

THE MEANING OF LOVE: A MULTIDISCIPLINARY COURSE

**Psychology 411: Special Topics
Spring 2016
11:00-12:50 Tuesdays & Thursdays
Burns Hall 206**

Professor: **Dr. Sandra Willis**
with Dr. Josh Reeves
Office: **Burns 301; Russell 324**
Hours: **MW 10:30-12:00, 1:00-3:00;**
additional hours by appointment
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OVERVIEW

Welcome to Psychology 411: Special Topics - The Meaning of Love: Multidisciplinary Perspectives. I am happy to have you in class and look forward to a productive, enlightening, and enjoyable semester.

The Meaning of Love is an interdisciplinary psychology course designed to consider the big question, "What is Love?" Drawing from the expertise of faculty and professionals from multiple disciplines - psychology, theology, religion, philosophy, history, medicine & bioethics, and human development & family studies - we will study and compare definitions, concepts, theories, and research designed to understand, describe, and, especially, to encourage love and prosocial behavior. The course incorporates application and reflection on benevolent practices using individual and group writing assignments, service learning and field experiences, and group production of educational films.

COURSE OBJECTIVES: This course is designed to fulfill the following objectives:

- 1) To consider perspectives contributed by many disciplines to our understanding of the meaning of love
- 2) To survey psychological theories and research on attachment, interpersonal attraction, positive psychology
- 3) To consider the unique conception of love found in the Christian tradition, and how it may or may not overlap with contemporary psychological concepts, theories, and research of love.
- 4) To refine information literacy and writing skills through literature search and composition of an APA style paper that reviews primary sources of research in student-selected areas of psychological science, medicine, health care, and then relates/compares/applies Christian love and compassion
- 5) To consider sources of prejudiced attitudes and discrimination in a field assignment at the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, and then to propose a plan to change prejudice and reduce discrimination
- 6) To reflect on altruism and practice prosocial behavior by engaging in a service learning, field experience (group-selected experience)
- 7) To consider the dynamics of a working group while developing skills necessary for effective team work (groups formed early in the semester; reflection paper - end of semester in which students consider both interpersonal as well as intrapersonal dynamics)
- 8) To express thoughts on the meaning of love in a visual medium by producing an educational film designed to provoke awareness, stimulate thought and (social) action reflecting benevolent love, particularly generativity (Erikson - caring for others, creating ways and accomplishing things that make the world a better place)

9) To develop communication skills in class discussion and structured activities in class as well as in the production and presentation of an educational film

COURSE FORMAT: This multidisciplinary course consists of presentation by members of the Birmingham community as well as faculty from Beeson Divinity; Departments of Psychology, Classics, Religion, History, Family Studies/Human Development; Center for Science and Religion; College of Health Sciences, particularly Nursing and Social Work; and, if time, Cumberland School of Law (family law faculty, custody; or community judge or attorney). Presentations will include class discussion or activities.

ASSIGNMENTS: This course emphasizes reflection and active learning using individual and small group writing assignments, group film production, and other activities (exploratory, field, & service learning experiences). Please complete reading assignments before attending class in preparation for contributing to class discussion and activities. Writing assignments require knowledge of material presented in class, in readings, and drawn from life experience. Assignments require reflection, critical thinking, and integration of material. All written assignments should be typed; no hand-written assignments will be accepted.

Major assignments for the semester are completion of a research paper and the group production and presentation of an educational film.

Research Paper: Each student is required to select one area of psychological research (social, lifespan development, clinical/counseling, health psychology) related to Love or Love relationships, and to summarize and comment on research in two primary sources (scientific journal articles) representing the selected area. More information on the journals from which you may select your articles, paper guidelines, as well as APA style will be discussed early in the semester. Research papers are due on (¾ through semester). Five points are deducted per day for late papers.

Educational Film: Each student will participate in a small group (no more than four) to conceive, develop, and film a 7-10 minute educational video on a selected area of Meaning of Love. The film may demonstrate a set of concepts, conduct interviews of students, acted scenes, and other creative ways to present the topic visually. Technology and Learning Center Staff will provide an in-class video editing tutorial. Final edited versions of films will “premiere” during the last week of classes. (Invite guest speakers, community members if appropriate.)

