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ENG 111-2B
Gender and the Pursuit of Friendship

From Aristotle to Rousseau, philosophers have seen the attainment of virtuous friendship as a necessary condition for personal happiness and social order. Yet, in Western traditions, writers often measure ideal friendship by way of heroic male relationships, such as Achilles and Patroclus, David and Jonathan, and Damon and Pythias, to name a few. This fraternal ideal has influenced writers across time, leading major thinkers even in the age of “enlightenment” to doubt women’s ability to possess “true amity” and causing female writers to rebut this prejudice with their own depictions of women’s friendships. Through case studies in classical, early modern, and contemporary contexts, you will explore the relevance of our readings to the present day assumptions and institutions that shape the practice of friendship as you experience it. As we consider literary, philosophical, and sociological texts, you will hone foundational skills for developing original and persuasive essays in the humanities. Discussions and writing assignments will invite you to place assigned readings in dialogue with your own personal experiences with and expectations for friendships.

Required Texts

Othello, William Shakespeare (Simon and Schuster 978-0743477550)

Sula, Toni Morrison (Vintage 978-1400033430)

Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao, Junot Díaz (Riverhead Books 978-1594483295)

Additional readings denoted (M) in the schedule appear on the course Moodle site. Other readings may appear as hyperlinks on the online syllabus. You are expected to print and annotate these readings for class.

Grading

Reading Responses and Quizzes	20%
Contribution	20%
Writing Portfolio	40%
Annotated bibliography / Presentation	20%

Learning Objectives

In this course you will . . .

1) Develop a critical understanding of the way authors of different historical periods and cultural backgrounds depict the performance and desire for friendship, while taking into account various aspects of social identity but especially gender identity (inquiry, intercultural literacy)

- 2) Refine your writing and composition skills as a tool for thinking critically through short responses and papers (inquiry, communication)
- 3) Explore differing interpretations of a literary reading by gathering and comparing different kinds of evidence in collaboration with peers (inquiry, communication)
- 4) Hone and research a course topic in the process of creating an annotated bibliography (inquiry, communication)
- 5) Present your research to the class effectively and ask engaged questions of presenters (communication)

Contribution (20%)

Your contribution to the course involves your attendance, preparedness, and participation in discussion, group work, writing conferences, and office hours. I will assess the visible level of effort as well as the substance of ideas you bring to the table.

You should come to class having read the material carefully and having taken the time to make notes and reflect on several key issues that you would like to explore with your peers. You should be active in discussion by asking probing questions, sharing your observations and interpretations, and by constructively responding to issues raised by your peers. I would like the discussion to strike a balance between, on one hand, addressing your questions and interests, and, on the other hand, dealing with those topics that I believe will best position you to write effectively and develop a cumulative understanding of the course materials.

I expect to hear from each of you during discussion several times a day. There will be ample opportunity for engaging in smaller group discussions, and so if you find it difficult to participate frequently in full class discussion, I would recommended making the most of these group discussions to dialogue with classmates and demonstrate your engagement with the material. (see “Classroom Expectations” below for more details on classroom behaviors that will positively or negatively affect your contribution grade)

Writing Portfolio (40%).

This is the largest component of your course grade, but also the grade that you will have the most opportunity to anticipate and improve through essay revisions. You will practice literary analysis by composing three essays (about 3-5 pages each). Each essay assignment will involve a different set of parameters designed to help you explore approaches to argument and analysis. All essays will require a complete first draft, and often other preliminary material (thesis statements, outlines, etc.). Failure to turn in any preliminary work on time will necessitate a deduction from your final portfolio grade.

At the end of the semester, you will submit a final portfolio that will include one of the first two essays revised, and your third essay. Your final grade will be wholly based on the quality of these final drafts, though it will also include any deductions for failure to meet any earlier deadlines or submit earlier drafts. Such deductions will be at minimum a third of a letter grade (for turning in a draft a day late, for instance), or at most a third

of the overall grade (for not turning in one of the first two essays at all) for the portfolio. Meeting deadlines is crucial; while I expect you to do your best on all drafts, you should not use the pursuit of perfection as an excuse for missing a due date.

