Love Actually (CAMS-UA.0147)  
Course Outline

"Love looks not with the eyes but with the mind" ~ William Shakespeare

Ah, love. L’amour. The very word stirs our imaginations and pulls at our heartstrings. This most fundamental of emotions has long been a source of creative inspiration – a muse for literature, song, and art. The importance of love and intimacy in human life is clear, but what can the latest observations and scientific discoveries about the brain tell us about this supreme emotion? Through discussions, papers, and projects, we will examine the concepts of love and intimacy through various lenses, including those of neurobiology, evolutionary psychology, culture, and art. Focusing on the development of love throughout the lifecycle, we will study how people seek intimacy, how love evolves over time, the influence of love on human behavior, and love and intimacy’s relation to psychological well-being.

In this class we will examine the various stages of love through a variety of perspectives. We will examine the neurobiology of different phases of love, from infancy to old age, as well as social and cultural influences that are involved. We will look at how technology and media exert their effects on relationships and love and how sexuality is related to the notion of love. We will explore love’s relationship to creativity and imagination, in addition to love as a therapeutic action and ability to repair, with specific focus on neuroplasticity and the brain's ability to change itself within this setting. At the end of this section, students will synthesize the material from throughout the semester creatively with final presentations. Throughout the course, we will look not only to the disciplines of neurology and psychology, but also to philosophy, poetry, literature, and film – all ‘primary sources’ of the complex experience of love.

Instructors:
- Francesco Ferrari, MD, MS (francesco.ferrari@nyumc.org)
- Megan Poe, MD (poem24@earthlink.net)

Office hours by appointment.

Books to Be Purchased By Students:


A detailed syllabus listing of all the other required readings for the course will be posted on NYU Classes.

Recommended and required films will also be placed on reserve at Bobst.
Course Overview:

Week 1: Overview of Love & Intimacy
What is love? What is intimacy? In this introductory session, we will begin to explore and deepen our curiosities about these definitions. The class will first be asked to define these terms as a group and create a taxonomy of love and intimacy. We will consider different forms and intensities of love and intimacy. For example, how is it different to love a child, parent, sibling, romantic partner, pet, or deity? We will also begin to explore and deepen our curiosities about how love and intimacy (or lack thereof) relates to our happiness and well-being. Do we need to love others with or without reciprocity in order to be happy and have a sense of purpose? Does absence of love cause depression? Can love be quantified? Can finding love, even perhaps in a psychotherapeutic relationship, be a cure for clinical depression?

Week 2: Love & the Humanities
In this class we finish laying the groundwork for the subsequent study of love throughout the life cycle. We will broaden our exploration of love beyond the hard sciences and into the rich and diverse academic worlds of history, philosophy, religion, literature, and the arts. We will focus on the strengths and limitations of such wide-ranging theoretical viewpoints and show that the whole is far greater than the sum of its individual parts. We will delve into our overarching need to express love and for love to be insisted upon creatively. After all, love is a great muse, a creative act in and of itself. We will also look at the role of fantasy and idealization in love and intimacy as forces that create, shape and destroy intimate bonds. We will examine how and why our modern interpretation of love is different from that of previous generations. We will examine Plato’s Symposium on the genesis, purpose, and nature of love, Leonard Cohen’s songs and poetry, and Shakespeare’s Love Sonnets among others to shed light on how the imagination has its own complex relationship to love, and how it is a vital part of all relationships.

Week 3: Evolutionary Psychology
In this class we begin to introduce the themes of love and intimacy through the prism of varied academic disciplines including evolutionary psychology, cultural anthropology, and sociology. We will explore the science of how and why we choose our partners and the evolutionary advantages of our most fundamental and universal behaviors in relationships. We will look at the evolutionary psychology of human mating and relationships as it pertains to procreation and successfully raising offspring. We will also present how and why representations, beliefs, and practices about love and sex vary across cultures and consider the implications of certain cultural constructs such as arranged marriages.