EVALUATION AND GRADING PROCEDURES: Fifty percent of the final course grade will be based on individual and group written assignments from sections of the course; this will include the reflection paper on group dynamics. The research paper and film are worth 25% each.

Grading Scale: Final letter grades will be assigned according to the following scale: 90-100% = A, 80-89.5% = B, 70-79.5% = C, 60-69.5% = D, below 60% = F. “Pluses” will be assigned to grades in the top 2% of any letter category; “minuses” will be assigned to grades in the bottom 2% of any category.

ATTENDANCE POLICY: Attendance is required. It is recommended that students miss no more than three class meetings during the semester. If more than three classes are missed, five points will be deducted from the student’s final course grade for each additional day missed. It is the student’s responsibility to keep track of days missed and to get notes and assignments from a classmate before the next class. Attendance is recorded at the start of each class meeting; therefore, it is important that students arrive promptly.

CLASS STRATEGIES & ETIQUETTE: PRACTICE BENEVOLENT LOVE... Please treat your fellow classmates with caring and respect; this includes showing up for group meetings outside of class. Please do not use laptops, cellphones, iPods, or similar devices in class. Be attentive, actively take notes, and participate in class discussions.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: University policies for academic integrity and the code of values as stated online are enforced in this classroom. See <http://www.samford.edu/studenthandbook/>

As stated in the Samford University catalog, “students, upon enrollment, enter into voluntary association with Samford University. They must be willing to observe high standards of intellectual integrity; they must respect knowledge and practice academic honesty.” Unless specified otherwise, students are expected to do their work independently, and to refrain from cheating, copying, or plagiarizing the work of others. When drawing from various resources for assignments, students must provide citations within text and references at the end of the assignment.

COMMUNICATION RESOURCE CENTER: If you would like feedback on your written assignments for this course or others, I recommend The Communication Resource Center (CRC), which offers *free* tutoring for Samford students in oral and written communication as well as support for developing and improving critical reading skills. The CRC is in Brooks 222 and is open MTWR 10:00 am - 6:00 pm. Drop-ins are welcome, but students may schedule appointments at samford.mywconline.com. For more information, visit <http://www.samford.edu/crc/> or <http://samford.libguides.com/crc>. Note: The first time you schedule an appointment, you will need to create an account, using your Samford email and password.

COUNSELING SERVICES: As a part of University Health Services (Seibert Hall), Samford provides counseling services at no extra cost to students. For an appointment, call 726-2065 or email counseling@samford.edu. For more information, please see <http://www.samford.edu/counseling/>

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: Students who may need course accommodations are welcomed to make an appointment with me during office hours for a confidential discussion of accommodations that may be necessary. Students with disabilities must be registered with Disability Resources (DR) and provide professors with an accommodation letter before we may begin academic adjustments. If you have a disability, but have not contacted Disability Resources, please call 726-2980/4078 or visit DR located in Career Development, Room 205 of the University Center.

MEANING OF LOVE:

TOPICS AND PRESENTERS FOR SEMESTER-LENGTH SCHEDULE IN 2016 OR 2017

Topic

Intro to Course, Conceptualizations of Love; Attachment, Friendship & Love Relationships; Marriage & Family; Prejudice & Discrimination; Prosocial Behavior & Altruism, Applications of benevolent love to healthcare, Applications of benevolent love in the workplace - Sandra Willis (Psychology)

GUESTS CONTRIBUTORS:

Contributors will be invited based on their disciplinary expertise and research or their work role in the University; each will select readings to accompany their presentations/activities; readings will be compiled at the beginning of the semester

Theology of Love Gerald Bray (Beeson Divinity) & Josh Reeves (Center for Science and Religion)

Love and Christian Ethics - Dennis Sansom (Classics)

Christian Love - Matt Kerlin, Brian & Rene Pitts, April Robinson (University Ministries, Spirituality)

Positive Psychology, Altruism, Forgiveness - Jack Berry (Psychology)

Love relationships, Treatment of Women in 18th century Britain - Ginger Frost (History)

Legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr - Jonathan Bass (History)

Love as Motivating Prevention of Violence - Jonathan Davis (Human Development and Family Studies)

Love as Service to Others - students select relevant experiences from University Convo list; Lynnette Sandley to contribute ideas about experiences and places

