

# **ENG 105: FYS Can We Be Kind to Strangers? (aka Relax: You can do this)**

**Block 1 2016-2017**

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**Classroom**  
Durham

## **Description**

Can we be kind to Strangers? This deceptively simple question implies an equally simple answer: Yes, of course we can--and we should. Religious texts, folklore, and philosophy from around the world and from different time periods all encourage us to show kindness to strangers. But we seldom need stories that exhort us to do what we are already doing; thus the stories also remind and encourage us to be kind to strangers, even when we might rather pass by. Thus the question--can we be kind to strangers--gives rise not to a simple answer but to challenging secondary questions. First, Is it in fact possible to be kind to strangers? Is there a biological basis for helping others? Is kindness to strangers altruistic or self-interested reciprocity? Next, in today's global, internet-connected world, what do we mean by stranger? Finally, *should* we be kind to strangers? what are the consequences and implications for the recipient and for the giver?

Specific goals for the FYS can be found here: <http://www.cornellcollege.edu/first-year-program/first-year-seminar/index.shtml>

## **Course Format**

We will spend most of our class time meeting in Durham discussing, analyzing, reflecting on, and writing about the assigned readings for the course. We will meet on a fairly regular schedule, but class times and locations do vary, so look carefully at the schedule every day. Sometimes we will have individual conferences or small group meetings to check in or work on projects. Those meetings will usually be in my office, South hall 105.

Because this course requires individual and small group meetings outside of regular class time we will likely meet together, as a class, for a little less than 15 hours per week.

You should plan to spend an average of 3-4 hours on work out of class per day, and should expect lengthier reading assignments over the weekend.

## Goals and Expectations

This course fulfills the following Educational Priorities:

**Inquiry:** ENG 105 invites you to engage with an enduring question and investigate it using research, creative thinking, and analysis

**Communication:** All of the projects and papers in ENG 105 call for you to demonstrate and cultivate effective reading, writing, and speaking skills.

**Intercultural Literacy:** The readings in this course examine different religious and cultural perspectives on our course question, thus they ask you to connect with diverse ideas and people whose experiences differ from your own and that may be separated from you by time, space, and culture.

My Expectations:

for me	for you
Show up for class and appointments on time and prepared to work	
spend sufficient time and planning to create assignments that are clear and meaningful	spend sufficient time reading and writing to create work that is clear and meaningful
Prepare for discussion and projects by devoting time to read carefully, prepare notes and questions	
Be available for appointments and conversations; respond to email within 24 hours	communicate with Kat, the CTL people, and me, especially when you have questions, something isn't clear, or you're uncertain about how to proceed
work together to create meaningful, challenging, and fair evaluation criteria	
Be responsive to class needs	Be willing to try new ways of thinking and of reading and planning (even if you think it won't work)
have fun playing with ideas, language, style, and writing	

### Responsibility:

As students at a liberal arts college, you are responsible not merely for showing up but also for actively engaging in this course. At the minimum, engagement means reading the syllabus carefully and often, reading all the assigned material for the course, and turning in assignments on time. It means looking at the course materials before you ask me when something's due, what happens if you miss class, etc.

More importantly, responsible engagement means asking questions, coming to class having already formulated your own thoughts about the material. It means relying on your own reading for your opinions. Finally, it means asking for clarification or help if you do not understand an assignment, expectations, the readings, a grade, what it means to come to class prepared, and so on. For some of these questions, you can ask me or the course mentor or a librarian or someone who works in the Center for Teaching and Learning. I am always willing to talk with you about the course and about your work here at Cornell College.

### **General Guidelines for Coursework**

#### Reading.

When you read: Pay attention to the argument as well as the information. What does the author focus on? Can you anticipate the direction of the written text? What questions would you ask the writer, if you could? And what kinds of details or information does the writer leave out or minimize?

Discussion. I have structured this course so that we spend most of our in-class time discussing the reading assignments.

To encourage productive class discussions, I ask that you:

- Read the assignment.
- Listen carefully.
- Speak constructively.

Writing. There are informal and formal writing assignments in this class. Though some are called "informal," all writing assignments should be typed, proofread for errors, and (usually) posted to Moodle.

Informal writing assignments should help you think about what you've read before class. Formal writing assignments give you a chance to present your revised, polished thoughts.

## Required Work:

Participation (10%) Participation means giving the readings and discussions your full attention and taking notes. It means being willing to discuss, examine, and rethink your responses to the readings. I base your participation grade on how well your presence in class helps discussion. Please keep in mind that side conversations are distracting for everyone and hinder class discussion. Things to think about: do you come to class prepared, having read and taken notes on the assignment? Do you listen to others? Do you offer your own insights and questions?

