

ILS 400: Capstone Seminar: Friendship and Community

University of Wisconsin – Madison, Spring 2022

Credits: Three (3)

Instructional mode: In-person

Classroom: 103 Meiklejohn House

Course attributes: Advanced, L&S

Time and place: Th 4:30-7:00

INSTRUCTOR:

Grant A. Nelsestuen
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Office: Meiklejohn House 202
Office Hours: W 12-2 & by appointment

COURSE CREDIT INFORMATION:

This class is 3 credits. It meets for one 150-minute class period each week over the semester and expects that students will work on course learning activities (i.e. reading, watching, writing) for about six hours out of classroom for every class period.

REGULAR AND SUBSTANTIVE INTERACTION:

This course provides regular and substantive interaction between the student and instructor through direct instruction, feedback on student work, and facilitating discussion of course content once a week.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Capstone experience seminar for Integrated Liberal Studies (ILS) students.

What is “friendship”? And how does it relate to the broader community (or communities) in which we live, work, and play?

Utterly familiar in its experience and simple to understand on an intuitive level, “friendship” turns out to be a surprisingly multifaceted, complex, and dynamic affair. At some level, many of us seem to casually think of “friendship” as a static concept: a personal relationship and experience that is shared across time and space, and equally recognizable and accessible to all human beings regardless of personal identity and circumstance. Yet, many of us also seem to be aware that there are different types of “friends” and differing levels or degrees of “friendship”; that historical, social, cultural, and other contexts might affect the configuration of one individual’s “friendships” when compared to those of another; and even that our understanding and practice of “friendship” can change over the course of our own lives.

This seminar seeks to interrogate the concept, practice, and experience of “friendship”—one of the “great themes of human inquiry and expression” (per the ILS mission)—through an integrated approach to the liberal arts. It does so by bringing a wide (perhaps even disparate!) array of material from the humanities and the social and natural sciences to bear on our investigation. Some of this material we might classify as “literary” or “philosophical”; other items are perhaps “scholarly” or “scientific” or “artistic”; and still other items might fall under other realms of human expression (e.g. “dramatic,” “pop cultural,” etc.). This seminar seeks to empower students to recognize and synthesize diverse types of knowledge and disciplinary approaches to how people make sense of friendship—all the while formulating new questions about and approaches to our topic.

This course meets once per week on Thursdays from 4:30pm to 7:00pm. Each week, you will need to do some mixture of reading and (occasionally) watching course material in advance of the class. As part of this preparation, you will post a 250-word response to a question on the course’s Canvas discussion board by the Wednesday before at midnight. That response will give you a chance to formulate some initial thoughts about that week’s readings and help prepare you for in-person discussion of the material.

In class, we will then talk about that week's readings as well as their relationship to other course material and any other phenomena (e.g. personal, historical, anecdotal, etc.) we may find relevant to the discussion at hand. After class, you will have the chance to reflect on that day's discussion by responding to at least two posts on that week's discussion board. (Note: one of the responses may be to your own earlier post if you so choose; each response should be 50 to 100 words.)

Typical week rhythm: Wednesday by midnight Thursday, 4:30-7:00 Friday by midnight
Discussion post due Seminar Two responses due

On week 8, the same procedure will apply, though in place of the seminar we will be sharing a meal with Prof. Roosevelt Montás in connection with his book and immediately before his public talk. (Note: the pandemic has been unpredictable, so this particular class activity may be subject to change. Also, if you feel uncomfortable with attending a restaurant setting under present circumstances, please let me know and I am happy to arrange a replacement class assignment for you.)

