

Love and Sex on the Silk Road

A Foundation Seminar in the Languages & Cultures Residential College,
Bucknell University



RESC 098-12 • CRN: 15813 • EGHU/FRST/RESC/W1

Fall 2012 • TR 8:00–9:22 am • COLE 117

L&C Common Hour: M 7:00–8:30 pm • COLE 54

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Office hours: MW 10:00–12:00, or by appointment

It is commonly assumed that love and sex are universal, natural phenomena, intrinsic to our very existence as human beings. Whatever their biological aspects, however, love and sex are also very much products of society, culture, and language—i.e., multifaceted phenomena with long and complex histories across various cultures and traditions. This seminar provides an intimate look at a few of the highlights in the cross-cultural history of love and sex as manifested in artifacts such as philosophy, poetry, novels, sacred scripture, paintings, and sculpture.

The primary goal of this seminar is to have students engage critically with cultural products—both foreign and familiar—in a way that recognizes the reality of cultural diversity as well as the possibility of a shared human nature. The narrative frame for our tale of the history of love and sex will be the Silk Road or Silk Route, the 5000-mile series of overland and maritime trade routes that once connected Europe to West, Central, South and East Asia. Themes include: theories of love and sex, cultural taboos on love and sex, cultural conceptions of beauty, body image, misogyny and sexual politics. Topics include: classical Greek perspectives on the male body, Roman and Persian love poetry, Lilith, Adam's "first wife," fertility goddesses in Indian sculpture, the *Kama Sutra*, conceptions of the body in Hinduism and Buddhism, Islamic perspectives on women, tantra, asceticism, romance in *The Tale of Genji*, Japanese *geisha*, and attitudes towards homosexuality among the classical Greeks, medieval Christians, & samurai of Japan.

Specific objectives of the seminar are to have participants: a) *develop* a basic knowledge and understanding of the beliefs, values and practices surrounding love, sex and the body among selected Western and Asian cultures; b) *witness* and *assess* the impact of literary, philosophical and religious texts on cultural ideals of love, sex and the body; c) *reflect* upon the similarities as well as the differences in attitudes towards sex, love and the body among various cultures, and even within the same culture over time; and last but not least d) *engage* in a personal and critical manner on the ideas and themes presented in the course via lectures, discussions, readings, and other media. In short, *students will develop writing, speaking, listening, and information literacy skills necessary for collegiate-level academic work, and will develop capacities for independent academic work and become more accountable in their learning.*

Format:

The course follows a seminar format, which means that lecture time will be integrated with discussion as much as possible. Students are expected to play a leading role in developing questions and topics for class discussion, based on assigned readings but reflective of their own critical insights and perspectives. As a foundation seminar, the *primary* goal of the course is for students to develop critical thinking and writing skills. Evaluation will be based on class participation, short written assignments, a symposium presentation and a final paper (see Requirements, below).

Pedagogy:

I wish to create a comfortable, enjoyable, and at times provocative environment for learning. This is an *interactive* course; the student will be asked to respond and engage with the course material, and with the ideas and opinions of the instructor and other students—though, it is hoped, always in a civil and polite fashion. Evaluation for the course will be based largely on the demonstration of both oral and written critical engagement with course material. I will also be employing various media, including prezis, video and DVDs, and so on, in order to stimulate as many learning faculties as possible. I may also wear the occasional costume, if you're lucky.

Readings:

- M1: Whitfield, Susan. Excerpt from *Life Along the Silk Road* (University of California, 2001)
- M2: Novinger, Tracy. "Why Communicate Across Cultures," in *Intercultural Communication* (University of Texas, 2001)
- M3: Nozick, Robert. "Love's Bond," in *The Examined Life: Philosophical Meditations* (Touchstone, 1990)
- M4: Paz, Octavio. "Eros and Psyche," in *The Double Flame: Love and Eroticism* (Harcourt, 1995)
- M5: Selections from Homer, *The Odyssey*, R. Fitzgerald, trans. (Doubleday, 1961); Sappho, *Stung with Love: Poems and Fragments*, A. Poochigian, trans. (Penguin, 2009)
- M6: Plato. Selections from *The Symposium*. Trans. S. Bernadette (Chicago, 2001)
- M7: Jenkins, Ian, & Victoria Turner. "The Beautiful & the Good," in *The Greek Body* (Getty Museum, 2009)
- M8: Selections from Ovid, *Amores* (Routledge, 2003); Propertius, *Elegies* (Harvard, 1990)
- M9: Selections from *The Five Books of Moses* (Schocken, 1995); Hesiod, *Works and Days* (Johns Hopkins, 2004); W. Barnstone, ed., *The Other Bible* (Harper, 1984); NRSV Bible (Oxford, 1989)
- M10: Biale, Rachel. "Sexuality and Marital Relations," in *Women and Jewish Law* (Schocken, 1984)
- M11: Countryman, William. "New Testament Sexual Ethics..." in *Dirt, Sex & Greed* (Fortress, 1988)
- M12: Selections from Dante, *La Vita Nuova*; Petrarch, *Sonnets*
- M13: Selections from Rumi, *Book of Love* (Harper, 2003); Hafiz, *Drunk on the Wine of the Beloved* (Shambala, 2001)
- M14: Selections from *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an* (Amana, 1989)
- M15: Hassan, Riffat. "An Islamic Perspective," in *Women, Religion and Society* (WCC, 1991)
- M16: Tannahill, Reay. "Islam," in *Sex in History* (Scarborough, 1982)
- M17: Selections from *The Ramayana* (North Point, 2001)
- M18: Shields, James Mark. "The Strange Case of the Buddha Bikini," in *God in the Details* (Routledge, 2010)
- M19: An Yangming. "Family Love in Confucius and Mencius," *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy* 7, 1 (2008); Tannahill, Reay. "China," in *Sex in History* (Scarborough, 1982)
- M20: Francoeur, Robert, et al, eds. "China," in *International Encyclopedia of Sexuality* (Continuum, 2004)
- M21: Sei Shonagan. Selections from *The Pillow Book*, M. McKinney, trans. (Penguin, 2007); Murasaki Shikibu. Selections from *The Tale of Genji*, E. Seidensticker, trans. (Knopf, 1978)
- M22: Ihara Saikaku. Selections from *Comrade Loves of the Samurai*, E. Powys Mathers, trans. (Tuttle, 2007)
- M23: Lindsey, William. "Value Models," in *Fertility & Pleasure: Ritual & Sexual Values in Tokugawa Japan* (Hawaii, 2007)
- M24: Dalby, Liza, "Pontocho of Long Ago," in *Geisha* (California, 1998)

Requirements:

1. ATTENDANCE

Attendance is mandatory. Since this seminar requires student interaction and discussion, it is absolutely necessary for the student to attend each and every class—*this includes the Languages & Cultures College common hours on Monday evenings and other L&C excursions*. Only sickness with a note is considered a valid excuse. Each absence without excuse will result in a 2-point deduction from the participation grade. Being late without an excuse will count as half an absence, thus a 1-point deduction. Five absences without a note will result in automatic failure.

2. PARTICIPATION

30%

Class participation, including discussion of readings and questions posed on weekly prezis, is a requirement. Participation is a matter of quality not quantity. You do not have to speak every class, but rather show that you have done the readings and are willing and able to engage, in a thoughtful way, with the topics under discussion. Again, this requirement extends to the L&C common hours and associated activities. Remember, good questions are also an important aspect of participation.

3. READING QUESTIONS (RQs)

10%

For each and every reading, all students will be asked to submit at least one question for discussion. This will be done via the Moodle page (instructions will be provided in class). Questions must be submitted by **midnight** on the evening before the class in which the reading will be discussed. The instructor will choose the best questions and we will use these as a basis for class discussion. At the end of the term, each student will be evaluated on the basis of how many of their questions were chosen for use in class.