Week 4: The Neuroscience of Love & Emotions
In this class we will continue to introduce scientific theories of love with a focus on the structure and function of the brain and mind and how they are shaped by emotional relationships. Students will learn how the mind emerges from the substance of the brain as it is shaped by interpersonal experiences from infancy through adulthood. We will introduce simple neuroanatomy, the function of neurotransmitters, the regions of the brain involved in emotion, how neurobiology and love are dynamically interwoven, and why this is essential for psychological well-being. We will also discuss limitations of
neuroscience in explaining how we love via an introduction to themes from an emerging academic coalition of “neuroskeptics.”

**Week 5: Parent-Infant Love**

What is so unique about the bond between a parent and child? And how does this first love relationship shape all others to come? This week we will begin looking at love through the human life-cycle. Starting with infancy we will study the first love relationship. We will expand on the neuroscience of early love, including the importance of oxytocin and physical attention as means to solidify this bond. We will consider a variety of theories of infant love including attachment theory and evolutionary theory, delving into how parent-infant love is designed to support survival of our species. We will also attempt to explore the uniqueness of early love as it relates to the idea of reciprocity and discuss whether infant dependency is actually a form of love or something different entirely. We will look at the unconditional love a parent has for their child and discover how this is quite different from love in any other form. We will depict how positive and loving early relationships have enormous implications on our well-being, on the shape of future relationships, and most importantly on our capacity for love.

**Week 6: Love in Childhood**

In this class we will continue our journey through the life cycle pausing in childhood to examine the shape that love takes during this time. We will continue to see how our early experiences and relationships form our capacity for human connection, illustrated by examining the adoption literature. We will look at the separation from one’s parents, the initiation of independence, and the development of transitional objects, all of which begin during this time and shape our experience in relation to others. We will examine the Greek concept of philia (friendship) and its relation to love, which has its roots in childhood. We will examine other cultural theories of love in childhood including the Japanese concept of amae (dependent love) and the Greek notions of agape (unconditional love) and storge (affection). We will also examine the social constructs of empathy and altruism that begin to develop in childhood, are shaped by our first love relationships, and ultimately have an enormous impact on our development and our ability to love in the future.

**Week 7: Love in Adolescence**

Continuing to examine love and intimacy from a developmental perspective, we will examine one’s first experiences of romantic relationships – those that begin in adolescence. Adolescent brain changes will be studied, with special attention paid to how these changes affect interpersonal exchanges. We will look at the role romantic relationships play in healthy adolescent development and identity formation. We will also begin to study how technology influences the development of contemporary romantic relationships, paying special attention to the impact of social networking sites (e.g., Facebook and Twitter) on adolescent behaviors and on the development of intimacy among teens.

**Week 8: Love, Sexuality, & Eroticism**

This week we will investigate the relationship between sexuality, eroticism, and love as it emerges in young adulthood. We will explore in greater depth the psychological, cultural and societal, and biological and evolutionary influences that drive us to have sex. We will
discuss what attracts us to other people and look at the variety of patterns of sexual behavior people exhibit, from serial monogamy, to infidelity, to polyamory. Sex will be examined both as an expression of love and as a physical act without intimacy. We will also explore similarities and differences in how heterosexual and homosexual partners find, express, and commit to love.

**Week 9: Dating, Mating, and Partnering**
This week we will continue our examination of love through the study of romantic relationships into adulthood. The act of dating, partnering and choosing whom (and whether) to marry will be our focus. We will explore the nature of loving, committed relationships and begin to look at what developmental changes occur during this time that propel us to partner with others. We will look at cognitive mechanisms that are used in different phases of mating and discuss various mating strategies, all of which are highly dependent on context. Continuing with material introduced in previous weeks, the impact of technology on the act of finding a partner in the contemporary world will be scrutinized as well. Particular attention will be paid to online dating services and geo-location mobile hook-up applications.

