In the critical approaches course "A Question of Love" we shall explore our understanding of the various emotions and relationships we cover by the word "love." As a basis for understanding the different aspects of love in human relationships as represented in western tradition, we shall read and analyze an anthology of fundamental passages from several classical and medieval works, ranging from Plato and the Bible to Ovid and The Romance of the Rose. We shall use our discussion of these texts to analyze the representations of love in two medieval romances, Chretien's Erec and Enide and Gottfried's Tristan; one seventeenth- and one eighteenth-century French novel, The Princess of Cleves and Dangerous Liaisons, and an English novel of Jane Austen, Sense and Sensibility.

There will be three examinations during the semester including the final. Students will be asked to write two papers: one of two pages and one not more than three pages. In these papers students will learn to approach literary texts in a critical manner. Students taking this course for honors credit will write a fifteen-page paper in consultation with the instructor instead of the second three-page paper. Honors students will be expected to "discover" their own topic and create the outline. Meetings with the professor will help both in the "discovery" of the topic and in the drafting of an outline. In this course we shall discuss the psychology of love, the close relationship between love and philosophy, the question of love and chivalry in the Middle Ages, the importance of rhetoric and authorial use of persona. Analyzing these issues will add to the student's ability to understand the novel we shall read, to appreciate the many faceted aspects of the experiences we cover by the single word "love," and to see the ways in which writers have represented these human emotions.