Quizzes (15%) I give quizzes regularly. I give them not only to encourage you to complete the reading by the first day of discussion, but also to guide you in what to read for. The quiz questions will ask you to identify or explain important ideas, images, or phrases from the assigned reading. I do not allow make-ups, but I give one more quiz than I count. Thus if you are present for all quizzes, it is possible to earn better than perfect on this portion of your grade. Things to think about: have I studied thoroughly for the quizzes? If I'm not getting the grades I expect, have I talked with my mentor and my professor about the quizzes?

Informal Writing (15%) I will assign short reading responses and microthemes frequently, and will usually ask you to post these to Moodle. These are really designed to help you organize and further explore your thoughts about the reading assignments and to give you frequent practice writing. I will not comment on every assignment, but I will let you know how you're doing.

Research Notebook (25%) At the beginning of the second week, we will start collecting research for this assignment which introduces you to information literacy, college research skills, and writing with research. More information will be available on Moodle.

Group presentation (10%). In groups of 3, you will research background information on one film and present your findings to the class in a 10-minute presentation. Group meeting and presentation times are listed on the syllabus. I'll assign you to groups and provide more information during the first week of class.

Take home exam (25%) 5-7 page paper that answers the course question using your research and the course readings.

## Class Policies:

**Check your Cornell email account at least once per day in this course.**

**Set your cell phone so that it does not make any noise during class. “Off” is always a good option.**

## Attendance:

In this class, attendance is not optional. I realize that sometimes exigent circumstances or illness may require you to miss a class session. In those cases, 1. let me know and 2. contact a fellow student to get notes and assignment information. Because absences and tardiness affect the entire class, excessive tardiness or missing **more than two class sessions** may lower your final grade. More than four absences may be grounds for failure in the course. \*Note: In accordance with college policy, I will consider signing 15<sup>th</sup> day drop forms only for students who have attended the majority of class sessions and who have turned in all assignments.

\*\*\*Special Note: Attendance at Film Viewings is not optional. I understand you can get the movie in other ways and watch it outside of class. However, watching a movie on a screen, with other people, differs markedly from watching a movie on a device, alone. Just come to class.

Laptops: Students stay more engaged with class discussion when they take notes by hand. Check with me before bringing a laptop to class. If you get permission to use a laptop, and you check Facebook, email, or any other website during class, you are not actually engaged with the class, so I will count you as absent.

Graded Work. All written assignments are due on time. I accept late papers and assignments only in extreme cases, and I may significantly lower the grade of any late paper. Because the film response and film analysis assignments allow you to skip one, I will not accept late assignments. Type or word-process and double-space all essays. Include one-inch margins on all sides, use an appropriate type font (12 point Times New Roman, for example), and use MLA citation style. For guidelines on formatting formal papers and assignments, check here: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

Academic Honesty: Cornell College expects all members of the Cornell community to act with academic integrity. An important aspect of academic integrity is respecting the work of others. A student is expected to explicitly acknowledge ideas, claims, observations, or data of others, unless generally known. When a piece of work is submitted for credit, a student is asserting that the submission is her or his work unless there is a citation of a specific source. If there is no appropriate acknowledgement of sources, whether intended or not, this may constitute a violation of the College’s requirement for honesty in academic

work and may be treated as a case of academic dishonesty. The procedures regarding how the College deals with cases of academic dishonesty appear in The Compass, our student handbook, under the heading “Academic Policies – Honesty in Academic Work.” ([http://www.cornellcollege.edu/student\\_affairs/compass/academicpolicies.shtml](http://www.cornellcollege.edu/student_affairs/compass/academicpolicies.shtml)).

At the College, penalties for academic misconduct range from a reprimand to indefinite suspension from the college. At the very least, academic misconduct in this course will result in a grade of F for the assignment in question and possibly for the course .

The MLA Handbook explains how to use and document sources. The Writing Studio website links to a summary of MLA documentation:

[http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/resdoc5e/RES5e\\_ch08\\_o.html](http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/resdoc5e/RES5e_ch08_o.html) Please see me if you have any questions about academic honesty or documentation.

Accommodations: Cornell College makes reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities. Students should notify the Coordinator of Academic Support and Advising and their course instructor of any disability related accommodations within the first three days of the term for which the accommodations are required, due to the fast pace of the block format. For more information on the documentation required to establish the need for accommodations and the process of requesting the accommodations, see <http://www.cornellcollege.edu/academic-support-and-advising/disabilities/index.shtml>.

Contacting Me: I am happy to meet you during office hours or by appointment if you want to discuss the readings, desire further guidance on the assignments, or if you want to discuss your work or progress in the course. Outside of class, email is the best way to contact me.