, has developed in western religious tradition from biblical Israel and classical Greece to the present, with emphasis on Christian thought and western culture as influenced by it. We will examine the ethic and idea of love in five historical periods (Parts I-V below) to try to understand how love was conceived and what influence on conduct this implied in each period.

There will be three tests in the form of what I call "directed papers": writing assignments on the ideas covered in the readings and class lectures. You will get the assignment for the first paper on Tuesday, February 15, write it at home, and turn it in a week later on February 22. The second assignment will be made on March 29 and will be due on April 5. The final paper assignment will be given out the last class day for this course, April 28; it is due during the period the final exam for this course is scheduled. These three papers will be weighted equally.

Regular class attendance and participation are important. Accordingly, the final grade will reflect excess absences. After the first week, when people are still getting their schedules finalized, attendance will be taken each class meeting. After that week we will have 26 days of class in this course. Everyone is allowed two absences (the equivalent to a week of class) as "personal" days during this period. Beyond this, there will be a deduction of 2.5 points from your final grade for each absence. You should, then, save your "personal" days for emergencies, including sickness. Long-term illnesses or other emergencies will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Office hours: Thursday 9:00 AM-12:00 noon or by arrangement.

Readings for the course: You should buy the Coursepak for this course, which contains all of the readings except the biblical passages and one brief reading from Augustine. In addition, for the first part of the course you will need access to a Bible (both Old and New Testaments).

Day-by-day plan of the course: see following pages.

Part I: Love in the Ancient World

1/18: First day of class. Orientation to the course. Forms of love in the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible. Read: Selections as given in class.

1/20: Forms of love in classical Greece. Read: Nygren, Agape and Eros, Part One, Chapter Two.

1/25: Forms of love in the New Testament. Read: Nygren, Part One, Chapter One; NT selections as given in class.

1/27: An application: the development of the Christian idea of the Trinity and God's love. Battenhouse, A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine, 235-56.

2/1-2/8: Augustine on the kinds of love and their implications. Read: Nygren, Part Two, II, Chapter Two, II-IV; Augustine, The City of God, Book XIV, Chapter XXVIII (to be distributed) and On Christian Doctrine, Book I.

Part II: Love in the Middle Ages

2/10-2/15: The love idea and the mystical tradition. Read: Bernard of Clairvaux, On the Love of God, and Bonaventure, The Journey of the Mind to God, selections.

First directed paper assigned 2/15, due 2/22.

2/17: Retrospective: the early shaping of Western Christian thinking on love and its implications

2/22-2/24: Courtly love. Read: Andreas Capellanus, The Art of Courtly Love, selections; D. de Rougemont, Love in the Western World, pp. 107-22.

3/1-3/3: Ethical applications of the love idea.

1) Marriage: mutual love as an excuse and remedy for sin.

Read: Ramsey, "Human Sexuality in the History of Redemption"

2) Love and the other virtues in Thomas Aquinas.

Read: selections from his writings, chart on the virtues.

3/8: Reprise: Western Christian Thinking on Love before the Renaissance and Reformation. No new reading.

Part III: Love in the Renaissance-Reformation Era

3/10: Love in Renaissance humanism: the rebirth of eros. Read: Nygren, Part Two, III, Chapter Five, I-III.

3/15 and 3/17: Spring Break.

3/22-3/24: Luther's rejection of the caritas idea. Read: Nygren, Part Two, III, Chapter Six, I-IV.

3/29-3/31: An ethical application: the changing idea of love in Christian marriage doctrine. Read: Johnson, A Society Ordained by God, Chapter V.

Second directed paper assigned 3/29, due 4/5.

Part IV: Love in the Romantic Era

4/5: Romantic love in literature, politics, and marriage. Read: Rougemont, pp. 267-96.

4/7-4/12: The romantic ideal and liberal theology; the romantic Jesus; the Social Gospel. Read: selections from Schleiermacher, Drummond, and Rauschenbusch in the Coursepak.

Part V: Love in Theology and Ethics in the Last Century

4/14-4/19: Catholic thought: Augustinian and Thomistic influences. Read: Häring, The Law of Christ, vol. 2, 83-107.

4/21-4/26: Protestant thought: extending an individual ethic of love to a social ethic. Read: Niebuhr, An Interpretation of Christian Ethics, chapters 2, 4; Ramsey, Basic Christian Ethics, Chapter VII; Tillich, Love, Power, and Justice, Chapter VI; Williams, "Love and Justice in Martin Luther King, Jr.," The Journal of Religious Ethics 18/2 (Fall 1990), 15-32. (All in Coursepak.)

4/28: Review and catching up as needed.

4/28 is the last day of class for this course. The assignment for the final directed paper will be given out then. The paper is due by the end of the final exam period for this course (Monday, May 9, by 11:00 AM). It is to be submitted as an e-mail attachment in one of the following formats: Microsoft Word (*.doc or *.docx), WordPerfect (*.wpd), or rich text (*.rtf). If you use Microsoft Works, you will need to save your paper in one of these formats (preferably *.rtf), as my computer cannot open Works files. Send it to me at the e-mail address on this syllabus: jtj@rci.rutgers.edu.