Advanced Writing: Writing about Love

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Rather than focus on one genre in their reading and writing, student writing in this course will be inspired by a theme: the nature and meanings of romantic love as both private feeling and social ideology. Love has assumed an enormously important place in Western culture in the last two centuries, shaping expectations of what the good life should be, as well as evoking anxiety about how to achieve the fulfillment of that dream. Students may try varied forms of writing about romance in our modern world, such as writing about their own emotions and experiences, literary analysis, cultural observation, and opinion. Accordingly, our texts will likewise be diverse, including fiction and poetry, letters and memoir; the philosophy of love; the sociology of gender and romance; and cultural theory about dating. Classes will be devoted to sharing in-class writing, analyzing the assigned texts to elicit ideas for essays, intensive workshopping of drafts in student groups, and personal conferences with the instructor.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. In their creative work, students will demonstrate their understanding of and adherence to essential principles of essay and story development and revision.

2. In classroom discussions and peer reviews, students will produce useful, relevant, and informed critiques of fellow students’ work.
3. Students will demonstrate understanding about the cultural and literary forms of romance from varied perspectives.

**REQUIRED TEXTS TO BUY:**

Alain Badiou, *In Praise of Love* (trans. Peter Bush)

Jeanette Winterson, *Written on the Body*

**ADDITIONAL TEXTS** (These are either handouts or files posted on NYU Classes; always bring printed copy to class):

Selection from Roland Barthes, *A Lover’s Discourse*

Excerpt from Sarah Kane, *Crave* (handout)

Excerpts from Diaries and Letters, Part II of *Women and Romance*, ed. Susan Weisser, pp. 67-109

Susan Weisser, “Is Female to Romance as Male is to Porn?”, Ch. 9, *The Glass Slipper*

Merri Lisa Johnson, “F--- You and Your Untouchable Face,” from *Jane sexes it up: True confessions of feminist desire*, Ch. 1, pp. 13-52


Lorrie Moore, “How”

Selected Love Poetry

**REQUIRED ASSIGNMENTS:**

Students will produce:

a) free-writes, ie. in-class, ungraded writing; you will be writing in class every week. In-class freewriting about the reading or other subject will be shared but not graded. The purpose of freewriting is to stretch your writing muscles, so to speak. You may want to use some or all of your freewrite in your drafts.

b) at least two drafts of four graded essays, minimum of five pages each (no maximum)

During class meetings, we will alternate free-writing; analysis of the reading and discussion of issues; critique and revision of essays in a group setting (writing workshops); and individual conferences. All writing will be geared to the topics of the reading and discussion for that week.
Just as the texts will vary in genres, e.g. fiction, poetry, memoir and social analysis, you will be expected to write across genres as well. However, you will have a great deal of choice as to the type of writing you would like to do. As long as you produce at least ONE work of creative writing (memoir or fiction) and ONE academic essay in response to any of the texts we read, you may decide for yourself what form the other essays will take: these may be short fiction; creative non-fiction, including memoir; literary analysis; cultural analysis; argument/opinion, with or without secondary sources. *All writing must be in essay form.*

You will not be given prompts, but I will be glad to work with you on a topic, if you wish.

The total number required is four substantive pieces of graded writing, of at least five pages each (no maximum).

Individual conferences with the instructor are voluntary and take place during group workshops. After the first week, you may sign up for as many conferences as you wish.

**ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS:**

Good attendance is necessary to the workshop process! The instructor reserves the right to count excessive absence (more than two meetings absent *without medical documentation*), late papers, and general inattention in evaluating students for grades. Please use the e-mail address above to communicate about problems, questions, absences, the meaning of life, etc.

Note that missing a class does not excuse you from the due date of a writing assignment; please email your paper to me and to your fellow students in the event of your absence. Nor does absence excuse you from your editorial duties – you must obtain your peer group’s essays and produce commentary on them as usual. You may bring hard copy of your commentary to the next class if that is appropriate, or email the commentary.

If you must be late, email before class if possible so I know you are coming. If you come in late, do remind me to erase your absent mark.

Please avoid leaving the classroom for our 75 minute class, unless it is really necessary.

**MEANS OF EVALUATION:**

The first drafts of essays are not graded, and there is ample opportunity to revise all essays for higher grades until the very end of the semester. There are no exams in this course; your understanding of the reading is expected to emerge in class discussions and/or in written critical analysis. For that reason, class participation in discussion is important.

The final grade is the average of grades on essays, with consideration of class participation, which includes both class discussion of readings and editorial work on the writing of others.
Four Graded Essays = 80%

Participation in Class = 20% (Editorial work and class discussion are 10% each)

If the average of the four essays is on the border between two grades, participation decides it up or down.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:**

As a Gallatin student you belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the University. Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating. Please consult the Gallatin Bulletin or Gallatin website (http://gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/integrity.html).

