

FIRST YEAR SEMINAR II: What is Personal Freedom?

Spring 2018

Mon/Wed 10:10am-11:30am in Olin 107

Professor Kevin Duong

Office Hours: Aspinnwall 209, Tuesdays 1:30-3pm or by appointment

To raise the question “What is freedom?” could hardly be more necessary today. Why have so many people in so many times and places identified freedom as a self-evident value, but have also excluded many around them from its benefits? How have different civilizations defined freedom at different times? What does freedom mean in a democracy, an empire, or a totalitarian regime? How do we understand the difference between “freedom to” and “freedom from,” between rights and responsibilities? Is scientific or artistic freedom an unqualified good, whatever its consequences? These are just some of the questions we address in First-Year Seminar. In the fall semester, we asked “What is political freedom?” We read thinkers from Socrates to Gandhi and Hannah Arendt. Now in the spring semester, we consider “What is personal freedom?” in the company of authors from Aristotle to Mary Shelley and Malcolm X.

Required Materials

The following textbooks will be made available at the bookstore:

1. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *‘Self-Reliance’ and Other Essays*, Dover Thrift Editions, ISBN: 978-0486277905
2. Photocopy of *Sentences of Ali and Sa’dī, Gulistan (or Rose Garden)*
3. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Terence Irwin, 2nd ed., Hackett Publications, ISBN: 978-0872204645
4. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, trans. Walter Kaufmann, Vintage Books, ISBN: 978-0679724650
5. Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin, Penguin Classics, ISBN: 978-0140441147
6. Malcolm X and Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, Penguin/Ballantine, ISBN: 978-0345376718
7. Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*, trans. Deborah Roberts, Hackett Publications, ISBN: 978-1603841900
8. Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, ed. J. Paul Hunter, 2nd ed., W.W. Norton, ISBN: 978-0393927931
9. *If Not, Winter: Fragments of Sappho*, trans. Anne Carson, Vintage, ISBN: 978-0375724510
10. James Joyce, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, ed. Seamus Deane, Penguin Classics, ISBN: 978-0142437346

Course Objectives and Expectations

Assignments: All First-Year Seminar students are required to write four 5-page (i.e., 1250 words) critical essays on the texts we are all reading over the course of the semester. All work is assumed to be written by the student, for First-Year Seminar. Any student who plagiarizes all or part of a paper will receive a failing grade for this course

Writing Fellow from the Learning Commons

Our class will be working closely with a Writing Fellow from the Learning Commons. Working with a Writing Fellow is an excellent way to get the most out of the writing component of this class, as you will get feedback on three of your drafts and have the opportunity to revise your papers. Becoming comfortable and proficient at revision is perhaps the single-most important aspect of developing as a college writer, and the tutor assigned to this class will work with you to sharpen these skills. Note that tutors are not meant to be experts in the texts that we read in this class. Rather, they offer a second pair of eyes on your writing, a chance to strengthen your thesis and argument, and an active sounding board for your ideas. Virtually all writers (including your professors here at Bard) rely on feedback from their peers on their written work. Because this process has the potential to contribute significantly to your development as a writer, these meetings with tutors are required, and any missed appointments will be reported to me and will lower your grade.

I hope you will make the most of this opportunity to push yourself as a writer. Even if you write an excellent first draft, why not push yourself and take it even further?

Attendance & Participation

Students are expected to attend and to participate in all classes and “Experience Days.” More than *two* absences from the course (including Experience Days) in a semester will affect your grade for the course. More than *six* will result in you failing the course. Exceptions to the attendance policy will be made on a case-by-case basis with either (a) a letter from the Dean of Students Office or (b) a documented accommodation plan from the Disability Support Services Office or the Title IX Office. In cases where illness or other exceptional circumstances have caused or are likely to cause a prolonged absence from class (i.e., three or more consecutive sessions), you should liaise as soon as possible with the Dean of Students Office. If you are unsure where to start, you can contact Kevin Dean, Assistant Dean of Students and Director of the First-Year Experience (Sottery Hall 108; Phone: 845-758-7454; email: firstyear@bard.edu).

Experience Day

“Experiencing Sappho,”

Sosnoff Theater, Fisher Center for the Performing Arts,

4:45 – 6:30 PM

Laptop Policy

This is largely a discussion class, so there will not be much lecturing. Since class will therefore be participatory, laptops will not be permitted in class. Note taking can be done adequately with pencil and paper when the need arises. If there is an unusually compelling reason, however, for why on a particular day you may need your laptop out, please let me know and we can try to accommodate that. I also expect that you will refrain from texting, sending emails, using the internet, and doing other work during class.

Course Evaluation

Four 5-page critical essays: 80%

Attendance & participation: 20%

Other Matters

Reasonable Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: If you have a disability that may require assistance or accommodations, or if you have any questions related to any accommodation for testing, note taking, reading, etc., please speak with me as soon as possible. You may also contact Student Disability Services with any questions about such services.

