

WHAT IS LOVE?



Love in Transatlantic Fiction, Film, and Theory

ENGL 2000 / Texts and Contexts

Spring 2022 MR 2:30-3:45

Fordham Rose Hill Dealy 206

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Zoom Office Hours W 3-6

Course Description

What is love? This question has inspired countless artists and thinkers (from Aristotle to Beyoncé) and resulted in some of Western civilization's greatest (and sloppiest) intellectual inquiries and most innovative (and cliché) works of art. In this course, we will examine how leading writers and filmmakers of the past century have contributed to this legacy and the romance genre. We will study depictions of love, including works by Virginia Woolf, Zora Neale Hurston, James Baldwin, Jack Kerouac, Michel Gondry, and Randa Jarrar, asking, how do they represent and define *eros*? And what do these visions of love reveal about their transatlantic contexts?

To answer these questions, we will trace romantic language, tropes, themes, narratives, and figures. We will explore the histories that inform the stories we tell and ideas we hold about romantic love, with a focus on how major transatlantic events, social issues, and intellectual movements intersect with each writer or filmmaker's biography and work. Last, we will consider the enduring political, artistic, and social significance of the assembled archive and learn about the popular literary distinctions *modernism*, *postmodernism*, and *contemporary*. This inquiry and the various assignments will help you grow as a scholar of 20th and 21st century film and literature, a critical thinker and writer, and someone "looking for my own peace of mind."

Course Objectives

This course is designed to encourage you to read, write, and think critically. As we make our way through the rich collection of films and literary works, we will focus on some fundamental aspects of college-level writing, such as close reading, identifying problems, making defensible claims, supporting your claims with evidence and warrants, and exploring the motives for your writing. Additionally, by producing different types of scholarship and studying the primary texts in terms of their artistic and historical significance, you will develop a vocabulary and method for writing about film and literature.

Required Digital Platforms

- Google Docs
- Fordham Blackboard
- Zoom Pro (free access on Blackboard)
- [Microsoft Office](#) (free access on your Fordham portal)
 - All papers must be submitted in Word format (.doc or .docx) . **No pages, pdf, etc.**

Required Texts (available in the RH Bookstore)

- Woolf, Virginia. *Mrs. Dalloway* (1922)
 - 978-0393655995
- Hurston, Zora Neale. *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937)
 - 978-0060838676
- Baldwin, James. *Giovanni's Room* (1956)
 - 978-0345806567
- Kerouac, Jack. *Tristessa* (1960)

- o 978-0140168112
- Jarrar, Randa. *Him, Me, Muhammad Ali* (2016)
 - o 978-1941411315

Required Films (available in Walsh Library and on Amazon Prime Video)

- Curtiz, Michael. *Casablanca* (1942)
- Godard, Jean-Luc. *Contempt* (1963)
- Bigelow, Kathryn. *Near Dark* (1987)
- Gondry, Michel. *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004)
- Lanthimos, Yorgos. *The Lobster* (2015)
- Jenkins, Barry. *Moonlight* (2016)
- Knowles-Carter, Beyonce. *Lemonade* (2016)

Readings on Blackboard

- Goldman, Emma. "Marriage and Love" (1914)
- Freud, Sigmund. "Being in Love and Hypnosis" (1922)
- Hurston, Zora Neale. "Folk Art," *The Florida Negro* (1939)
- Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction* (1978)
- Gwenllian Jones, Sara. "Vampires, Indians, and the Queer Fantastic: Kathryn Bigelow's *Near Dark*" (2003)
- Badiou, Alain. "Introduction," *In Praise of Love* (2012)
- Han, Byung-Chul. *The Agony of the Eros* (2017)

Assignments and Grading Policy

Assignment	% of Final Grade	Due Date
Attendance and Participation	20%	See below
Group Digital Project and Presentation	20%	See GoogleDoc on BB
Midterm Close Reading Paper	20%	3/9
Event/Outreach Blog Post	10%	4/13
Final Research Project	30%	5/19

Attendance and Participation

Your attendance and participation are important. Great classes are built on a collective commitment to working together to formulate questions, share ideas (laughs, frustrations, challenges, etc.), develop special interests, expand our respective perspectives, debate different interpretations, and learn the subject matter. So come to class ready to participate! To participate, you will need to

1. read/watch the assigned text,
2. organize your thoughts about the work prior to our meeting,
3. bring the assigned text to class, and

4. listen to your classmates.

