SPRING 2019 First-Year Seminar ~ Love: The Sociology of Intimacy (FYSEM-UA 660)

This seminar uses sexually explicit reading and visual material. If you are not comfortable with this, please choose another seminar.

Instructor: Professor Deirdre A. Royster       Course Meeting Day/Time: Wednesdays, 11am-1:30pm
Office hours: TBD (We can also meet right after class and by appointment, including via Skype session Deirdre 0212, if that works best for you.)
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

If a toddler does not receive physical affection and companionship from a caregiver, it will die—but even the mere sight of a caregiver, on a daily basis, can avert the tragedy of death (from lack of social and physical intimacy). Love is a powerful social force; this course provides an opportunity for students to read, learn, think, write, and talk about research, theories, and essays about Love—mostly from a sociological perspective (but with occasional forays into other fields). Yes, that’s right; love—with a special focus on romantic relationships and pairings. So much has been written about love, and from every conceivable point of view, but Sociology asks some very specific things about how social contexts influence patterns in how people love across different times, societies, groups, and so forth. American society has been undergoing many changes that have had profound effects upon how we love—including what forms we expect our relationships to take; when we expect to form enduring relationships with romantic partners; how we connect with the strangers who can become future life partners; and what it may take to move from exploration to commitment. Sociology de-bunks many “love” myths that we’ve told ourselves as a society and instead highlights realities we’ve lived but not understood well—providing clarity on the distance between “idealized” and “realized” love.

A perfect class for the skeptic and romantic alike—this course asks students to engage in the process of sociologically investigating a complex theory about why love tends to hurt in modern societies (so much so that love and romance are in decline among some populations!). Specifically, students will engage in the process of determining what kinds of data could be collected and analyzed in order to evaluate the explanatory power of the “Why Love Hurts” argument of sociologist Eva Illouz. After developing empirical indices and one or more methods by which to collect data, students will set about collecting data, and once collected, begin the fun and arduous task of making sense of a “pile” of data and finally work toward explaining what the data tell us about the power of Illouz’s theory to explain “the hurt” of modern love. Each student will assist in the development of a collective investigative effort—including sharing material from their own experience of planning/executing a date with another human of interest. While the data will be focused on exploring the “Love Hurts” model, students will also have the opportunity to develop a few propositions of their own to explore empirically as well.

For this class, students are expected to be active participants, specifically you are required to discuss and to lead discussion on course readings and to work on improving your writing, with peer support (which counts toward the final paper grade) and with a focus on writing for the social science, rather than general, audience. You will have a few shorter writing assignments and a longer (10-12 page) final paper in which you draw upon the data collected by the entire class, but before those assignments, you will translate theoretical ideas into possible empirical data collection strategies (in a low-stakes writing assignment). Since it’s especially useful for you to begin honing your presentation skills, each student will present on the distinct portion of their literature review and on an empirical finding from their final paper that they feel is compelling. I will take attendance at the beginning of each class and assess your preparedness and participation level toward the middle and at the end of the semester. Each of the course assignments is designed to facilitate your development as a scholarly thinker, writer and presenter of ideas and to serve, in some way or another, as a building block for your final paper.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
1) Introduce students to sociological theories and research on love that will help them to question their assumptions about love across time, space, and diverse populations.

2) Introduce students to basic research methods within sociology.

3) Provide a supervised research experience in which students will develop a grounded investigative strategy & participate in collecting, organizing, and interpreting data.

4) Assist students in composing and revising a primary social science research paper.

5) Assist students in becoming more self-aware of their strengths and weaknesses as writers and actively addressing areas of weakness.

6) Assist students in becoming more comfortable and adept at presenting on and discussing scholarly ideas and empirical data publicly.

**READINGS**

There are a few required books for the course, some movies you will also need to view, and sometimes there will be shorter readings and worksheet posts on NYU Classes as well. ALWAYS bring the book or shorter readings that we are currently discussing to class with you. The required books include:


**REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING**

1. 100 points or 10%-- 1 Low-stake writing assignment
2. 150 points or 15%-- Mid-term on sociological methods & assigned readings
3. 100 points or 10%-- Contribution to data collection/organization for class project
4. 100 points or 10%-- Re-Enchantment Assignment & Write-up: Planning & Executing a Date
5. 150 points or 15%-- Attend class prepared & participating (10%) & Co-lead Discussion (5%)
6. 150 points or 15%-- Literature Review & Presentation of key final paper finding
7. 250 points or 25%-- Final Paper (20%) with peer review (5%)

1000 points total for assignments.


