

Friendship, Solitude, Suffering and Death
GE111D
Fall, 2009

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Office hours: MW 2:00-3:30

Course Description

In this course, students will write interpretive essays on meaningful philosophical topics that identify, engage, challenge and refine their own personal concerns. Toward that end, students will first engage in a series of shorter, focused writing assignments in a variety of forms: personal, interpretive and argumentative writing. Students will conclude the term by writing a research essay integrating all these forms of writing. We will focus in our writing on philosophical reflections on the topics of friendship, solitude, suffering and death.

Required Texts

Hacker, Diana, *A Pocket Style Manual*
Woolf, Virginia, *A Room of One's Own*
The Book of Job
Plato, Death of Socrates
~~CANCEL~~: Seneca, *The Stoic Philosophy of Seneca*
~~CANCEL~~: Epictetus, *Handbook*

Moodle Downloads, including:

Montaigne, "On Friendship"
Aristotle, "The Sources and Justification of Friendship" (NE, Book IX)
Montaigne, "On Solitude"
Weil, Simone, "Friendship"
Weil, Simone, "Love"
Weil, Simon, "Detachment"
Montaigne, "To Philosophize is to Learn to Die"

Particulars

Participation (including in-class writing)	15%
Personal , Interpretive, Argumentative and Problem Solving Journaling	15%
2 Mid-term Papers (2000 words)	25%
Annotated Bibliography	10%
Presentation/First Draft of Research Paper	10%
Final version of Research Paper (3500 words, significantly integrating one primary source and one-two secondary sources)	25%

SCHEDULE

- Wed, 9/9 Introduction: Writing as an existential task
In class writing: Do you like writing? Why/why not? What are your writing habits? What do you do? Why? What don't you do? Why not? Which habits make your writing good? Which make them bad?
- Mini-Lecture:**
Personal versus interpretive writing
Writing with and without texts: where are "you"?
When/how should I use "I"? (know what you're doing, who you're talking to and how best to express that thing to that audience)

I. FRIENDSHIP

- Fri, 9/11 **Personal Journaling** on the nature of friendship
Topic (for or against): "My mother/father is my friend" *or* "Two people become one soul in a friendship"
- Mon, 9/14 Montaigne, "On Friendship" (Moodle download)
Wed, 9/16 Aristotle, "The Sources and Justification of Friendship" (Moodle download)
- Fri, 9/18 Writing with texts revisited
Interpretive journaling: writing with a quote from Montaigne or Aristotle (choose from 3) – Large class discussion
- Mini-Lecture:** How to cite texts (formal and informal styles)
Where am "I" when interpreting? What am I doing when?
Constructing arguments w/text (in anticipation of next class)
- Mon, 9/21 **Argumentative journaling** on Friendship
Topic: My mother/father is my friend" *or* "Two people become one soul in a friendship"
(i.e., take earlier topic on which we've done interpretive work, and take a position, arguing, sequentially, **from both points of view**, and integrating one text either as support for your point of view or as something against which you will argue)
Work in pairs today
- Mini-Lecture:** What is a thesis? Did you have one today? Was it complex enough? Who cares if you can state your thesis? When does it emerge? What does the "working" of "working thesis" or "working title" mean? Importance of facing terror and keeping nose to the scent. First intro of using problem-solving journaling

II. SOLITUDE IN FRIENDSHIP

Wed, 9/23 **Personal journaling** on the need for solitude in friendships
Topic (for or against): "Appropriate distance in friendships is crucial"
Weil, "Friendship," "Love," and "Detachment" (Moodle download)

Mon, 9/28 Montaigne, "On Solitude" (Moodle download)

Wed, 9/30 **Interpretive Journaling:** on Weil/Montaigne

Mini-Lecture: Reflections on writing with and without texts: are "you" still there?

III. SOLITUDE IN WRITING

Fri, 10/2 **Argumentative journaling** on Weil/Montaigne
Topic: "Appropriate distance in friendship is crucial"

Mini-Lecture: How's your thesis today?

Mon, 10/5 **Personal journaling** on the need for solitude in writing
Topic (for or against): "Writing is the quintessential solitary activity"
OR "One cannot become a good writer without embracing long periods of solitude" (you might reflect on past few weeks!)

