"To learn to write," said Robert Frost, "is to learn to have ideas." This course will explore the act of writing as a way of thinking, using a particular theme -- the pleasures and difficulties in the experience of love --- to develop your writing voice and give shape to thought. A variety of readings in different genres -- scholarly writing, philosophy, fiction, drama, memoir, newspaper articles, and children’s literature -- will serve as the springboard to practice writing the academic essay with clarity. Our aims in this course are to acquire strategies for generating good ideas, as that term is defined in a university setting; learn how to shape raw ideas into a coherent essay with a strong academic thesis; and develop a good ear for editing our own and others’ writing. Our method involves reading for ideas, discussion, in-class writing, peer workshops, multiple drafting, and individual conferences.

The theme of the course is various forms of love and the trouble they can sometimes lead to. All you need is love, love makes the world go around, and love is a battlefield, so the songs tell us. What kinds of love are essential to our well-being, and why does love so often go wrong? Together we will examine friendship, family love, romance and marital love. These varieties of love are very personal and yet also have social rules of their own, sometimes unspoken. Philosophy often tells us what is ideal, while social science attempts to describe objectively, but literature may portray the ways in which experience can break all the rules. We will use a selection of literary and non-fiction texts on the subject of love in its many forms to see what they contribute to an understanding of our most important relationships. Discussing what we think about these representations of love will serve as the springboard for developing students’ writing on the subject. Students will compose descriptive and critical essays as well as a literary/critical paper with a research component.

TEXTS TO BUY (on sale at the NYU Bookstore):

Barthes, Roland, A Lover’s Discourse (Hill and Wang)
Bechdel, Alison, Fun Home (Houghton/Mifflin)
De Troyes, Chretien, Lancelot, trans. B. Raffel (Yale)
Kincaid, Jamaica, My Brother (Farrar, Strauss, Giroux)
LaBute, Neil, The Shape of Things (Faber)
Mishima, Yukio, Patriotism (New Directions)
Sexton, Anne, Love Poems (Houghton/Mifflin)
Smiley, Jane, The Age of Grief (Ivy/Ballantine)
Note that other texts are required, but will be provided for you in hard copy or linked on Blackboard in advance of assignments. (A separate Reading List in chronological order is provided.)

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

Writing Seminar I is based on analysis of readings and on clusters of scheduled peer workshops. It is imperative that you come prepared to discuss assigned texts. You need to prepare for writing groups by bringing to class six copies of a rough draft of each essay on the designated workshop dates (you may also email these to your fellow students – instructions below). There is a mandatory research component to the last (longer) essay, and we will have a session with a librarian at Bobst Library to prepare for it.

**WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:**

- **Essay #1:** The first essay is a short ungraded exercise in which you analyze a text of your own choosing on the course topic. The purpose of this assignment is to encourage you to begin thinking productively about the subject and to try out your writing on a college level.

- **Essays #2 & 3:** There will be two additional formal essays and a final, longer critical paper with a research component (Essay #4). Each of these will be peer reviewed while in process (see separate sheet) before you hand in the draft for grading.

- Beginning with the first formal essay (#2), you will have a chance to revise your work before it is graded. In addition, you will be able to revise as many times as you like (or not) after the first grade in order to raise your grade. Note, however, that improvement must be substantive, not merely mechanical, in order for the grade to be changed. If you are unhappy with your grades, would like an explanation for my comments, or are not sure how to revise, please discuss this with me!

- Beginning with Essay #2, our goal is to write academic essays with a strong thesis, clear structure, and graceful style. Rule: each essay must a) be on the topic of that section, and b) use at least two of the texts in that group of readings, synthesizing them into a coherent, fully developed and gracefully written analysis. Topics will be suggested for the first two essays, but the goal is for you to generate your own thesis in the last essay.

**ATTENDANCE:** Excellent attendance is required. Your grade will be lowered for excessive absence (more than 3 classes missed). My policy is that written evidence of a medical visit to a doctor or health facility will erase an absence. If you need to be excused for a religious holiday or family emergency, please let me know in advance. Be sure to get in touch with me if you are having a problem that affects your attendance!
Policy on lateness: Lateness is disruptive to the class. If you are not present when attendance is taken, it’s your responsibility to tell me directly after class that you are present -- otherwise you will be marked absent! Also, please do not leave the room while class is in session unless it’s really necessary, as that is distracting.

CONFERENCES: There will be ample time for students to meet with me individually on a voluntary basis, as often as you like, to discuss ideas, style, revisions, grades, general problems or questions, and so on. Please remember to bring the essay(s) you wish to discuss with me! You may also use email as frequently as you wish to try out an idea or ask a question about your writing.

