

Honours Seminar: Books and Friendship

ENGL 491H 003



Image: Paul Klee, *Le Cirque Ambulant*, c. 1940. Musée d'Art de São Paulo (São Paulo).

Course description: Aristotle says, “Without friends no one would choose to live, though they had all other goods.” Friendship claims to exist upon a principle of perfect equality, in an economy of even exchange. It promises a private intimacy free from masquerade and convention; only a friend knows and loves your “true portrait,” proposes Montaigne. But what would a cultural history of friendship show? Is modern friendship something new? Could you have a friend briefly, or must a friendship be

built with labour over time? Can friendship be erotic or romantic? This course thinks about “two going together,” remarkable and distinctive friendships in fiction, in drama, in verse, in life.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

UBC’s Point Grey Campus is located on the traditional, ancestral, occupied, and unceded territory of the xwməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam) people. I acknowledge the land rights of the Musqueam people, who for millennia have passed on their culture, history, and traditions from one generation to the next on this site.

COURSE INFORMATION

Official Course Title	Course Code Number	Credit Value
Senior Honours Seminar: Literature	ENGL 491H 003	3 credits

PREREQUISITES

Eligibility for English Honours seminars.

CONTACT INFO

Course Instructor(s)	Contact Details	Office Location	Office Hours
Prof. Judith Paltin	judith.paltin@ubc.ca	BUTO 502	W 1-3 pm and by appointment. Please feel welcome to visit.

COURSE INSTRUCTOR BIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

My preferred pronouns are she/her or they/them. I earned my PhD in 2013 from the University of California, Santa Barbara; at UBC, I supervise research and teach courses in modern Anglophone literature, modernist studies and critical and cultural theory. I am passionate about teaching English courses that are meaningful and truly interesting to you, that give you questions to ponder, methods of thinking, and ideas to carry forward into your next endeavors. The quickest way to reach me is by email, and even when away, I will try to respond within 48 hours. If you haven’t heard from me by then, please kindly let me know I somehow missed your communication.

COURSE STRUCTURE AND VITAL INFORMATION

This course meets on Mondays from 1-2:50 pm in BUTO-541. The seminar does not meet for a final examination.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

The reading schedule shows you which readings we will be discussing each day. Please do your best to complete the reading before class. It is helpful and effective to take journal-style notes while you are reading and to bring them to class to aid your participation. It is a time-honored tradition as well

among English scholars to make notes in the margins of your text. How you read is important. Select a quiet place, and try to read a chosen amount without interruption. As upper-level students, you are also able and expected to carry out a certain amount of basic contextual research on your own about the texts and authors (cough *internet*) and to bring that information to class discussions.

Monday, January 6

Week 1: Course Introduction, readings and poems supplied in class and on Canvas.

Monday, January 13—Friends as Companions

Week 2: *Waiting for Godot*, Samuel Beckett. "Of Friendship," Montaigne.

Monday, January 20— Friends and Self-Growth

Week 3: *A Wizard of Earthsea*, Ursula Le Guin

Monday, January 27—Friendships with Animals and Other Nonhumans

Week 4: **Reading Response #1 due.**

Flush, Virginia Woolf. "The Cares of a Family Man," Franz Kafka. "Vaster than Empires, and More Slow," Ursula Le Guin.

Monday, February 3— Philosophy of Friendship

Week 5: Plato, Cicero, Seneca, Bacon, Emerson [i.e., excerpts on friendship from philosophers, pdfs and links on Canvas]. Also read the entry on "Friendship" at the online Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy [hint: the bibliography at the end of this article is a good resource for your research essay.]

Monday, February 10— Heroic Friendships

Week 6: "David and Jonathan." "Damon and Pythias." *The Epic of Gilgamesh* and supporting materials.

Monday, February 17 **Family Day (and Reading Week): NO CLASS.**

Monday, February 24—Friends in Times of Trouble

Week 7: **Reading Response #2 due.**

Of Mice and Men, John Steinbeck

Monday, March 2—Friendship and the Nation

Week 8: "Two Friends," Guy de Maupassant. "After 20 Years," O. Henry. "Guests of the Nation," Frank O'Connor. "September 1913," "Easter 1916," "No Second Troy," W.B. Yeats.

Monday, March 9—Modern Friendship

Week 9: "Two Gallants," "After the Race," "Ivy Day in the Committee Room," "A Painful Case," "Grace," "The Dead," James Joyce. Begin reading *Nights at the Circus*.