**Week 10: Commitment**
We often talk about finding a person to love, but what happens next? There is a new and changed life that begins once the searching is done. Though we call it ‘settling down,’ the trials of partnering can be just as ‘wild’ as early love. How does love shift from the potent spell of falling in love to something deeper that can be sustained over time? What can appear straightforward to the casual observer is often a relationship containing complex undercurrents beneath the surface. We will look at the natural ebb and flow of intimacy, where a couple feels distant and then back in love. What does it take to create a healthy atmosphere for love, and what is it that gets in the way? We will examine why some relationships flourish and others fade. We will look at the concepts of danger and desire, safety and adventure, growing apart and infidelity. We will consider how love lasts, how our parent’s unions affect our own, and how love changes as we transition, such as with the birth of children or the changing of careers. We will also look at love as we age, including the ways love and passion shift for the elderly.

**Week 11: The Loss of Love & On Being Alone**
In this session we will explore the different ways that being by oneself relates to being in love. How does our capacity to be alone relate to our ability to love, to be intimate, and to form relationships? We will consider Erich Fromm’s concept of “standing in love;” that is, being one’s own person while fully loving another. We will explore the difference between loneliness and solitude (i.e., being by oneself vs. with oneself) as they relate to love. Having studied how one loves another, we will go on to explore how loving oneself is vital to mental health. We will then examine several different aspects of love and loss. We will look at mourning a loved one, whether through separation or death, and what impact this grief has on our psychological well-being. We will consider how love and intimacy enhance not only the quality of our lives, but also greatly impact our physical and emotional health and how recent research demonstrates that loneliness places us at greater risk for illness. We will also explore the process of love coming to an end through divorce, infidelity, and even transient loss of love in relationships. Finally, we will consider the sociological, psychological and biological factors involved in mature love.
Week 12: Love & Repair
As the instructor-driven course didactic content comes to a close, our focus shifts back to the dynamic relationship between love and our psychological well-being. We will explore what it means to be healthy in the way we love. Can love repair and be repaired? Can we learn to love as adults if we weren’t loved well as children? This class will touch upon how psychotherapy, as well as other loving relationships, such as mentorship and close friendship, can potentially repair our ability to be intimate and love. We will explore the latest scientific discoveries of the brain revealing the impact of psychotherapy, including fMRI studies, and concepts of neuroplasticity (how the brain changes itself). We will also delineate key concepts related to love and intimacy in the therapeutic setting, including transference, countertransference, and how therapy works and develops as a relationship in itself.

Week 13: Final Examination
The class will conclude with a written examination, including short answer responses and longer essay questions synthesizing material covered throughout the semester. We will then debrief and evaluate the course, addressing any outstanding questions or concerns.

Week 14: Final Creative Project Presentations
Through creative project presentations, we will review major themes highlighted throughout the course and have a discussion on overarching perspectives of love and intimacy through the lifespan. In this session, students will give final creative presentations related to the major themes of the course.

Methods of Assessment:

1) Participation (25%): Participation is critical for this seminar. Much of the learning will be derived from in-class discussions, presentations, and viewing of multimedia. As such, we expect students to attend each week, be on time, and participate in in-class dialogues about the material being studied. Students will be graded upon their attendance and participation in class, specifically their demonstrated familiarity with the academic material and research. Attendance and adequate participation in class will count for a maximum of 15 points (or 15% of the final grade). Any anticipated absences will need to be discussed with instructors in advance.

Creative reflections:
As part of their participation score, students will create 2 creative reflections during the semester.

Directions: Design and execute a creative project using any format integrating the material from prior weeks leading up to the project, drawing both from readings and class discussions. Projects could include poem, song, artwork, blog submissions, a short podcast, short film, short essay, public service announcement, performance art/installation, or other ideas, but it should be clear how the material relates to class material and concepts from the weeks prior to submission. These small projects should have an eye toward teaching and disseminating the ideas from the course to others.
The first will be due by the beginning of class for Week 5. This reflection should be based on readings and discussions from Weeks 1 through 4. The second will be due by the beginning of class for Week 10. This reflection should be based on readings and discussions from Weeks 5 through 9.