**Discussion Co-Leading:** Since many students are quite shy and others can be a bit too forthcoming, I’ve found it useful to create some structure for class discussions. As part of your preparedness/participation effort, you and a classmate are required to lead at least one class discussion that will have a few elements. You’ll need to briefly identify and review important themes in the current reading assignment, connect the readings to those which came before, introduce questions for class discussion, and facilitate your peers’ exploration and understanding of the reading.

**More on the Final Paper:** Your final paper must be 10-12 pages (including 1 page of references). It needs to provide a discussion of one or more theoretical arguments from “Why Love Hurts” as well as other literature which you use to supplement your exploration of “Why Love Hurts” and will function much like a literature review, a description of the data and methods the paper will use, a set of relevant findings and discussion of implications of findings. On the last day of class, each person is required to turn in a first complete draft of the final paper to be exchanged with another student (of my choosing). You then have about 30 hours to provide a written evaluation of your assigned paper—you must send (via e-mail) to me.
and to the student whose paper you have evaluated a single-spaced page of serious critique (I’ll provide guidelines on this). You have until the end of the final exam period scheduled for this course to revise your own paper for final submission to me. The final paper itself is worth 20% of your grade, peer reviews 5%, for a total of 25%.

**Schedule for LOVE: The Sociology of Intimacy**

**Week One (Jan 30th)**  
**Topic: How Sociologists Think About & Study Love in Varied Contexts**  
Read—Chs.1-6, pp. Intro-103 “Marriage, a History”

**Week Two (Feb 6th)**  
**Topic: Modern Ideals v. Historical Realities**  
Read — Chs. 7-12, pp. 104-215,”Marriage, a History”

**Week Three (Feb 13th)**  
**Topic: The Future of Marriage…Will Your Generation Marry? For Love?**  
Read— Chs. 13-conclusion, pp. 216-314, “Marriage, a History”

**Week Four (Feb 20th)**  
**Topic: Modern Love and Romantic Choice Markets…**  
Read—Chs 1-3, pp. 1-103, “Why Love Hurts”

**LOW Stake Assignment handed out & In-Class Workshop on Data Collection Strategy**

**Week Five (Feb 27th)**  
**Topic: Love and the Vulnerable Self…**  
Read—Chs 4-Epilogue, pp. 109-248,”Why Love Hurts” LOW Stake Assignment due

**Week Six (March 6th)**  
**Topic: Workshop on Translating Sociological Propositions into testable Hypotheses & Mid-term Review**

**Week Seven (March 13)** Hand in your data & bring laptop to class for In-class Mid-term

**Week Eight (March 20th)** SPRING BREAK!

**Week Nine (March 27th))**  
**Topic: “Sociologizing” the Modern On-line Search for Love & Romance**  
Read—Chs. Intro-4, pp. 1-148 “Modern Romance”

**Week Ten (April 3rd)**  
**Topic: Critical & Demographic Analyses of Coupling**  
Read—Chs. 5-Conclusion, pp. 149-252 “Modern Romance”

**Week Eleven (April 10th)**  
**Topic: Technology & the Birth of Women's Pleasure**  
Read—Whole book, pp. 1-124, “The Technology of Orgasm” (Re-enchantment Assign. Write-up DUE)

**Week Twelve (April 17th)** Field Trip to: The Museum of Sex

**Week Thirteen (April 24th)**  
**Final Paper Presentations (Literature Reviews are due when you present.)**

**Week Fourteen (May 1st)**  
**Final Paper presentations**

**Week Fifteen (May 8th)**  
**Final Paper Presentations & Course Evaluations (Bring laptops to class) LAST DAY OF CLASS—Final Paper Drafts due today!**

**Paper Draft** (at least 9 pages, inc. bibliography) Due for Peer Exchange last day of class

**PEER REVIEW** (worth 5%) DUE to PEER/ROYSTER within 30 hours of receipt

**FINAL PAPER** (POLISHED DRAFT worth 20% of your grade-DUE by END OF EXAM PERIOD)