Monday, March 16— Friendship, Sexuality, and Gender

Week 10: **Research essay proposal and preliminary bibliography due.**

Nights at the Circus, Angela Carter

Monday, March 23—Queer/Romantic/Platonic Friendships

Week 11: “Miss Furr and Miss Skeene,” Gertrude Stein. “First Conjugation,” Julia O’Faolain.

Excerpts from Woolf’s *Jacob’s Room* and Wilde’s *Picture of Dorian Gray*. Excerpt from Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*.

Monday, March 30—Doomed and Difficult Friendships

Week 12: *Never Let Me Go*, Kazuo Ishiguro

Monday, April 6: **Research Essay assignment due.**

Week 13. Course Wrap-up.

Important note: From time to time, for additional learning opportunities and enrichment, **I introduce other materials during class meetings** which you don’t need to read ahead of class, and which therefore are not listed in the reading schedule, but which you will be expected to remember and be able to analyze. I will post powerpoint slides on Canvas when available, but I assure you the slides cannot replace class attendance.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of this class students will be able to:

- Identify and explain the philosophical, cultural and political significance of major works of fiction, verse, and drama by a variety of writers of different periods and places united around the thematic of friendship that reflect anti-capitalist, decolonial, feminist, environmental, and critical race concerns, among other social, political, and economic issues.
- Engage with varieties of genre and textual studies that take account of differential identities and ideations of intimacy, non-kinship bonds, and human and animal life, referencing contemporary and historical instances of speech and writing in contexts that are often culturally complex.
- Identify and integrate into their own research appropriate research sources and methods, and critically evaluate the scholarly quality of research sources.
- Evaluate and participate in lines of argument and critique relating to cultural change and theories about literature as a field by cultural theorists and stakeholders of diverse origins.
- Recognize and appropriately utilize methods of English studies’ disciplinary modes of reading and criticism.
- Think beyond traditional nation- and period-defined fields of literary and cultural classification.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

In this course, you will read and analyze a range of writing in English thematically grouped around the topic and philosophy of friendship, but our discussions may range wherever matters of interest arise from the works. Our activities include close readings and analysis, brief presentations from the instructor and from students providing contextual and background information, library and media research, theoretical discussions, discussions of controversies and issues, and writing activities.

During seminar meetings, you should speak freely and listen carefully, and think about the material, adding your own ideas and connections where you can. I welcome a conversational style during class, with lots of interaction among all of us. If I am talking, feel free to intervene with questions and contributions. Your own curious and imaginative contributions are always welcome in class, as long as you are not talking over other people, failing to share class time fairly, or taking the class too far away from the day's assigned topics for an extended period. Barring that, please explore your venturesome public intellectual self!

LEARNING MATERIALS

Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot* (~\$15)

Ursula Le Guin, *A Wizard of Earthsea* (~\$13)

Virginia Woolf, *Flush* (~\$12)

John Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men* (~\$15)

Angela Carter, *Nights at the Circus* (~\$15)

Kazuo Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go* (~\$12)

Other course materials will be supplied at no charge on Canvas or via URL links online.

Cost estimates are gathered from publishers' websites when available, or from online booksellers; you may be able to pay less online or by buying a used copy. If necessary, you can use a different edition. Not all books have a scholarly critical edition in print, but when you can, please try to select one.

ASSESSMENTS OF LEARNING

Requirements consist of class attendance and participation, two reading responses, a solo presentation, and an analytical research essay .

15% Classroom discussion, attendance and participation, evaluated holistically. An attendance sheet will be circulated at the beginning of each class for students to sign-in.

20% Two reading responses (10% each) of around 1000 words, responding to, explicating or historicizing one of the primary texts assigned in the course.

15% One oral presentation and prepared discussion questions on a work, author, theme, or theory of interest to the course. See assignment prompt for requirements and rubric.

50% Research/critical essay. This at-home essay of 2000-3000 words will include a library research component (with professional-level secondary sources) and an analysis component (close reading and interpretation). You will prepare and submit a brief prospectus and preliminary bibliography for partial grade credit before drafting the paper. See assignment prompt for requirements and rubric.

A general writing rubric and assignment prompts will be supplied on Canvas. Your written work for this course should take up a critical question or issue of concern to the course (in some cases, specific topics may be assigned), and offer a focused, well-reasoned discussion with reference to primary course-assigned texts, in MLA or Chicago citation style. You may also choose to include real-world examples from high-quality journalistic or historical sources around an issue of concern to the course, or some other form of case study.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

The following statement is composed by and mandated to appear in the syllabus by the UBC Academic Senate in support of **Senate Policy V-130**.