Each creative reflection will be worth a maximum of 5 points (or 5% of the final grade).

2) **Midterm Exam (25%)**: There will be a take-home, open book, individual midterm examination, which will employ both short answer and longer essay formats to assess students’ understanding and ability to synthesize the material presented thus far. The midterm exam will be due at the beginning of class on Week 8.

3) **Final Exam (25%)**: There will be an in-class, closed book final examination, which will employ both short answer and longer essay formats to assess students’ understanding and ability to synthesize the material presented throughout the entirety of the course.

4) **Creative Project (25%)**: Each student will create a 10-15 minute individual or paired final presentation of a creative project. Instructions for this creative project related to a major theme from the course will be passed out at the beginning of the course. By Week 9 at the latest, students will submit a 2-3 page proposal discussing their ideas for a final presentation. Proposals must be approved by instructors, and presentations will be given during the last class (class #14).

**Grade Delineations**:

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**Policy on Attendance**:
It is expected that students will attend and be on time for all scheduled classes. As class participation comprises a significant portion of the final assessment, **attendance and punctuality are essential and, therefore, mandatory**. Attendance will be taken at the start of class each week. After one missed class, students will lose 1 point (or 1% from the final grade) for each subsequent absence or tardiness.

Students requesting an exemption from the attendance policy must present a written note from a school Dean, Academic Advisor, or personal physician (e.g., not the student’s parent or family member) justifying the absence, which will then be considered by the instructors.

**Policy on Late Submissions**:
The Midterm Take-Home Exam is due by the beginning of class 8. Exams turned in after this deadline will be accepted, however, grades will be lowered by 1/3 for each day they are late (e.g., from an A- to a B+ on late day #1, from a B+ to a B on late day #2, etc.).
Students must be present to take the Final Exam on the second to last scheduled day of class. Students must also be present for Final Creative Project presentations due on the last class #14.

Under no circumstances will any assignments/papers/projects be accepted after the date of the final exam. Assignments/projects/papers received after this date will not be graded and will receive a score of zero.

Students requesting an exemption from the late submission policy must present a written note from a school Dean, Academic Advisor, or personal physician (e.g., not the student’s parent or family member) justifying the late submission, which will then be considered by the instructors.

**Academic Integrity:**
All students at NYU follow an honor code, rules of conduct, and policies of academic integrity. Students violate academic integrity when they: (1) cheat on exams; (2) submit work that is not their original work; (3) submit the same work from two different courses without permission from their professors; (4) receive help on a take-home exams without knowledge from their professor; (5) plagiarize. **Plagiarism** occurs when students do not properly give credit when pulling or reporting information or ideas from papers, documents, presentations, musical scores, the Internet or other materials, and attribute others’ work and ideas as their own.

Examples of plagiarism include: (1) copying verbatim from a book, article, presentation, or other documents, with providing a proper attribution, citation or quotation; (2) paraphrasing an article, chapter, presentation or other materials without giving attribution or citation, or providing quotation marks; (3) copying from a classmate or allowing a classmate to copy from you, or submitting another student’s work with your name on it; (4) collaborating between two of more students, without the professor’s permission, and then submitting the paper individually under each student’s name; (5) purchasing an assignment or paper, and submitting as original work.

**Students are expected to submit original work and ideas for all assignments and to follow the rules of conduct and policies of the honor code and academic integrity.** Students can avoid plagiarism by: (1) providing citations and attributions for information and ideas pulled from outside sources; and (2) submitting original work. If you have any questions regarding academic integrity and proper attribution of others’ work, please set up an appointment with your professor. In the event that a student violates academic integrity or plagiarizes, the professor will follow the rules and policies set forth by NYU and the College of Arts and Science. If a violation occurs, the student may receive a zero for the assignment or exam, a lower grade, or a failing grade in the course. For more information on Academic Integrity and the Honor Code, please see: [http://cas.nyu.edu/page/academicintegrity](http://cas.nyu.edu/page/academicintegrity).