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Montás, Roosevelt. (2021). *Rescuing Socrates: How the Great Books Changed My Life and Why They Matter for a New Generation*. Princeton University Press.
Coursepack (posted on Canvas)

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES:

1. Recognize and synthesize diverse types of knowledge and disciplinary approaches to how people make meaning
2. Formulate new questions about and integrate new approaches to how people make meaning.
3. Articulate and assess the value of a liberal arts education.
4. Formulate your own questions about and understanding of "friendship"

GRADE BREAKDOWN:

Preparation:	Discussion preparation posts	20% (1.5% each; 1/week; 15 total)
Discussion:	Attendance and participation	20% (1.5% each class day; see rubric)
Reflection:	Responses to posts	20% (.75% each; 2/week; 30 total)
Project:	See description below	20% (due: Thursday, May 12 at 7pm)
Integrative Essay:	"On Friendship" assignment	20% (due Thursday, May 12 at 7pm)

Grading Scale: 100-93, A; 92-87, AB; 87-81, B; 80-75, BC; 74-70, C; 69-60, D; 59 and below, F.

As should be clear, 60% of the course grade is tied to the preparation of, discussion of, and reflection on course material on a weekly basis. This is meant to encourage you to keep up with the course material—and to reward you for doing so!

The remaining 40% is split between two semester-long assignments: a "project" (see below) and an "integrative essay," which is tentatively entitled "On Friendship" (though you should feel free to change the title if you would like). Neither is "cumulative" per se—though you may find that engagement with much or even most of the material is helpful. Alternatively, you may also find that specific and sustained engagement with a select group of materials is particularly helpful for what you are seeking to do. The point here is that there is no one "right" way to approach either of these assignments; instead, each gives you the freedom to engage with the course material and its theme of "friendship and community" in ways that you find most useful and meaningful.

POLICIES:

Covid-19-related policies: Like all other courses on campus this Spring, we will be adhering to the Covid-19-related policies, as established by the University and Dane County Public Health. (For fuller information, see <https://teachlearn.provost.wisc.edu/spring-2022-instruction/> and <https://covidresponse.wisc.edu/faq/>.) Practically, what that means is that we will all be **wearing masks in the classroom** so long as the Chancellor's Mask Mandate remains in effect and unless an individual has received an exemption (due to a medical condition or disability) from wearing one by way of an accommodation from the McBurney Center.

Please note: I will serve as the lead for ensuring that we are all adhering to University policy in this respect. If you have not received a McBurney-approved exemption, are not wearing a mask, and refuse to wear one when asked, I will respectfully ask you to leave the building and your absence will be treated as "unexcused" (per University policy). Repeated failures to comply with University policy will result in being referred to the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards (per University policy).

If you have concerns over this policy and how it is being enforced in the classroom, I ask that you reach out directly to me, as your instructor. I will respond accordingly and in a way that respects the rights and privacy of all members of the class. **The important thing to keep in mind is that we are all in this together!**

The aforementioned websites also treat **absences** in the case of illness and/or the need to isolate or quarantine. If this ends up applying to you, I ask that you reach out to me as soon as possible and we will work together to make *reasonable* accommodations for you. To be clear: I will not be holding any such absences against you.

The modality for this class is **in-person**. What this means is that the class is intended to be held in-person and, short of exceptional circumstances or due to pedagogical reasons (or a change in University policy), the class will not be held on-line or remotely. For those students who need to miss class and contact me in advance with reasonable forewarning, I am happy to provide an audio recording of the class. I may also be willing to provide a Zoom stream into the class under the following conditions: 1.) the Zoom attendee recognizes that technical difficulties may arise and 2.) the Zoom attendee recognizes and accepts that the approved modality of this class (i.e. in-person) limits them to passive observation and precludes active participation. (Note: studies—as well as my own personal experience—have shown that a synchronous hybrid model results in an inadequate experience for both in-person and remote participants.) In any case, I am happy to meet with you independently in office hours or another time to facilitate any make-up work that you may need to do.

Make-ups: Under normal circumstances, make-up assignments are not allowed except in well-documented circumstances (university-sanctioned commitment/holiday or a major medical emergency). The present semester, however, is not a "normal" one by any means. If you become ill (or need to isolate or quarantine), I ask that you reach out to me as soon as possible in order to make alternate plans for how to proceed with the course. I will consider the anticipated extent of your absence and I will work with you to provide alternative ways to complete the course work *with reasonable accommodations*.