3. INTEGRATED WRITING

40%

A large part of this course will be devoted to writing, understood as a *process* rather than simply a *means* of communication. In order to achieve this, we will be employing methods of *exploratory* writing, i.e., writing that is itself part of the process of developing one's thoughts and arguments. Here are the assignments you will be responsible for, along with their respective worth:

1) In-class writing		NE
2) Reaction Papers (RPs)	4 x 5% =	20%
3) Abstracts for Final Paper & Presentation		NE
4) Final Paper		20%

1) The first and simplest of these methods is **IN-CLASS WRITING**: every so often, at the beginning, middle or end of the class, I will ask you to spend five minutes writing a response to a specific question or problem related to one of the readings or to an image that we are studying. This time can also be used to write questions or note points of confusion. It is important to understand that exploratory writing is primarily for your sake, to help you clarify your thoughts and to develop your writing skills without having to worry about grammar, structure or organization. Though your in-class writing will not be evaluated, I will take your effort into account when compiling your participation grade.

2) About every three weeks, I will ask you to write a **REACTION PAPER** in response to a specific issue or question raised in the lecture, class discussion, or readings. After receiving feedback on an initial draft submitted as part of your journal, you will be required to construct a more formal argument on that particular topic. What you argue is much less important than how well you construct your argument and your written powers of persuasion. These papers will be worth 5% each and will act as practice for your final paper. See Grading Policies for details on how these will be evaluated.

3) You will be expected to write a short (150-word) **ABSTRACT** in preparation for BOTH your symposium presentation and final paper. Unlike the above exercises, the abstract is meant to be a formal summary of your intended argument. These will be submitted towards the end of October. Feedback will be provided.

4) Last but not least, students will be asked to write a 10-page **FINAL PAPER**, which will act as the summation of the above writing assignments. The final paper may be on the same theme as the symposium presentation, but I will expect you to go into more detail with the topic, and present a solid piece of formal writing based on a 'argument' that is your own. Final papers will be handed in no later than the last day of our class, Tuesday, December 4.

4. SYMPOSIUM PRESENTATION

20%

Finally, all students will explore an issue associated with one of the major themes of the course, and present their findings in a 15-20 minute symposium presentation (or poster session), which will be part of the Residential College Symposium scheduled for Saturday, December 1. Detailed instructions to follow.



Love and Sex on the Silk Road



Schedule of Topics and Readings

I. Introduction

T 08/21	1. <i>CH1—Introductions, Explanations & Icebreakers</i>	
R 08/23	2. Course introduction	M1: Whitfield
M 08/27	3. <i>CH2—Discussion: Intercultural Communication</i>	M2: Novinger
T 08/28	4. Philosophy of love & sex	M3: Nozick
R 08/30	5. Eros & Psyche, East & West	M4: Paz
M 09/03	6. <i>CH3—Obon Matsuri</i>	

II. The Classical World

T 09/04	7. "For Her Sake"	M5: Homer&Sappho
R 09/06	8. <i>Symposium</i>	M6: Plato
M 09/10	9. <i>CH4—Inter-lingual Chalk Talk</i>	
T 09/11*	10. The Classical body	M7: Jenkins
R 09/13	11. Roman love poetry	M8: Propertius/Ovid
SN 09/16	12. <i>CH5—Culture Begins at Home: Bike Ride on Rail Trail</i>	

III. Judeo-Christian Cultures

T 09/18†	13. Love and sex in the Hebrew Bible	M9: Bible
R 09/20	14. Jewish perspectives on sex and marriage	M10: Biale
M 09/24	15. <i>CH6—Yoga in America: Shreena Gandhi</i>	
T 09/25°*	16. Christian sexual ethics in today's world	M11: Countryman
R 09/27	17. Late medieval love poetry	M12: Dante/Petrarch
M 10/01	18. <i>CH7—The Way We (and They Eat): John Westbrook</i>	

