"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):

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)
O’Neill, Eugene, Long Day’s Journey into Night (Yale)
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. (See separate Reading List in chronological order.)
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 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 short ungraded and informal. You will discuss an essential question posed about the nature of love. 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 and 4 (graded): There will be two formal essays (4-7 pp.) and a final, longer (7-10 pp.) 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 second draft for grading.

- Beginning with the first formal essay (#2), you will not only have a chance to revise your work before it is graded, you will also be able to revise as many times as you like (or not) after the first grade in order to raise your grade. This is entirely optional. 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, clarity and elegance of 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 lively 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” back 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 grades: 20% each = 40%
Essay #4, the final grade: 40%
Participation (including class contributions and editing): 20%

OFFICE HOURS: Tues and Thurs. 9-9:30, 715 Broadway, Rm. 416.
E-MAIL: sw34@nyu.edu; 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 performance. 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!
Prof. S. Weisser
Gallatin K10.0345

First Year Writing Seminar: Love and Trouble

SCHEDULE

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

WEEK 1
September 4
Introduction to the course
Assignment: Descriptions of love (see handout for details, also posted on BB)

September 6
Share and discuss Descriptions of Love

WEEK 2
September 11
**Reading due: Ideal Love**: Corinthians (handout), The Giving Tree
Discuss rhetorical strategies for writing the academic essay
Question for Essay #1

September 13
Begin Friendship readings: Aristotle (both on BB); Victorian article (handout or BB)

WEEK 3
September 18
*ESSAY #1 DUE: See handout
**Reading due:** New York Times articles on Friendship; Deresiewicz, “Faux Love”

September 20
Writing due: first paragraphs for essay on Friendship, Essay #2

WEEK 4
September 25
*ESSAY#2 DUE
Writing Workshop 2A (Essay #2, first day): first draft of Essay #2 due with copies for your writing group and one for me.

September 27
Writing Workshop 2B (Essay #2, second day)
WEEK 5
October 2
Begin **Family Love readings:**
**Reading due:** O’Neill and Larkin

October 4
**Reading due:** Kincaid
**Essay #2, Draft #2 DUE**

WEEK 6
October 9
**Reading due:** Bechdel

October 11
**Reading due:** Bechdel, cont.; Savage

WEEK 7
October 16
**NO CLASS**

October 18
**ESSAY #3 DUE**
**Writing Workshop 3A (Essay #3, first day):** first draft of essay due with copies for your writing group and one for me.

WEEK 8
October 23
**Writing Workshop 3B (Essay #3, second day)**

October 25
Begin **Romantic Love and Marriage readings:**
**Reading due:** Lancelot

WEEK 9
October 30
**Essay #3, Draft #2 DUE**
**Reading due:** Nineteenth Century articles on love, *Cosmo* article, “How to Love”

**November 1**
Illouz, “Reason within Passion: Love in Women’s Magazines”
**Assignment due:** Read/bring in an article from a popular men’s or women’s magazine on love

WEEK 10
November 6
**Reading due:** Mishima, *Patriotism*
November 8  **Reading due:** Smiley, “The Age of Grief” (note that the assigned reading is a novella within the collection of stories whose book title is *The Age of Grief*)

**WEEK 11**  
November 13  **Reading due:** LaBute, *The Shape of Things*

November 15  **LIBRARY CLASS:** This will be a scheduled tutorial class with a Bobst librarian; room number TBA

**WEEK 12**  
November 20  **Reading due:** Sexton’s *Love Poems*; excerpt from *Crave*; THANKSGIVING!

**WEEK 13**  
November 27  *ESSAY # 4 DUE*  
Writing Workshop 4A (Essay #4, first day)

November 29  Writing Workshop 4B (Essay #4, second day)

**WEEK 14**  
December 4  Writing Workshop 4C (Essay #4, third day if necessary), OR revised draft of earlier essay

December 6  Conferences; you may submit Essay #4, Draft #2 early for feedback

**WEEK 15**  
December 11 & 13  Conferences, catch-up  
**Essay #4, Draft #2 DUE**

**NOTE:** Any revised drafts of Essays #2 or 3 will be due on December 14th in my mailbox.
First Year Writing Seminar: Love and Trouble

READING LIST

NOTE: Asterisk indicates book on sale at NYU Bookstore; other texts are handouts or online at Blackboard (BB), as indicated.

Ideal Love

Corinthians 13:4 – (Handout)
Shel Silverstein, The Giving Tree –(BB)

Friendship:

Aristotle on Friendship (from Nichomachean Ethics) –(BB)
“Men for Friendship and Women for Love,” 1866
“Faux Friendship,” William Deresiewicz – (BB)
NY Times articles on Friendship – (BB)

Family:

*Eugene O’Neill, Long Day’s Journey into Night
Philip Larkin, “This Be the Verse” (Handout)
*Jamaica Kincaid, My Brother
*Alison Bechdel, Fun Home
Dan Savage, “Role Reversal”- (Handout)

Romantic Love and Marriage:

*Chretien de Troyes, Lancelot, trans. B. Raffel (Yale)
“The Strength of a Woman’s Love” and other nineteenth century articles (BB)
B. Bross & J. Gilbey, “How to Love like a Real Woman,” Cosmopolitan Magazine (BB)
Eva Illouz, “Reason within Passion: Love in Women’s Magazines” (BB)
*Yukio Mishima, Patriotism.
*Jane Smiley, “The Age of Grief” (novella), in The Age of Grief (title of book)
*Neil LaBute, The Shape of Things
Anne Sexton, Love Poems (Handout); excerpt from Sarah Kane, Crave