Faith and HealthCare - Neena Sanders (Dean of the College of Health Sciences) - emphasizing empathy in the education and training of students in the health sciences

Patient Care, Hospital Policy - Debbie Duke - Baptist Health System

Benevolence in the Institutional Environment - Brad Creed (Provost)

PANEL PRESENTATIONS - COMMUNITY:

(Offer panels across Samford Community)

1) Improving Love relationships for Couples and Families:

Clinical/Counseling psychologists, Counselors, Social Workers

2) Love according to Different Religions or Faith Traditions:

Protestant, Catholic, Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, Native American

3) Love, Empathy and Healthcare:

Neena Sanders, Debbie Duke, University of Alabama School of Medicine reps of Palliative Care, Hospice, other Healthcare occupations

4) Prosocial Behavior in the Workplace:

Brad Creed, Provost - University Administration, Mark Freeman - Organizational Psychologist

Collegiality, civility, generativity, sharing, facilitation (conceptualized in overall organization Structure & Function, commitment and specific plan/ ways to implement)

MEANING OF LOVE:***SCHEDULE*****Week 1: Introduction to Course**

Conceptualizations/Definitions of Love

Students form Working Groups - get acquainted, consider film

First writing assignment (individual)-personal conceptions of love

Weeks 2-3: Attachment, Friendship & Love Relationships

Marriage & Family

Second writing assignment (group)

Panel #1 Improving Love relationships for Couples and Families

Week 4: Theology of Love

Jesus and the Ethic of Love

The Apostle Paul: Love Conquers All

Week 5: Theology of Love - readings from Gerald Bray

God as Love

Augustine: Theologian of Love

Panel #2: Love according to Different Religions or Faith Traditions

Week 6: Christian Love

Love and Christian Ethics

Writing assignment (individual)

Student Groups consider Film Topics, discuss with class, plan filming

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Week 7: Positive Psychology & Forgiveness

Prosocial Behavior & Altruism

Revisiting the Good Samaritan

Service learning, field experience (one 2-3 hour group-selected experience)

Week 8: Love relationships, Treatment of Women in 18th century Britain

Love as Motivating Prevention of Violence

Group writing assignment

Digital editing session

Week 9 & 10: Prejudice & Discrimination: Cognitive, Emotional, & Social factors

Legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr

Field trip to Birmingham Civil Rights Institute

Individual writing assignment based on field experience – understanding prejudice & reducing discrimination

Week 11: Love- and Care-centered Ethics: Empathy in Health Care

Panel #3: Love, Empathy, and Healthcare

Week 12: Applications of Benevolent Love in the Workplace

Panel #4: Prosocial Behavior in the Workplace

Week 13: Meta-Questions

Reductionistic vs Holistic Accounts of Love; Egoism versus Agape

How can we encourage the practice of benevolent love? How can psychological science contribute?

Last Week: *Film Premieres: Groups Present Films to the class*

(in format that will play on my PC; copy needed for grading)

Exam day: Reflection Papers and Research Papers are due (email PDF copies of articles along with paper by 5 pm)

Partial Reading list

Other readings selected by guest speakers will be integrated into Schedule.

History of Love: “Love, Western Notions of.” By Ken Mondschein In *The New Dictionary of the History of Ideas* (Maryanne Cline Horowitz, ed.). Detroit: Gale Group, Inc., 2004.

Origin of idea of Altruism: The Invention of Altruism: Auguste Comte's Positive Polity and Respectable Unbelief in Victorian Britain in *Science and beliefs: From natural philosophy to natural science, 1700-1900* (2005) By Thomas Dixon

Philosophy of Love: “Why do I Love? And “Reasons for Love” (Chapters 3 and 4) in *Personal Relationships: Love, Identity, and Morality* (1995) by Hugh LaFollette

Theology of Love: “A Theology of Love Informed by the Sciences” in “Defining Love: A Philosophical, Scientific, and Theological Engagement” (2010) by Thomas Jay Oord

Biblical Ideas of Love: Sermon on the Mount and Parable of the Good Samaritan

Defining Love: Different Types of Love: Wolterstorff reading

Psychology of Interpersonal Attraction: “Attraction and Intimacy: Liking and Loving Others” (Chapter 11) in *Social Psychology* (2013) By David Myers