IV. West Asia

T 10/02†	19. Persian love poetry	M13: Rumi/Hafiz
R 10/04	20. Islamic perspectives on love and sex	M14: Qur'an
M 10/08	FALL BREAK = NO COMMON HOUR	
T 10/09	FALL BREAK = NO CLASS	
R 10/11°	21. Beyond the Veil: Women in Islam	M15: Hassan
M 10/15	22. <i>CH8—Native American Languages: Guest Speaker</i>	

Schedule of Topics and Readings (2)

V. India & Tibet

T 10/16*	23. Love & sex in classical India	M16: Tannahill1
R 10/18	24. Love and sex in the Hindu epics	M17: <i>Ramayana</i>
M 10/22	25. <i>CH9—Discussion: Democracy & Love (International TAs)</i>	
T 10/23†	26. The Strange Case of the Buddha Bikini	M18: Shields
R 10/25	27. <i>Library Research Seminar: Chloe Barnett</i>	
M 10/29	28. <i>CH10—Collage Workshop: Roger Rothman</i>	

VI. China & Japan

T 10/30°*	29. Confucian love and relationships	M19: An/Tannahill2
R 11/01	30. Sexual values in Contemporary China	M20: Francoeur
ST 11/03	31. <i>CH11—Washington Day Trip</i>	
M 11/05	NO COMMON HOUR	
T 11/06†	32. <i>The Pillow Book / Tale of Genji</i>	M21: Sei/Murasaki
R 11/08	33. Love among the Samurai	M22: Saikaku
M 11/12	34. <i>CH12—Diwali (Indian Festival)</i>	
T 11/13°	35. <i>Decision Making Seminar: Sarah Bell</i>	
R 11/15	36. Life in the Pleasure Quarters	M23: Lindsey
M 11/19	37. <i>CH13—Symposium Presentation Workshop I</i>	
T 11/20	38. Film: <i>Memoirs of a Geisha</i>	M24: Dalby

VIII. Conclusions

R 11/22	THANKSGIVING BREAK = NO CLASS	
M 11/26	39. <i>CH14—Symposium Presentation Workshop II</i>	
T 11/27	40. <i>Discussion: Cross-cultural ideals of beauty</i>	
R 11/29	41. <i>Discussion: Cross-cultural perspectives on women</i>	
ST 12/01	42. <i>CH15—LLC SYMPOSIUM</i>	
M 12/03	43. <i>CH16—Meditation Workshop: Guest Speaker</i>	
T 12/04¶	44. Course Conclusion	

* RP is assigned

† RP DRAFT is due

° RP FINAL is due

¶ FINAL PAPER is due

Reaction Paper #1: Classical Love Poetry

- ✱ Write 2-3 PAGES (min. 1000 words) in response to the following problem:
- ✱ So far we have read (or will read) poetry from four prominent classical writers: Homer, Sappho, Ovid, & Propertius; choose at least one poem or passage from two of these four writers, and analyze it in relation to the concept(s) of “love” expressed therein. *How does each poet’s understanding of love differ from the other; what are some shared features; how do these expressions resonate with your personal understanding of love, or with the understanding of love expressed in contemporary US culture; how do they differ?*
- ✱ Draft due Monday, September 20th
- ✱ See Grading Policies for general guidelines on writing

Reaction Paper #2: Women in Biblical Traditions

- ✱ Write 2-3 PAGES (min. 1000 words) in response to the following :
- ✱ In these past two weeks we have studied various attitudes towards women and women's sexuality in the Judeo-Christian (or biblical) traditions; choose ONE story, section or passage from our biblical readings and analyze it with respect to both its explicit values and implicit assumptions about women and women's sexuality. As always, be sure to ground your argument in your sources, but also play these off against your own personal, cultural (and perhaps religious) background and ideas. You may of course use the secondary readings to buttress your argument, but be sure to make it your own.
- ✱ Draft due Tues, Oct 2nd by 5 pm; final due Tues, Oct 9th by 5 pm

