Mediating Love, Sex and God

Media, Culture and Communication
MCC-UE 1419-001

Course Description:

This seminar examines the mediated historical trajectory of love, sex and God. This history is mediated in a double sense. These are conditioned by media, in the sense of material practices of socially productive representation from rite to word, code to algorithm. And they are themselves mediations in the sense that they involve material practices premised on unobservable substances beyond sense and logic. The material practices involved in each domain must travel – or mediate -- between the visible and the invisible, whether love, desire or divinity. In the nexus of love, sex and God, in the passionate and anxious domain of world-making, this seminar seeks to explore the performative and metaphysical basis of social practice. We seek not only to explore the ways in which these objects of existential concern are historical phenomena, but how they are conditioned by the long history of techniques and technologies of mediation. We seek not only to explore the ways in which religion is shaped by material practices of mediation, but the way in which certain forms of social mediation are themselves religious.

This seminar is intended for students who want to engage both historically and theoretically. Students will be required to write on a regular basis, to be distributed before each seminar through the seminar alias. Students will be graded based on their written and oral contributions in seminar as well as an in-class final examination.

Learning Outcomes: Students will learn to think comparatively between cultures and historical periods as to the presence, meaning and organization of romantic love. Students will explore theories of social construction and physiological determination. Students will examine the ways in which categories of religious experience inform an apparently secular aspect of modernity. Students will examine the ways in which different disciplines construct their objects and generate knowledge by comparing the treatment of the relation of love, sex and religion across a range of disciplines from philosophy, comparative religion, history, evolutionary psychology to sociology. Furthermore, students will apply theoretical, ethnographic and historical knowledge to analyze the way they personally imagine romantic love.

Required Texts:
See schedule below for readings, which will be uploaded to course website.

Assignments:

Students will be required to write responses to the readings on a regular basis, to be distributed before each seminar through the NYU Classes site. Students will be graded based on these written contributions and on informed participation in class discussion as
well as a final examination. A practice midterm (no credit) will be offered as a study aid and self-diagnostic tool in the 7th week of the semester.

**Week 1: Introduction**

**Week 2. The Productive Totem**

**Week 3. Love and Faciality**

**Week 4: The Whole at the Center: Bodily Grammars of the Sacred**
David Carrasco, *City of Sacrifice: The Aztec Empire and the Role of Violence in Civilization*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999), 080704643400

**Week 5. Love as Mediation Between Humans and the Gods**

**Week 6: The Word of God**

**Week 7: Romance as Mystical Genre**

**Week 8: Seed, Word and Will in Christianity**

**Week 8: Protestantism: Sex, Capital and Sovereignty**
Week 9: Love, Marriage and Sexual Desire: A Brief History

Week 10: The Production of Modern Sexuality

Week 11: Performing Intimacy and the Algorithms of Compatibility
    Eva Illouz, Cold Intimacies: The Making of Emotional Capitalism (Cambridge: Polity, 2005), 9780745639055

Week 12: Digital Intimacies

Week 13: The Visibility of Sex

Week 14: Money, Sex and God: The Economics of Contemporary Political Religions

Week 15: Review

Evaluation:

Written & Oral Class Presentation 30%
Final Exam (Date) 70%

Evaluation Rubric
A= Excellent
This work is comprehensive and detailed, integrating themes and concepts from discussions, lectures and readings. Writing is clear, analytical and organized. Arguments offer specific examples and concisely evaluate evidence. Students who earn this grade are prepared for class, synthesize course materials and contribute insightfully.

B=Good
This work is complete and accurate, offering insights at general level of understanding. Writing is clear, uses examples properly and tends toward broad analysis. Classroom participation is consistent and thoughtful.

C=Average
This work is correct but is largely descriptive, lacking analysis. Writing is vague and at times tangential. Arguments are unorganized, without specific examples or analysis. Classroom participation is inarticulate.

D= Unsatisfactory
This work is incomplete, and evidences little understanding of the readings or discussions. Arguments demonstrate inattention to detail, misunderstand course material and overlook significant themes. Classroom participation is spotty, unprepared and off topic.