McBurney Resources: The University of Wisconsin-Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy (Faculty Document 1071) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared instructor and student responsibility. Students are expected to inform instructors of their need for instructional accommodations as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. I will work either directly with students or in coordination with the McBurney Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA.

Academic Misconduct and Plagiarism: By enrolling in this course, each student assumes the responsibilities of an active participant in UW-Madison's community of scholars in which everyone's academic work and behavior are held to the highest academic integrity standards. Academic misconduct compromises the integrity of the university. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and helping others commit these acts are examples of academic misconduct, which can result in disciplinary action. This includes but is not limited to failure on the

assignment/course, disciplinary probation, or suspension. Substantial or repeated cases of misconduct will be forwarded to the Office of Student Conduct & Community Standards for additional review.

Plagiarism means presenting the words or ideas of others without giving credit. You should know the principles of plagiarism and the correct rules for citing sources. If you are unsure about the proper ways to give credit to sources, ask your instructor or consult the Writing Center's website, "[Quoting and Paraphrasing Sources](#)."

I have extensive experience in reading undergraduate writing and will most likely be able to determine if a paper or other piece of writing or work is not your own. Please note also that submitted assignments will be reviewed by Turnitin as well. If *any part of an assignment* is found to be plagiarized, you will need to meet with me, after which you will receive a zero for that assignment and the final grade will be lowered by one letter grade in addition. A report will also be made to the Dean of Students.

Diversity and Inclusion: Diversity is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for UW-Madison. We value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich the university community. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity as inextricably linked goals.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison fulfills its public mission by creating a welcoming and inclusive community for people from every background – people who as students, faculty, and staff serve Wisconsin and the world.

Textbook and Computer Policy: Unless you clear it with me beforehand, you must have a copy of the text and bring it to class each day. Computers or other digital devices are allowed in class, but should only be used for the purposes of class. Failure to abide by this guideline will result in a meeting with me and/or being asked to leave the classroom.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE:

Week #: Date	Topic: Reading assignments
Week 1: Jan. 27	Introductions; Intuitions of friendship; Aphorisms on friendship; Anecdotes of “true friends”
Week 2: Feb. 3	What is Friendship? pt. 1: Plato, <i>Lysis</i> ; Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> 8; relevant selections from other works
Week 3: Feb. 10	Friendship and Politics: C. Schmitt, “The Concept of the Political”; P. King, “Friendship in Politics”; Homer, <i>Odysseus</i> 9
Week 4: Feb. 17	Between Friends: Alice Munro, “Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage”; <i>Thelma and Louise</i> (dir. R. Scott)
Week 5: Feb. 24	Friendship and Religion (Christianity): Selections from Augustine’s <i>Confessions</i> ; C.S. Lewis’s “Friendship” from <i>The Four Loves</i> ; D. Thompson, “Luther, Feminism, Friendship, and the Future”
Week 6: Mar. 3	Friendship and Feminism: Selections from J. Raymond’s <i>A Passion for Friends. Toward a Philosophy of Female/Affection</i> : pref. and Introduction; Ch. 2 (skim); Ch. 5; S. Schwarzenbach (2007), “Civic Friendship: A Critique of Recent Care Theory”
Week 7: Mar. 10	Psychoanalyzing Friends: Selections of Freud/Jung letters; Jung’s interview ; A Dangerous Method ; Project abstract due
Week 8: Mar. 24	Dinner with Prof. Roosevelt Montás, Author of <i>Rescuing Socrates</i>
Week 9: Mar. 31	The “Mysteries” of Friendship: Montaigne on friendship; Ralph Waldo Emerson, <i>Friendship; Self Reliance</i>
Week 10: Apr. 7	Friendship and Art: Nehamas, Chapter 3; Yasmina Reza’s <i>Art</i> (text here ; mp3 version of 2020 L.A. Theatre production here ; video capture of 2020 Studio 7 production here)
Week 11: Apr. 14	Cognitive and Evolutionary Psychology and Friendship: R.I.M. Dunbar, “The Anatomy of Friendship”; S. Kaliarnta, “Using Aristotle’s theory of friendship to classify online friendships: a critical counterview”
Week 12: Apr. 21	Modern friendship in the Margins: Toni Morrison’s “Recitatif”; A. Sullivan, <i>Love Undetectable</i> , ch. 3
Week 13: Apr. 28	So What is Friendship?, redux: J. Derrida, “The Politics of Friendship”; New Yorker essay on Derrida
Week 14: May 5	Friendship in Theory and Practice: Cicero, <i>De Amicitia</i> ; selections from Cicero’s <i>Letters</i> and Nepos’s <i>Life of Atticus</i>
Final Projects	Thursday, May 12, 7:00pm