UBC provides resources to support student learning and to maintain healthy lifestyles but recognizes that sometimes crises arise and so there are additional resources to access including those for survivors of sexual violence. UBC values respect for the person and ideas of all members of the academic community. Harassment and discrimination are not tolerated nor is suppression of academic freedom. UBC provides appropriate accommodation for students with disabilities and for religious observances. UBC values academic honesty and students are expected to acknowledge the ideas generated by others and to uphold the highest academic standards in all of their actions.

Details of the policies and how to access support are available on [the UBC Senate website](#).

OTHER COURSE POLICIES

Our classroom space is intended to be warmly welcoming, enriching, and respectful in all its interactions. I request that you kindly self-monitor your own contributions for civility, including off-topic phone or computer use. Tuning out during class affects other people's experience and takes away from your own impact and learning.

The following policy is adapted from resources, suggestions, and ideas originated by Prof. Koritha Mitchell, @ProfKori: This classroom will be free of hate speech regarding sexual orientation, gender expression, race, ethnicity, national origin, and socio-economic status or background. Students may suggest additions to this list which the class will discuss whether to adopt. This policy means that words that are slurs such as the N-word or F-word won't be used in this class by any person, even when it appears in our texts and we are quoting the passage. Instead we will substitute the name of the first letter of the word. Dr. Mitchell points out that we can be responsibly and deeply engaged with texts and materials which contain these slurs without "giving them life with our breath" in our learning space.

Readings, discussions, and class materials may reference mature themes, violence, sexual matters, or conflictual ideas (this is a "content warning"). If you feel you do not wish to read one of the assigned

texts because it may emotionally distress you, please see me well in advance of the assigned reading's due date to request a substitute reading assignment; if we cannot agree on an appropriate substitution, you may be obliged to follow the original schedule of readings to complete the course.

Please be advised that study at university-level is more than knowing a collection of facts, and class attendance and participation are crucial to developing your academic skills at this level. We will follow the Department of English **attendance policy**, which you may read at:

<http://english.ubc.ca/resources/resources-for-students/#attendance>. Please know that “religious observance may preclude attending classes or examinations at certain times. In accordance with the UBC Policy on Religious Holidays, students who wish to be accommodated for religious reasons must notify their instructors in writing at least two weeks in advance” (UBC Policy on Academic Concession).

The same webpage (“Resources for Students”) also details the English department’s agreed-upon marking standards for your reference.

The course adheres to the university’s strict rule against plagiarism. If you represent the words, productions or ideas of anyone else as your own, you become subject to the disciplinary processes of the university concerning plagiarism, and may face a disciplinary process. If you have any questions about what counts as plagiarism, please ask me before you submit the assignment.

Late assignments will be penalized 5% per day of lateness, and no papers will be accepted more than a week late unless they are accompanied by a memo from Arts Advising or a medical excuse. I do not accept computer breakdowns or accidental file deletions as excusing emergencies—you should frequently back up your work to a cloud account or flash drive, so that you can upload it to the assignment page on time from any connected device.

Students may record in class for personal study purposes only, and may not share any portion of their recordings or lecture notes with any other person not currently enrolled in the course nor upload them to any online platform.

LEARNING ANALYTICS

This course will be using the following learning technologies: Canvas. This tool captures data about your activity and provides information that can be used to improve the quality of teaching and learning. In this course, I plan to use analytics data to:

- View overall class progress
- Track your progress in order to provide you with personalized feedback
- Review statistics on course content being accessed to support improvements in the course
- Track participation in discussion forums
- Assess your participation in the course

LEARNING AND OTHER SUPPORT RESOURCES

There is a student Writing Centre with coaching available in the Chapman Learning Commons in Barber: please see <http://learningcommons.ubc.ca/tutoring-studying/writing/> for more information. Anyone with a documented disability is gently encouraged to contact the Access and Diversity Office

in Brock Hall, 1203- 1874 East Mall (tel. 604.822.5844) for accommodations and support services. Other helpful programs are the academic services described at <http://students.ubc.ca/success>, and UBC Counselling Services tel. 604.822.3811 or, after hours, for anyone in distress, the Vancouver Crisis Line, tel. 800.784.2433. I am a resource person with UBC's Positive Space Campaign. As its website announces, "the Positive Space Campaign is an initiative intended to help make UBC more receptive to and welcoming of its lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans* (transgender, transsexual, trans-identified), two-spirit, queer, questioning, intersex and asexual (LGBT*TQIA+) communities, individuals and issues of sexual and gender diversity on campus." If you would like more information about this campaign, or to be put in touch with campus resources, please feel free to talk to me, or to contact the Office of Equity and Inclusion in Brock Hall, tel. 604-822-6353.

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