F=Failed
This grade indicates a failure to participate and/or incomplete assignments

A = 94-100
A- = 90-93
B+ = 87-89
B = 84-86
B- = 80-83
C+ = 77-79
C = 74-76
C- = 70-73
D+ = 65-69
D = 60-64
F = 0-59

COURSE POLICIES
Absences and Lateness
More than two unexcused absences will automatically result in a lower grade. Chronic lateness will also be reflected in your evaluation of participation. Regardless of the reason for your absence you will be responsible for any missed work. Travel arrangements do not constitute a valid excuse for rescheduling exams. There are no extra credit assignments for this class.

Format
Please type and double-space your written work. Typing improves the clarity and readability of your work and double-spacing allows room for me to comment. Please also number and staple multiple pages. You are free to use your preferred citation style. Please use it consistently throughout your writing. If sending a document electronically, please name the file in the following format Yourlastname Coursenumber Assignment1.doc
Grade Appeals
Please allow two days to pass before you submit a grade appeal. This gives you time to reflect on my assessment. If you still want to appeal your grade, please submit a short but considered paragraph detailing your concerns. Based on this paragraph I will review the question and either augment your grade or refine my explanation for the lost points.

Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism
http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/policies/academic_integrity
The relationship between students and faculty is the keystone of the educational experience at New York University in the Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development. This relationship takes an honor code for granted and mutual trust, respect, and responsibility as foundational requirements. Thus, how you learn is as important as what you learn. A university education aims not only to produce high-quality scholars, but to also cultivate honorable citizens.

Academic integrity is the guiding principle for all that you do, from taking exams to making oral presentations to writing term papers. It requires that you recognize and acknowledge information derived from others and take credit only for ideas and work that are yours.

You violate the principle of academic integrity when you cheat on an exam, submit the same work for two different courses without prior permission from your professors, receive help on a take-home examination that calls for independent work, or plagiarize.

Plagiarism, one of the gravest forms of academic dishonesty in university life, whether intended or not, is academic fraud. In a community of scholars, whose members are teaching, learning, and discovering knowledge, plagiarism cannot be tolerated.

Plagiarism is failure to properly assign authorship to a paper, a document, an oral presentation, a musical score, and/or other materials that are not your original work. You plagiarize when, without proper attribution, you do any of the following: copy verbatim from a book, an article, or other media; download documents from the Internet; purchase documents; report from other’s oral work; paraphrase or restate someone else’s facts, analysis, and/or conclusions; or copy directly from a classmate or allow a classmate to copy from you.

Your professors are responsible for helping you to understand other people's ideas, to use resources and conscientiously acknowledge them, and to develop and clarify your own thinking. You should know what constitutes good and honest scholarship, style guide preferences, and formats for assignments for each of your courses. Consult your professors for help with problems related to fulfilling course assignments, including questions related to attribution of sources.

Through reading, writing, and discussion, you will undoubtedly acquire ideas from others, and exchange ideas and opinions with others, including your classmates.
and professors. You will be expected, and often required, to build your own work on that of other people. In so doing, you are expected to credit those sources that have contributed to the development of your ideas.

**Avoiding Academic Dishonesty**

- Organize your time appropriately to avoid undue pressure, and acquire good study habits, including note taking.
- Learn proper forms of citation. Always check with your professors of record for their preferred style guides. Directly copied material must always be in quotes; paraphrased material must be acknowledged; even ideas and organization derived from your own previous work or another's work need to be acknowledged.
- Always proofread your finished work to be sure that quotation marks, footnotes and other references were not inadvertently omitted. Know the source of each citation.
- Do not submit the same work for more than one class without first obtaining the permission of both professors even if you believe that work you have already completed satisfies the requirements of another assignment.
- Save your notes and drafts of your papers as evidence of your original work.

**Disciplinary Sanctions**

When a professor suspects cheating, plagiarism, and/or other forms of academic dishonesty, appropriate disciplinary action may be taken following the department procedure or through referral to the Committee on Student Discipline.

The Steinhardt School Statement on Academic Integrity is consistent with the New York University Policy on Student Conduct, published in the NYU Student Guide.

**Student Resources**

- Students with physical or learning disabilities are required to register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities, 726 Broadway, 2nd Floor, (212-998-4980) and are required to present a letter from the Center to the instructor at the start of the semester in order to be considered for appropriate accommodation.

- Writing Center: 411 Lafayette, 3rd Floor. Schedule an appointment online at www.rich15.com/nyu/ or just walk-in.