Intimacy, Attachment, Commitment: Ainsworth, Shaver, Hazen, Bartholomew and Horowitz, Sternberg, Donaldson and Young

Love and Marriage: *Why Marriages Succeed or Fail* (1994, 2007) by John Gottman

Stress, Coping, and Caring: Tend and befriend theory (2000) by Taylor, Klein, and colleagues

Love and Empathy in Healthcare: “Routine, Empathic and Compassionate Patient Care: Definitions, Development, Obstacles, Education, and Beneficiaries” (2014) by Stephen Post and colleagues

Prosocial Behavior & Altruism: The Good Samaritan revisited (Darley & Batson, 1973); Religion & Helping - Steffen & Masters (2005), “Prosocial Behavior: Helping Others” (Chapter 9) in *Social Psychology* (2012) by Baron and Branscombe

Institutional Benevolence: Stephen Post, Institute for Research on Unlimited Love: Altruism, Compassion, and Service; “The Science, Study, and Practice of Universal Benevolence”

About Dr. Willis:

1998-Present – Principal Investigator - **Health Beliefs and Behaviors Studies (HBBS) research program** - influence of religious faith, psychological outlook, and individual differences on tobacco and alcohol use behaviors
 2006, 2008, 2011, 2014 – **Special Topics in Faith & Health; Faith & Health Research Seminar**
 2009 Research Mentor Award - Southeastern Psychological Association
 2011-2012 Faculty Scholar – UAB Geriatric Education Center – **Health Psychology/Behavioral Medicine**

EDUCATION

Doctor of Philosophy and Master of Science in Experimental Psychology, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA
 Concentrated Areas of Study: Social Psychology, Physiological Psychology, Comparative Psychology, and Research Design and Statistics

Dissertation: "*Information Preference, Coronary-Prone Behavior Pattern, and Stressful Cognitive Task Performance.*"

Master's Thesis: "*Perceptual Reactance and Effects of Caffeine Arousal on Motor Task Performance.*"

Additional graduate coursework (39 credits) in
 Psychological Testing and Biopsychology, Columbia University, New York, NY
 Counseling, University of Alabama at Birmingham

Bachelor of Science, a double major in **Psychology and Biology, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA**

WORK EXPERIENCE

University Positions at **Samford University, University of South Carolina system, Loyola University of New Orleans**

Courses Taught at Samford: Health Psychology, Social Psychology, Directed Research, Senior Seminar, Junior Seminar (Honors Program), Research Methods, Measurement and Assessment, Lifespan Development, Problem-based General Psychology, Internship, Adjustment, Abnormal, Childhood and Adolescence, and Interdisciplinary Cornerstone Course: *Dimensions of Personal Wholeness*

Research in Health Psychology: Adolescent/Young Adult Health Behaviors, Religious Faith and Coping; Multidimensional Health Locus of Control Scale; Suicide Prevention and Transtheoretical Model; Clinicians' Stress and Coping; Antecedent Factors in the Development of Bulimia; Drug Awareness/ Health Education

Research in Teaching of Psychology: Problem-based Learning in Psychology; Interdisciplinary Teaching; Critical Thinking and Writing

Research Associate, The Psychological Corporation

Professional Examinations Division; Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, New York, NY

Developed biomedical entrance examinations, e.g., Pharmacy College Admission Test, Dental Admission Test; edited biomedical licensing examinations; conducted meetings with contracting groups for designing exams and editing items; interpreted item analyses and validity studies

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Religion, coping, and health. Chapter in *Religious influences on health and well-being in the elderly*. Shaie, Kraus, & Booth (Eds.), New York: Springer.

Young adult use of tobacco and alcohol: Exploring religiosity, God locus of health control, and religious coping. Chapter in *Faith and health: Psychological perspectives*. Plante & Sherman (Eds.), New York: Guilford.

Cartographic analysis of health behaviors: Mapping the spatial dimensions of religion's influence on tobacco and alcohol use in metropolitan Birmingham, Alabama USA.

The transtheoretical model of change applied to developing suicidal behavior. *Omega: Journal of Death and Dying*. (co-author)

FILM EXPERIENCE

At the Mardi Gras. Co-written, filmed, produced, and directed with James McHale. New Orleans, LA: Godzilla Fairy Productions.