Reaction Paper #3: Imagining India

- * Write 2-3 PAGES (min. 1000 words) in response to the following :
- * In these past 2 weeks we have studied various ideas, ideals, attitudes and assumptions about love, sex and the body in classical Indian tradition. For this assignment, I would like you to engage your creative talents in addition to your analytical and interpretive skills, by constructing a narrative or dialogue involving two or more of the following 10 Indian gods or goddesses: Vishnu (Rama, Krishna), Lakshmi, Sita, Radha, Shiva, Parvati, Kali or Kama. Although you are writing a fictional story or 'myth', be sure to ground your narrative or dialogue in the information gathered from our readings. The specific topic is yours to choose, but it needs to relate to the themes of the course. Have fun!
- * Draft due Tuesday, October 25th

Reaction Paper #4: *Memoirs of a Geisha*

- * Write 2-3 PAGES (min. 1000 words) in response to the following:
- * We have just watched the film *Memoirs of a Geisha*. While the film is fictional, it does give a reasonably accurate portrayal of the life of a geisha in early-mid 20th century Japan. For this final short assignment, I would like you to analyze the film in terms of several of the themes and questions raised throughout our journey through love and sex on the Silk Road. Consider some of the following questions: *What exactly is a geisha? What are the limits on what a geisha can do, in relation to love, sex, and marriage? What are signified by the terms 'danna' and 'mizu-age'? What are the 'positive' aspects of being a geisha (in relation to non-geisha women of the period)? What does the tradition tell us, if anything, about Japanese values regarding love, 'romance', sex, and the role(s) of women? Finally, why do you think that there are still some young women, today, who choose to be geisha?* Please address these (or any other ideas you have) with examples from the film's central plot and characters (character list is on Moodle). As a source, please use the reading M25-Dalby.
- * Draft due Thursday, November 29th; final due Thursday, December 6th

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Languages & Cultures College

Final Project: Paper & Symposium Presentation

Framework

The final project for this course includes three distinct requirements: 1) Proposal; 2) Symposium Presentation; 3) Final Paper, each exploring the same topic.

Purpose

The purpose of the project is summative; i.e., it is intended to be an expression and/or critical interpretation of something you have learned in the foundation seminar and the L&C common hours. Although your topic can (and should be) fairly specific, you should try to 'expand' it to encompass one or more broader themes discussed in class or experienced during common hours. Though this is not technically a 'research paper', it will likely require some outside research.

Assignment

Your assignment is quite simple: research and discuss a specific topic related to love, sexuality, gender or the body in a culture of your choosing (but *not* your 'own'). This will likely be rooted in one of the many cultures we covered in class, but you should not choose a topic or figure that we covered in detail, either in class discussions or in our Reaction Papers (i.e., no Plato, Paul, Rumi or Adam and Eve). I can help you narrow your topic, and may even provide some time in class to 'brainstorm' ideas. Once you have a topic and begin your research, you will be expected to develop an 'argument' on the particular issue.

Proposal

Due: Thursday, 11/01

The first stage in this process is brainstorming: by yourself, with others, in class (time permitting) and with JMS. By Tuesday, November 1, you will submit a short (150-word) proposal in preparation for your final project symposium presentation and final paper. The proposal is meant to be a formal summary of your intended argument (particularly that of your final paper). Feedback will be provided.

Symposium Presentation

Date: Saturday, 12/01

Once you have received feedback on your abstract, you will begin preparing for the 15-minute symposium presentation. We have set aside two common hours in mid-late November for this, though of course you should begin on your own. The presentation may take one of the following forms: 1) a powerpoint; 2) a 'prezi'; 3) a poster (personally, I believe the 'prezi' option gives you the best of both worlds: while it is 'virtual', like powerpoint, the layout is very much like a poster rather than sequential like powerpoint; but the choice is yours). You will be evaluated on how effectively your 'method' expresses your 'message'. Bonus points for creativity!

Final Paper

Due: Tuesday, 12/04

Finally, you will write a 2500-word (8-10 page) paper on the same topic as the symposium presentation, but going into more detail, and presenting a solid piece of formal writing based on a 'argument' that is your own. Final papers will be handed in no later than the last day of our class, Tuesday, December 4. Drafts are not required, but I will be more than happy to look at your writing in its various stages.