Participating in class and on Blackboard will take different shapes for different people, but to receive full credit for attendance and participation, you must attend class, share your ideas with the group, contribute to in-class activities, and engage with your classmates. To this last point, let's do our best to create an environment where everyone feels respected, valued, and included. As the thinker Judith Butler argues, "If I am to live a good life, it will be a life lived with others. I will not lose this I that I am; whoever I am will be transformed by my connections with others, since my dependency on another, and my dependability, are necessary in order to live and live well."

You will not be penalized for your first three absences or latenesses; thereafter, your final course grade will drop one grade for each day missed. Six or more absences may result in failure of the course per [Fordham's policy](#).

Extensions, Late Work, Emails, and Etiquette

Everyone is entitled to **one** extension over the course of the semester. If you need or want to use the extension, simply request it 24 hours before the deadline via email, and we can establish a new due date—typically two days after the original deadline. Unexcused late work will be marked down or not accepted.

If you have a question or an issue arises, sign up for office hours (or let me know after class -- I hang back at the end of the period for just this reason). You may also email me, but please note that the best way to reach me is via office hours and our in-person meetings. When emailing me (or any professor), keep in mind that there is no time like the present to begin honing your email etiquette. Consider all messages professional correspondences and include subject headings, appropriate salutations, and minimal grammatical errors. This skill will be valuable throughout your career at Fordham and beyond.

Last but not least, I know we are still navigating a devastating global pandemic and that our lives have changed dramatically over the last three years. While learning about literature, film, and history is important, your health and well-being are my top priority. I am happy to make adjustments, so please ask for what you need. Communication is key (always but especially now), so please do not wait or be afraid to reach out to me after class or via office hours if an issue arises. Fordham's [Counseling and Psychological Services](#) is also an excellent resource. They offer free one-on-one appointments and group workshops to support your mental, psychological, and emotional health.

COVID-19

If you have to miss class because you **test positive for COVID** and are symptomatic, please

1. email/text/call your assigned class partner(s) to get notes from class;
2. sign up to meet with me during Zoom office hours on Monday;

3. post a 250-word reflection on the Blackboard Discussion Board *if* you have to miss **more than one class** because you are symptomatic; and
4. rest up and feel better!

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

Participating in an academic conversation means learning from others and giving them credit for what you have learned. This skill is one of the great responsibilities and joys of writing. Moreover, plagiarism undermines the integrity of your work, our classroom, and our school. Therefore, plagiarism will not be tolerated. Evidence of plagiarism will result in an automatic zero for the assignment as well as a notification to the Dean's office and possibly failure of the course. For more information on Fordham University's policy on academic integrity, please consult your student handbook. Also, while we'll practice citing, synthesizing, and incorporating the work of others in class, please don't hesitate to reach out to me with questions about using outside sources!

Paper Submission and Formatting

Please submit an *electronic copy* of each assignment on Blackboard under the Content tab and bring a *hard copy* to class. Essays should be formatted according to MLA standards: double spaced; Times New Roman, 12-point font; header and title; citations and works cited page, etc. See *The Bedford Handbook for Writers* or [Purdue Owl Online Writing Lab](#) if you need a refresher. Fordham's [Writing Center](#) is also an excellent resource.

Mandatory Reporting

As a faculty member, I am a mandatory reporter. This means that if I observe, learn, or suspect that a student has experienced sexual or any other type of misconduct, I am obligated to report this information to Fordham's [Gender Equity & Title IX Office](#). This obligation extends to the work that you produce in this class. The system is part of Fordham's commitment to supporting you and ensuring that misconduct stops and does not happen again.

Commitment to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

One of my goals is to make this course inclusive, equitable, and explicitly antiracist by supporting the vital truth of Black Lives Matter and its charge to all of us to recognize biases, confront privilege, and labor toward justice for all Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). During this semester, we will strive to be courageous and empathetic when we navigate difficult topics and discuss complex issues related to racial and other intersectional forms of social justice.

As part of this effort, we will answer [Toni Morrison's](#) challenge to ensure that oppressive language is "rejected, altered and exposed." This means disavowing speech that attempts to silence, threaten, and degrade others and communicating in ways that are inclusive of individuals and groups regardless of race, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, national origin, political affiliation, disability, religion, appearance, and more. For example, we will use gender-inclusive and non-sexist language, which avoids misgendering people, and

recognizes the distinction between biological sex and gender expression, as well as one another's chosen name and preferred pronouns. Similarly, we will not repeat racial slurs even when we watch a film or read a text that includes them. This choice shows respect to all the people who have been subjected to hate speech and acknowledges the history and violence of this language. Last, like everyone, I am still in the process of learning about diverse perspectives and identities. If something is said in class by me or a classmate that makes you feel uncomfortable, please talk to me about it or provide anonymous feedback via Blackboard.