Wed, 10/7 Woolf, Chs. 1-2

Fri, 10/9 Woolf, Chs. 1-2

Mon, 10/12 **Interpretive journaling** on Woolf

Mini-Lecture: Compare interpreting Woolf with interpreting Montaigne/Weil

Wed, 10/14 **Argumentative journaling** on Weil/Montaigne

IV. WORKING TOWARD THE FIRST INTERPRETIVE ESSAY

Fri, 10/16 **HAND IN JOURNALS TODAY** (to be handed back during individual meetings next week)

Mini-Lecture: On writing an interpretive 2000 word interpretive essay
ASK: What are your new habits? What old ones have stuck/still work?
Which have gone? Which still need to go?

Finding an "interpretive thesis" (a claim about the text, and a claim about whether what the text says is true or not OR a claim about friendship/solitude, and reliance upon a carefully interpreted text either to support that claim or to act as interesting/significant opposition to it)

What is my argument?

How am I integrating other voices? If I have quoted someone else in my paper, is it an interpretive paper?

Should I write an outline? Would a mind-map work better?

What if I'm worried that my working thesis is wrong? (terror, keeping nose to scent, problem-solving journaling)

- Mon, 10/19 NO CLASS – individual meetings to discuss 2000 word interpretive essay (bring outline or mind-map)
- Wed, 10/21 NO CLASS – individual meetings to discuss 2000 word interpretive essay (bring outline or mind-map)
- Fri, 10/23 Zero Draft of 2000 word interpretive essay discussed in class [in partners/peer review sheets]

FALL BREAK: Saturday, Oct 24th through Tuesday, Oct 27th

- Wed, 10/28 **2000 word interpretive essay on Friendship and/or Solitude due**
In class: large group discussion of thesis/chosen interpretive passage crucial to your thesis

Mini-Lecture: thinking about your final paper [working thesis/mind-maps due on 11/18!]

V. SUFFERING

- Fri, 10/30 **Personal journaling** about the meaning of suffering
Topic (for or against): "intense suffering has meaning" or "We need God to help us with our intense suffering"

Mon, 11/2 Job, Chs. 1-24

Wed, 11/4 Job, Chs. 25-42

- Fri, 11/6 **Interpretive/Argumentative journaling** on Job
Mini-Lecture: on the challenges of interpreting a narrative/story (and the difference between interpreting a story and interpreting a philosophical essay)

VI. DEATH

- Mon, 11/9 Montaigne, "To Philosophize is to Learn to Die" (Moodle download)
Plato, *Death of Socrates*

Wed, 11/11 **Interpretive/Argumentative journaling** on Montaigne/Plato

- Fri, 11/13 Meeting with library representative to discuss annotated bibliographies and looking for appropriate secondary sources for final research paper

VII. WORKING TOWARD THE FINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Mon, 11/16 2000 word interpretive essay on suffering due [work in partners for peer review in anticipation of possible final essay]

Wed, 11/18 Working thesis and mind-maps of final paper due

Mini-lecture: identifying a complex thesis
_____ of _____; not just _____!!

SO, possible topics:

True meaning of friendship

The importance of solitude in friendship

The importance of solitude in writing

Exemplary management of suffering

Best ways of dying

Fri, 11/20 Annotated Bibliography due/in class, large group discussion

Mon, 11/23 Zero draft of final paper due/peer editing

THANKSGIVING BREAK: Wednesday, Nov 25th through Sunday, Nov 29th

NOTE: Continue interpretive, argumentative and problem-solving journaling throughout these two weeks, as necessary

Mon, 11/30 Presentation/First Draft of Research Paper

Wed, 12/2 Presentation/First Draft of Research Paper

Fri, 12/4 Presentation/First Draft of Research Paper

Mon, 12/7 Presentation/First Draft of Research Paper

Wed, 12/9 Presentation/First Draft of Research Paper

Fri, 12/11 Presentation/First Draft of Research Paper

Mon, 12/14 Presentation/First Draft of Research Paper

Course Evaluations

FINAL RESEARCH PAPER DUE ON Saturday, December 19th at 11 a.m., in my office (Holland 503A)