If you would like further help, the Gallatin Writing Center will open early in the semester. See www.nyu.edu/gallatin/writingschedule for instructions about making an appointment.

GRADES: Each essay (except for the first ungraded paper) will be graded beginning with the second draft, with an eye to substance of ideas, style, and organization. The course grade is based foremost on the grades of your essays, after all drafts have been handed in, and secondarily on participation in the class, which includes contributions to discussion, editorial skill and effort, and attendance.

Your editorial responses to others’ writing will be returned to you, as your efforts make up part of your participation grade. Check minus on a response indicates that you could put more effort into editing; check indicates a satisfactory response; check plus indicates a very good response. You will receive your “edits” so you can monitor your level of editing and raise it if necessary.

Your grade will be lowered for late or missing papers. Any plagiarism will result in an F for that paper. For information on Gallatin’s policy on plagiarism, see:http://www.gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/policy/integrity.html

The final grade will consist as follows:
Essays #2 and #3, the FINAL grade on each: 20% each
Essay #4, the final grade: 40%
Participation: 20%

OFFICE HOURS: Mon. and Wed. 9-9:30, 715 Broadway, Rm. 416.
E-MAIL: sw34@nyu.edu; please identify your course in the subject line of your email. Please do use email for all questions, confusions and problems, including personal issues that affect your attendance or other matters. My policy is to acknowledge ALL emails from students within 24 hours, so that you will know I have received your email. If you don’t hear back from me, check the address to make sure you sent it correctly.
First Year Writing Seminar: Love and Trouble

SYLLABUS

NOTE: Dates are provisional and subject to change to allow for flexibility. Please check your email regularly for updates on assignments.

WEEK 1
September 7
Introduction to the course
Assignment: Descriptions of love (see handout for details, also posted on BB)

WEEK 2
September 12
Share and discuss descriptions of love

September 14
*Essay #1 DUE: analysis of descriptions
Begin Friendship readings:
Reading due: Corinthians (handout), The Giving Tree and Aristotle
(both on BB)

WEEK 3
September 19
Reading due: New York Times articles on Friendship (BB)
Discuss rhetorical strategies for writing the academic essay

September 21
Writing due: first paragraphs for essay on Friendship

WEEK 4
September 26
Writing Workshop 2A (Essay #2, first day): rough draft of Essay #2 due with copies for your writing group and one for me.

September 28
Writing Workshop 2B (Essay #2, second day)
WEEK 5  
October 3  
Begin Family Love readings:  
Reading due: “Angel Over the Left Shoulder” (BB)

October 5  
Reading due: Kincaid

Essay #2, Draft #2 DUE

WEEK 6  
October 10  
No classes on Columbus Day

October 12  
Reading due: Bechdel

WEEK 7  
October 17  
Reading due: Bechdel, cont.

October 19  
Reading due: Savage (BB)

WEEK 8  
October 24  
Writing Workshop 3A (Essay #3, first day): rough draft of essay due with copies for your writing group and one for me.

October 26  
Writing Workshop 3B (Essay #3, second day)

WEEK 9  
October 31  
Begin Romantic Love and Marriage readings:  
Reading due: selections from Lancelot(TBA)

November 2  
Reading due: Barthes, Lover’s Discourse

Essay #3, Draft #2 DUE

WEEK 10  
November 7  
Reading due: “The Little Mermaid, “How to Love Like a Real Woman,” (both on BB), Patriotism

November 9  
Reading due: Sexton’s Love Poems
WEEK 11
November 14  **Reading due:** Illouz, “Reason within Passion: Love in Women’s Magazines” (BB)

**Assignment due:** Read/bring in an article from a popular men’s or women’s magazine on love

November 16  **Reading due:** LaBute, *The Shape of Things*

WEEK 12
November 21  **LIBRARY CLASS:** This will be a scheduled tutorial class with a Bobst librarian; room number TBA

November 23  Optional conferences will be held instead of class this day before Thanksgiving to accommodate those who will be traveling.

WEEK 13
November 28  **Reading due:** Smiley, “The Age of Grief” (note that the assigned reading is a novella within the collection of stories which have the same name)

November 30  **Reading due:** Cherlin, Ch. 9 of *The Marriage-Go-Round* (BB)

WEEK 14
December 5  **Writing Workshop 4A (Essay #4, first day):** rough draft of essay due with copies for your writing group and one for me. Please email your essay to your group no later than the day before our workshop so we can maximize workshop time in class.

December 7  **Writing Workshop 4B (Essay #4, second day)**

WEEK 15
December 12  **Writing Workshop 4C (Essay #4, third day if necessary), OR revised draft of earlier essay**

December 14  Conferences, workshops, catch-up

**Essay #4, Draft #2 DUE**