Posting Assignment Grading Rubric

To encourage the pursuit of creative, original thought and experimentation within the guidelines of each posting assignment prompt, posting assignments will not be graded on “correctness” or “writing style.” Instead, the following rubric will be used to assess each posting, according to one of the following four categories:

Good (1.5 out of 1.5 points): This post makes a good faith and substantive effort at fulfilling the task of the prompt; meets the requisite length of ca. 250 words total in the case of initial posts or ca. 200 words total in the case of the two responses; reflects familiarity with the course’s readings and materials; and is written (mostly) in grammatical, intelligible English. In the case of responses to classmates’ posts, this post is respectful in its tone and constructive in its engagement.

Okay (1 out of 1.5 points): This post is deficient in one or two of the four criteria mentioned in the case of a “good” post. For example, it may be a good faith effort, but is too short or reflects a lack of familiarity with e.g. the reading. In the case of response posts to classmates, it may betray a lack of respect or be less than constructive in its engagement.

Inadequate (.5 out of 1.5 points): This post is seriously deficient in two or more of the four criteria mentioned in the case of a “good” post. In the case of response posts to classmates, it could be disrespectful or unconstructive. It may even just consist of little or nothing more than a post with one’s name on it.

Fail (0 out of 3 points): Typically, no post at all will merit this score. But in the case of response posts to classmates, this post could be aggressive or even openly hostile. Depending on the circumstances, we may need to confer before you will be allowed to continue with the posting assignments.

Note also that (in accordance with the guidelines of the syllabus) **late posts** will be penalized by an automatic loss of half a point on top of whichever grade is assigned. Given the nature of the posting assignments—as well as the fact that they will be posted in advance of their due date—there will be no make-ups allowed beyond 24 hours, except in the case of medical emergencies or other merit-worthy circumstances (e.g. religious observances), as laid out in the syllabus. **If you know in advance that a particular posting assignment will be difficult for you to complete due to a merit-worthy circumstance, please contact me as soon as possible and we may be able to work something out.**

All posting assignments are due by midnight (US Central time) on the Wednesday or Friday on which they are due.

Participation Rubric

The grade for “participation” will be assessed at the end of the semester, though there will be a mid-semester “check-in,” part of which will entail a discussion of the student’s performance up to that point. The following guidelines will be used to determine participation grades:

A (20-18.6 points): This student attends class on a consistent basis, always completes assigned readings, always brings the readings to class, and always comes to class prepared to participate and discuss. They are willing to volunteer to take the lead in discussion periodically, posing interesting questions or taking risks by answering tricky questions in a thoughtful manner. They avoid dominating discussion, instead participating attentively in discussion, considering others’ ideas and responding thoughtfully and respectfully. They help to create a sense of a shared enterprise in the group as a whole. This student shows passion for the work of the class and is committed fully to our work while in the classroom.

AB (18.6-17.4): This student does most of what an A student does, but may show room for some improvement in one area. For instance, they may show up unprepared for one class period, or they may be a conscientious reader and thinker who listens less attentively to other students or dominates conversation instead of engaging in productive and respectful dialogue.

