

# Sociology 143V: Love

Professor Lewis

Fall 2025  
Mon/Wed/Fri 11-11:50am  
Center Hall 109

Office hours:  
Mon 8-9am, 1-2pm  
(sign up on Canvas)

Arguably the most common and enduring theme in all forms of human expression (art, music, poetry, etc.)—and arguably the most powerful experience and motivating force in human existence—*love* is nevertheless bafflingly absent from most educational curricula and surprisingly neglected in academic research. This course aims to provide a broad scholarly introduction to the topic of romantic love, in particular. Course material will necessarily be drawn from a variety of disciplinary perspectives (while emphasizing sociological and social psychological themes) and at times entirely transcends these silos. Further, our orientation is at once ultimately (and unapologetically) practical and optimistic: We will focus not just on understanding romantic love—in all of its many forms—but on cultivating and improving love relationships (with the belief that this is possible for everyone).

## Evaluation

Your course grade will be determined based on your cumulative score (out of 100 points) on the following assignments:

- 5 “core assignments”—5 points each
- 3 “cumulative assignments”
  - One based on the book (*The Course of Love*)—20 points
  - One (discussion forum) based on the course podcast—20 points
  - One final paper based on all course material—40 points

Details for all aspects of course evaluation will be discussed at length in lecture. *All assignments, including the final, will be take-home and asynchronous.* In other words, there is no “in-class” final and you do *not* need to be available at the time that is listed for our final on the Schedule of Classes. You may note that the above assignments do not total 100 points. This is because an “extra credit” opportunity in the form of an extra core assignment is built into this calculation.

Please note that use of electronics (including laptops) during class is prohibited (unless you have a university accommodation). This is to ensure a learning environment that is free from distractions; the educational benefits of longhand have also been experimentally demonstrated.\*

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\* Mueller, Pam A. and Daniel M. Oppenheimer. 2014. “The pen is mightier than the keyboard: Advantages of longhand over laptop note taking.” *Psychological Science* 25:1159-1168.

## Required materials

de Botton, Alain. 2016. *The Course of Love*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

We will ultimately read de Botton's book in its entirety, and it should be cheaply available online in various formats as well as at the bookstore. We will also listen to 10 episodes from Esther Perel's popular podcast, "Where Should We Begin?" Links to the relevant episodes will be posted each week on the course website. Additionally, each week I will recommend reading related to that week's topic. These readings are entirely voluntary although I hope some will spark your interest.

## Discussion forums

There are four discussion forums on the course website, each for a different purpose. The first is a digital version of office hours, where you can ask me questions related (or unrelated) to course material. The second is an open discussion forum where you can engage your peers on any aspect of the course—something like an extension of in-class conversations. The third is a forum for you to post media related to love (created by you or anyone else) that you would like to share with our class community. The fourth is the forum for the course podcast (the 2<sup>nd</sup> cumulative assignment).

## Schedule

The course is divided into 6 substantive units ("The \_\_\_\_\_ of love") related to a different aspect of romantic love. In the middle of these units we'll break for a week focusing on three miscellaneous topics related to love ("Love and..."). And the end of the course will be dedicated to a 7<sup>th</sup>, practical unit on navigating and enhancing love relationships: "The practice of love."

WEEK 1:	<i>The history of love</i>	Contextualizing modern Western love
WEEK 2:	<i>The nature of love</i>	What is love?
WEEK 3:	<i>The basis of love</i>	Theories of attraction and compatibility
WEEK 4:	<i>Love and...</i>	Technology; immigration; sex
WEEKS 5 & 6:	<i>The contours of love</i>	Variation across individuals, configurations, and time
WEEK 7:	<i>The dark side of love</i>	Abuse, infidelity, and pathology
WEEK 8:	<i>The end of love</i>	Breaking up
WEEKS 9 & 10:	<i>The practice of love</i>	"Love is a skill, not just an enthusiasm"