

## **Are We Friends? A Look at Friendship Through Philosophy and Literature** **First-Year Seminar: One Credit**

ARTSCI 1138.xx  
Day TBA  
Time and Place TBA

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Department of Greek and Latin  
Office Hours Fridays 9:00-11:00 am  
272 University Hall

**Course Description:** Friendship seems to be around us, especially as freshmen at university. It seems as natural as the air we breathe and as effortless as diving into a lake. But is it? In this seminar we will explore the topic of friendship. Questions we will be dealing with are: What is friendship? Do we talk about friendship today? Is friendship a problem? Is it important to us? Is there a difference between the way men and women understand and build friendship? Is friendship always the same through the ages and across societies? Do people still believe in friendship, a special relationship imposing duties and obligations, or are they interested in friendly relations with low interest and investments?

We will approach our topic from the perspective of literature and philosophy. That is to say, our material will come from philosophy as well as fiction and poetry.

You will also have an oral group report on the representation of friendship in popular culture.

**Course requirements:** You are expected to attend each class, have all the assigned materials done, and participate in class discussions. At the start of each class you should have written down at least three questions on the readings. These questions will form the basis for our discussions. I will evaluate your participation by how actively you provide comments and ask questions.

Each week you will be required to keep a critical journal, writing at least a page of 250 words. In this journal you will be expected to reflect on the reading of the week, past discussions, and/or your life. This is not an exercise in autobiography, however, as you will be expected to tie your personal thoughts on friendship (actual or ideal) to our class work. You will submit the journals in printed form in the final class. I will expect clear writing that thinks critically through the issues of the seminar.

In the eighth week you present your oral reports. For this report you will have divide into group of four and chose either a couple of episodes from a television program or a movie and present your findings for 15 minutes to the class along with clips from your program. Each group will demonstrate how the television episode or film develops the theme of friendship. You will be evaluated (as a group) on the clarity of your presentation and your ability to connect it to our readings and discussions.

**Grading:** Satisfactory/ Unsatisfactory

Class participation: 30%

Oral presentation: 20%

Critical Journals: 50%

**Course Objectives:**

- To get a better understanding of the issues involved in the creation and maintenance of friendship as a social institution
- To develop skills in oral presentation
- To enhance critical skills in writing

**Academic Misconduct**

**It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct <http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/>.**

**Students with Disabilities**

**Students with disabilities (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions) that have been certified by the Office of Student Life Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office of Student Life Disability Services is located in 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue; telephone 614- 292-3307, [slds@osu.edu](mailto:slds@osu.edu); [slds.osu.edu](http://slds.osu.edu).**

**Biographical Statement**

As a professor in the Department of Greek and Latin, I have been working at Ohio State for about 20 years. While I regularly teach classes in modern Greek culture and literature, I also teach courses in nationalism, multiculturalism, identity, and world literature. My Honors Athens course, a popular class in the Honors Program, culminates with a ten-day trip to Greece during spring break. I have published books on Greek literature and culture, comparative literature and nationalism, and one on the importance of literature and art in our lives. This year I finished a manuscript on friendship.

## Weekly Readings:

1. Introduction  
“Friendship as Commodity”  
<http://arcade.stanford.edu/friendship-commodity>
2. What is Friendship?  
Montaigne “Of Friendship”
3. Philosophy of Friendship I: Aristotle
4. Philosophy of Friendship II: Plato
5. How close is close? *Moby Dick* and “Friends”  
<http://arcade.stanford.edu/ishmael-joeys-and-ross-whither-american-manhood>
6. A world with no friends  
Willa Cather’s “Paul’s Case”
7. Is friendship always the same?  
Readings from the *Iliad* and the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, *The Bible*
8. Children’s Friendship  
Bring to class and read from your favorite children’s stories on friendship.
9. Friendship across the ages  
Updike “Dear Alexandros”
10. Oral Reports.
11. Oral Reports
12. Friendship and sexuality  
Proulx “Brokeman Mountain”
13. Friendship and poetry  
No Class
14. Do we know our friends?  
Carver “Cathedral”  
Submission of Journals.

Required texts: TBA