B (17.4-16.6): This student displays a willingness to participate meaningfully, but not consistently. They may attend every class and prepare for all the readings but avoid taking the lead in class, instead only responding to questions or adding periodically to others’ ideas.

BC (16.6-15.4): This student may be a frequent but superficial participant. At times the student may seem not to have done the readings, though they usually come prepared.

C (15.4-14): This student is intermittently prepared for class. They may have flashes of brilliance, but rarely participate beyond the occasional superficial comment. This student may occasionally be disruptive of class.

D (13.8-12): This student very rarely participates, and only in superficial ways. This student may occasionally be disruptive of class.

F (11.8 and below): This student frequently seems to come to class unprepared or rarely participates or fails to engage with class colleagues in meaningful and respectful ways.

Project

20% of your overall grade; **Due Thursday, May 12th by 7pm**

This assignment offers you the choice between writing a traditional academic essay (on a topic of your choice, though in some way pertaining to friendship) or undertaking a more “creative” project.

1.) A six-to-eight page original argumentative (i.e. thesis-driven) essay on a topic of your choice relating in some way to our theme of “friendship and community.” Some potential starting points include:

- a.) Take a particular question or set of questions posed, explored, or even unasked in our course material and attempt to answer it.
- b.) Advocate for or critique (or some combination thereof) a particular approach or set of approaches to “friendship.”
- c.) Develop a theme that may be broached, but insufficiently explored, in the course material.

Examples include:

- The cognitive science of friendship, emotion/affect, etc.
- The role of technology in friendship
- The question of gender and friendship
- The differences and similarities between love and friendship

Some things to keep in mind:

- Make sure that your paper has a thesis statement and that it effectively marshals evidence in support of your argument.
- An ideal paper will likely consult outside sources. (Note that certain topics would basically require outside consultation.) If you do, make sure to provide proper documentation. Use whatever style you prefer consistently.
- Quotations should be used sparingly and only in support of specific points. Also, quotations require proper contextualization (usually in the form of summary, analysis, and interpretation).
- If you have any questions about content or format, please consult with me before handing in the paper. You are also more than welcome to discuss your paper with me at any point in the creative process.

2.) A more creative project of roughly equivalent length and substance

- a.) A podcast or YouTube-style video or blog piece on some dimension of “friendship and community”
- b.) A piece of creative writing or other artistic representation that relates in some way to the course content
- c.) A study of real-life friends by way of an oral history interview and analysis of that oral history¹
- d.) Another project?

Please note: depending on the nature of the project, use of outside sources, a bibliography, etc. may be in order. You may also collaborate with a classmate on this project, though the length requirement will increase commensurately.

In the case of either option, an abstract of some 100-200 words (**due Thursday, March 10**) and consultation with me thereafter are required.

¹ Note: some interview-based projects may require approval by the [Education and Social/Behavioral Science Institutional Review Board](#). If interested in this project, we can talk about ways to either undergo this review or avoid the need of it (per the guidelines of most “oral history” projects).

Integrative Essay: “On Friendship”

20% of your overall grade; **Due Thursday, May 12th at 7pm**

A number of the materials we are reading this semester are titled “On Friendship” *vel sim*. Instead of just reading others waxing on about the joys and pleasures—or the trials and tribulations—of friendship, this is your chance to do the same.

This writing assignment is extremely open-ended. Nearly *everything* about it is subject to your discretion. Are you interested in doing a deep dive into one particular aspect of friendship? Do it! Do you enjoy writing discursive essays, which abandon the mechanics of formal argumentative writing in favor of profound thoughts? Great! Are you thinking that words simply cannot capture some element of friendship that some other piece of media successfully does? Include it! Don't like the assigned title? Change it!

What, then, are the requirements and guidelines?

- 1.) The essay must comprise some 1500-2000 words in length.
- 2.) The essay must incorporate and cite at least three readings or other materials we have read this semester.
- 3.) The essay must adhere to the rules of proper citation and ultimately be your own original work.