Disability Services

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973, all students, with or without disabilities, are entitled to equal access to the programs and activities at our university. If you believe that you have a disabling condition that may interfere with your ability to participate in the activities, coursework, or assessment of the object of this course, you may be entitled to accommodations. Please schedule an appointment to speak with someone at the [Office of Disability Services](#).

Course Schedule

Please note: The syllabus is subject to change. See Blackboard for updates.

Introduction: This brief overview of critical understandings of the love genre—from the idea of “eros” in ancient Greek dramas to accounts of love stories today, including Ashley Sheldon’s *Unmaking Love* (2017) and Joe Fassler’s “The Epic Drama of the Imperfect Love Story” (2014)—will provide some historical background and key questions for our course. As part of this overview, we will discuss your understanding of the genre through the Adam and Eve creation myth.

Week 1-2

- Jan. 19: No reading due
- Jan. 23: *The Lobster*
 - Please sign up on the Group Digital Project GoogleDoc on Blackboard by the end of the day on 1/24

Optional Additional Reading: Anne Carson, *Eros the Bittersweet: An Essay* (1986)

Unit One

Love vs. Society: “We’ll Always Have Paris” in Modernity (1914-1945)

Week 2-6

- Jan. 26: *Mrs. Dalloway* (pp. 3-55)
- Jan. 30: *Mrs. Dalloway* (pp. 56-106) and “Being in Love and Hypnosis” [bb]
- Feb. 2: *Mrs. Dalloway* (pp. 107-150)
 - Group 1 Presentation
- Feb. 6: *Mrs. Dalloway* (pp. 151-94)
- Feb. 9: *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (chs. 1-4)
- Feb. 13: *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (chs. 6-11)

- o Group 2 Presentation
- Feb. 16: *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (chs. 12-16) and “Folk Art” [bb]
- Feb. 20: No Class / President’s Day
- Feb. 21: *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (chs. 17-20)
- Feb. 23: *Casablanca*
 - o Group 3 Presentation

Optional Additional Readings: Emma Goldman, “Marriage and Love” (1914); Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex, Introduction* (1978); Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color” (1991); bell hooks, *All About Love: New Visions* (1999); Judith Butler, “Doubting Love” (2007)

Unit Two

Love Hurts: Containing and Confessing Love (1945-1989)

Weeks 6-9

- Feb. 27: *Giovanni’s Room* (Part I, chs. 1-2)
- March 2: *Giovanni’s Room* (Part I, ch. 3)
- March 6: *Giovanni’s Room* (Part II, ch. 4)
 - o Group 4 Presentation
- March 9: *Giovanni’s Room* (Part II, ch. 5)
 - o **Midterm Close Reading Essay Due**
- March 13-17: No Class / Spring Break
- March 20: *Tristessa* (pp. 7-50)
- March 23: Excerpt from *The Rhetoric of Empire* [bb]
- March 27: *Tristessa* (pp. 51-96)
 - o Group 5 Presentation
- March 30: *Near Dark*
- April 3: “Vampires, Indians, and the Queer Fantastic” [bb]

Optional Additional Readings: Stanley Kramer, *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner* (1967); Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction* (1978); Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (2004); Elizabeth Povinelli, *The Empire of Love* (2006); Eva Illouz, *Why Love Hurts* (2011); Louis Menand, *The Free World: Art and Thought in the Cold War* (2021)

Unit Three

The Art of Love: Loving In Spite Of (1989-present)

Weeks 10-14

- April 6-10: No Class / University Closed
- April 13: *Moonlight*
 - o **Outreach Blog Post Due**
- April 17: *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* and *In Praise of Love* [bb]
 - o Group 6 Presentation
- April 20: *Him, Me, Muhammad Ali* (“Lunatics’ Eclipse”/pp. 3-14)
- April 24: *Him, Me Muhammad Ali* (“Lost”/pp. 35-52 and “A Sailor”/pp. 69-71)

- April 27: *Him, Me, Muhammad Ali* ("Zelwa"/pp. 189-201) and *The Agony of the Eros* [bb]
- May 1: *Lemonade*

Optional Additional Readings: Gina Prince-Bythewood, *Love & Basketball* (2000); Dominic Pettman, *Love and Other Technologies: Retrofitting Eros for the Information Age* (2006); Maggie Nelson, *Bluets* (2009); Emily Witt, *Future Sex* (2017); Joanna Hogg, *The Souvenir* (2019)

Final Project Due by 11:59 PM on Thursday, May 19th