**ELECTRONIC DEVICES:**

You are very welcome to use your computer or tablet for note-taking and freewrites in the classroom. Obviously no electronic devices should be used for socializing during class hours, however!

**TECHNICAL MATTERS:**

1. All essays must be typed, double-spaced, and stapled. Also, number all pages for easy reference during editorial readings.

First drafts must be at least four pages minimum, and there is no maximum. Please label all essays by number as well as number the drafts at the top of the first page: it should be clear which assignment and which draft it is! Be sure to proofread for errors, even on first drafts!

2. **Workshops**

**First (Workshop) draft:** The first draft is collected but normally not read by the instructor except in conference. It is assumed that the draft is a work in process, and you are to use your peers for initial feedback. When a first draft is due, you will bring a designated number of copies for your workshop group to class, in addition to one for the instructor. Please don’t leave copying...
until the last minute! You may also email your draft to your group in time for them to read it before class if you wish. Remember to give me the hard copy of your workshop draft on the day it is due.

**Second draft:** The second draft, *accompanied by first drafts with editorial comments by students*, is **due at the next class after the workshops end**.

This draft is the first to be graded. You may choose to accept this grade, or you may try to raise it by redrafting (or even entirely rewriting) the essay, which will be Draft #3, etc. All drafts after Draft #2 are voluntary.

**Third and Subsequent drafts:** Only first and second drafts are mandatory. If you choose to do more redrafting, do NOT resubmit peer comments, but **DO clip on the previous draft with my comments** attached to the new draft. It’s helpful if you highlight or otherwise indicate where improvements were made on the paper. Grades are raised only when there is substantive improvement to the last draft (beyond technical corrections).

**Third and subsequent drafts, should you choose to do them, have no due date;** you may hand them in (hard copy) any time until the very end of class.

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### 3. Process Notes

**ALL DRAFTS AFTER THE FIRST MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY A PROCESS NOTE (brief letter to the instructor)** before the essay, with any or all of the following information: how this assignment went for you, how satisfied you are with your progress on it, what you see as the areas you’d like more work on, what questions or doubts you have about it...or anything else you’d like to communicate. The Process Notes must also explain how your essay is related to the readings for that topic. This Process Note is helpful for both of us: I will not grade any draft that does not have one attached.

All **final** revisions will be due at the end of the semester.

Please do not email papers for me to print without permission, as the printing of your papers is too much of a burden on me and on Gallatin.
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CLASS SCHEDULE

This schedule is provisional and subject to change according to class need. Books are marked with an asterisk.

**Week 1:**
Jan 26  Introduction to the course
Jan 28  *Topic I: The Nature of Love*

**Reading Due:** Diaries and Letters in *Women and Romance* (link in NYU Classes; see instructions as to selections there)

**Week 2:**
Feb 2, 4  *Writing Due:* Essay #1, Workshops/Conferences begin

**Week 3:**
Essay #1, Workshops/Conferences continue; NOTE: I will be out of town on Feb. 11

**Week 4:**
Feb. 9, 11  NOTE: No class on Presidents’ Day; *Topic II: Obsession*

**Reading Due:** Kane, *Crave* (handout),

**Week 5:**
Feb. 16, 18  Lorrie Moore, “How to Be an Other Woman”

**Week 6:**
Feb. 23, 25  Barthes, *A Lover’s Discourse*

**Week 7:**
Mar 2, 4  *Writing Due:* Essay #2, Workshops/Conferences

**Week 8:**
Mar 9, 11  SPRING BREAK!!
Mar 16, 18

**Week 9:**  **Topic III: Relationships and Gender**
Mar 23, 25  **Reading Due:** Weisser, “Is Female to Romance as Male is to Porn?”, Johnson, “F—You”;

**Week 10:**  **Reading Due:**
Mar 30, Apr 1  Moore, “How”; Winterson, *Written on the Body* *

**Week 11:**  
Apr 6, 8  Coontz, “Fragility of Marriage”

**Week 12:**  **Writing Due:** Essay #3, Workshops/Conferences
Apr 13, 15

**Week 13:**  **Topic IV: The Poetic Expression of Love**
Apr 20, 22  **Reading Due:** Selected Poems (see file on NYU Classes)

**Week 14:**  **Writing Due:** Essay #4, Workshops/Conferences
Apr 27, 29

**Week 15:**  
May 4, 7  Workshops and Conferences on revisions

**Week 16:**  
May 11  Catch-up; *All final drafts are due!*