Reading Responses and Quizzes (20%)

For certain class periods, you will be asked to write a short response to a question about the assigned reading, and/or to respond to a classmate's post. You will post your responses on forums in Moodle.

Each response must make analytical claims and *provide specific evidence (cited brief quotations)* for its assertions. Cite the text by line or page number. Responses must be at least 200 words and are **due before the beginning of our AM class meeting on the day marked RR.**

Each satisfactory response earns a point. **Responses do not earn a point if they:**

- 1) do not provide quotes and discuss details directly
- 2) do not provide line or page citations for quotes
- 3) are less than 200 words (*not counting quotations you include)
- 4) are posted late
- 5) simply reword ideas from another student's earlier post
- 6) do not clearly indicate that you have read beyond the first 5 pages of the reading

Do not write your posts in Moodle, but rather in a word editing program and *make sure to save a copy of each post in a document file as back up*. You are responsible for maintaining a back-up in the case of a system failure or posting malfunction. You will hear from me early in the semester about your RRs by email if I find that you are not meeting the criteria above. If you do not hear from me, you should presume you are earning a point. Feel free to confer with me before you post your RR if you are unsure what I am asking you to do.

Quizzes will be periodic, short answer, and designed primarily to ensure that you keep up with the readings. They will be pass/fail, and be weighted equivalent to an RR post. All RRs and quizzes will be worth one point.

Annotated bibliography / Presentation (20%)

You will develop a research question that stems from our discussion of gender and friendship in these literary texts. Your research question may directly deal with one of the readings or it may deal with another text, or a related historical or contemporary issue. It should however stem from topics discussed in class. You will annotate 6 relevant sources on your topic (more detailed instructions and sample annotations will be available on Moodle). In your presentation, you will share your research with the class and discuss its relevance to our readings (if you are not focusing on a particular assigned author). You will be assigned to read another student's annotated bibliography draft in advance and formulate a question to pose after his or her presentation.

Classroom Expectations

Do not engage in behavior that interferes with the ability of your classmates to concentrate and participate in the class. Such behaviors range from the obvious to the subtle. These are things that will not only affect your contribution grade, but will solicit an admonishment from me.

First the obvious: 1) refrain from all side conversations when your peers or when I am talking. 2) similarly, don't use phones, send texts, or use computers (unless it is for a learning accommodation). Turn off cell phone ringers before class. 3) Do not sleep in class or close your eyes for long periods of time, or yawn repeatedly (yawning stimulates mirror neurons in others). I will consider you absent if you are sleeping through class, so you might as well take a nap elsewhere.

The less obvious (perhaps): 1) You need to have the book or printed reading for the day's meeting (that means out on your desk and turned to the page we are discussing). If we are looking at a particular passage in the text, I do expect to see everyone following along. 2) Always have something to write with and to write on. You should appear ready to take notes during every class meeting.

My recommendation on how to do earn a great contribution grade: as Shakespeare's Hamlet implores his mother, "Assume a virtue, if you have it not," or in other words "fake it 'til you make it." Shakespeare and science agree that we can change our behavior, change who we are, not just by thinking differently, but by acting differently. In other words, the role changes the actor. Don't wait for the spirit to move you: act as though you are curious about the material, and you may discover you are curious about it. Act as though you care about what your classmates are saying and you will over time have made a habit of caring. Convince yourself that the writing assignment matters to you, not just because you are being graded, but because you care about enhancing your writing abilities, and you will find that the act of writing comes more easily. Don't ask me what you need to do to get an A in the class, show me that you are taking the course material seriously and engaging with it to your fullest capability for its own sake.

Office Hours

Participation also includes your use of my office hour availability to seek guidance on any assignments, any difficulties you experience regarding the course, or to discuss questions or ideas that were not fully addressed in class. I am always very glad to speak with students during office hours to address any questions about class content, or if you want to share an idea you did not have a chance to raise in discussion. If my regular office hours do not work for you, please contact me to make an appointment at another time. During certain busier times in the semester (just before assignments are due and toward the end of the term) you may wish to make an appointment to ensure you won't have a long wait to see me.

Attendance

Absences in excess of **two** sessions (AM and PM) will result in a third of a letter grade deduction from your final grade at semester's end. Missing more than two full days of class meetings will be grounds for failing the course. If you are incapable of attending class due to illness and can provide a detailed note signed by a medical professional, I will offer you make-up work for the missed days up to a point. If you miss more than three days on account of a documented health issue, I will recommend you look into pursuing a health withdrawal. If you miss a class session, it is your responsibility to contact me (by email or office hours) about any upcoming assignment instructions you may have missed. If you want a more detailed sense of what was covered, stop by my office hours. You are also strongly encouraged to get notes from a classmate.

If you arrive late (after I check attendance), make sure to check with me after class to ensure I have you marked in attendance. Late arrivals in excess of two will be considered one full absence. All late arrivals more than 10 minutes into the class will count as absences.

*Note: In accordance with college policy, I will consider signing 15th day drop forms only for students who have attended 90% of the class sessions and who have turned in all assignments.

Academic Integrity

"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 Catalogue, under the heading "Academic Honesty."

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>"

Course Schedule

Abbreviations:

AM: 9:30-11am

PM: 1-3 pm

RR= online reading response

WEEK 1

M	AM	Introductions and Syllabus
	PM	William Deresiewicz's, "Faux Friendship" (M) Reading together in class (bring copies): Othello Act 1
T	AM	Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution" (1-7)
	PM	Essays by Montaigne and Bacon (M) Othello Act 1 and 2, Essay 1 Assigned, RR
W	AM	<i>Writing Analytically</i> Chapter 1, pgs. 1-16, (M), <i>Sin Boldly</i> , Chapters 1 and 3 (M)
	PM	Othello Act 2 and 3 RR
Th	AM	Othello Act 4 and 5, Derrida on elegiac fraternity (handout)
	PM	Othello Act 5, Butler, "Performativite Acts," 7-14 Essay 1 Draft submitted to group forum by 6 PM
F	AM	No meeting; Read and Respond to Group Essays
	PM	1-2pm Groups 1 and 2 meet 2-3pm Groups 3 and 4 meet
Sa	PM	Final Draft of Essay 1 Due 3PM

WEEK 2

M	AM	Essay 2 assigned, Annotated Bib. Assignment, Library Resources Discussed
	PM	Morrison's <i>Sula</i> 1-85 RR
T	AM	Writing Workshop with Jennifer Haigh
	PM	<i>Sula</i> 87-137 RR <i>Writing Analytically</i> , Chapter 1, pgs. 16-33 (M)
W	AM	<i>Sula</i> 137-END
	PM	Library Research Session

Individual Meetings

Th	AM PM	Individual meetings (sign up on Moodle) Individual meetings Draft of Essay 2 Due at 6PM
F	AM PM	No meeting; Read and Respond to Group Essays 1-2pm Group 3 and 4 meet 2-3pm Group 1 and 2 meet

Sa Final Draft of Second Essay 2 Due at 3PM

WEEK 3

M	AM PM	Reading Time Essay 3 assigned, <i>Oscar Wao</i> 1-136 RR
T	AM & PM	<i>Oscar Wao</i> , 136-200 RR
W	AM PM	Annotated Bib Draft Due; workshop <i>Oscar Wao</i> , 200-260
Th	AM & PM	<i>Oscar Wao</i> , 260-END; (2:30-4) Individual Meetings
F		Individual Meetings Submit Draft of Bibliography to Assigned Reader by 5pm
Sa		Draft of Third Essay Due by 3pm

WEEK 4

M	AM PM	Group Meetings 1, 2, 3 and 4 Revising Presentations
T	AM PM	Final Annotated Bib due by Noon Research Presentations Research Presentations
W		Final Portfolio due by Noon