The Stevenson Library: The Stevenson Library's First-Year Seminar webpage contains several resources, including guides on close reading, writing an essay, revising an essay, using correct grammar, and avoiding plagiarism.

See <http://libguides.bard.edu/content.php?pid=613149>.

The Learning Commons: The Learning Commons provides academic support for all Bard students. It offers peer tutoring in writing and other subjects; individualized or small-group assistance in writing and study skills; assistance for students with disabilities; and credit-bearing courses in writing, English as a second language, and public speaking. The Learning Commons is in the basement of Stone Row, next to the Root Cellar. Contact the Learning Commons at blc@bard.edu or 845 758 7812; Jim Keller, Director, at keller@bard.edu or 845 758 7051.

See also <http://www.bard.edu/learningcommons>.

The Center for Student Life and Advising: The Center for Student Life and Advising comprises the offices of the Dean of Student Affairs, the Dean of Studies, and International Student Services. It provides academic and personal advice as well as mentorship to students throughout their time at the College. Contact the Center at csla@bard.edu; Kevin Dean, Assistant Dean of Students and Director of the First-Year Experience, Sottery Hall 108, 845-758-7454, firstyear@bard.edu; Kaet Heupel, Assistant Dean of Studies for first-year students, Sottery Hall 107, 845-758-7454; Jennifer Triplett, Director of Academic Advising, Sottery Hall 109, 845-758-7365, triplett@bard.edu; or Dorothy Albertini, Academic Advising Associate, Sottery Hall 107, 845-758-7436 albertin@bard.edu.

See also <http://www.bard.edu/csla>.

The Counseling Service and the Chaplaincy: The Counseling Service has six certified counselors. They offer individual short-term counseling as well as a variety of talks, workshops, therapy and support groups, walk-in counseling options, and trainings. Their office is in Robbins Annex on North Campus. Contact the counselors at counselingservice@bard.edu or at 845-758-7433. See also <http://www.bard.edu/counseling/about>. The Chaplaincy has on staff six college chaplains: an Anglican priest, a Catholic priest, an imam, a rabbi, a Buddhist chaplain and a Community chaplain. Each chaplain is available for pastoral care with students. Contact the chaplains at 201-956-8228 or at nelson@bard.edu. See also <http://www.bard.edu/chaplaincy>.

Schedule of Readings

Readings and assignments are to be completed by their corresponding date.

Part I: Dialogues Ancient and Modern, East and West

- Jan 29:** Introduction
Jan 31: Ralph Waldo Emerson, essay “Self-Reliance,” in *Self-Reliance and Other Essays*
 Photocopy of *Sentences of Ali* and sections from Sa‘dī, *Gulistan (or Rose Garden)*
Feb 5: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I
Feb 7: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book II
Feb 12: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book III
Feb 14: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book X
Essay #1 Assigned
Feb 19: Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, pt. I-II
Feb 21: Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, pt. III-V
Feb 26: Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, pt. VI-VII
Feb 28: Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, pt. VIII-IX
Essay #1 Due

Part II: Conversions and Creeds

- Mar 5:** Augustine, *Confessions*, Book I-II
Mar 7: Augustine, *Confessions*, Book III-IV
Mar 12: Augustine, *Confessions*, Book V-VII
Mar 14: Augustine, *Confessions*, Book VIII-IX
Essay #1 Revision Due
Mar 19: Spring Break, No Class
Mar 21: Spring Break, No Class
Mar 26: *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, chs. 1-3, 7-8
Mar 28: *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, chs. 9-12
Apr 2: *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, chs. 16-18; epilogue (pp. 441-55, 496-523)
Essay #2 Assigned

Part III: Scientific Freedom and the Boundaries of Knowledge

- Apr 4:** Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*, pp. 1-27
Apr 9: Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*, pp. 28-54
Essay #2 Due
Apr 11: Shelley, *Frankenstein*, vol. 1
Apr 16: Shelley, *Frankenstein*, vol. 2
Apr 18: Shelley, *Frankenstein*, vol. 3
Essay #2 Revision Due
Essay #3 Assigned

Part IV: Artistic Freedom and the Boundaries of the Imagination

- Apr 23:** Sappho, *If Not, Winter*, pp. 1-177
Experience Day: “Experiencing Sappho,”
Sosnoff Theater, Fisher Center for the Performing Arts,
4:45 – 6:30 PM

- Apr 25:** Sappho, *If Not, Winter*, pp. 178-355
Essay #3 Due
- Apr 30:** Advising Day, No Class
- May 2:** Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, pt. I
- May 7:** Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, pt. II
- May 9:** Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, pt. III-IV
- May 14:** Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, pt. V
Essay #3 Revision Due
Essay #4 Assigned
- May 21:** **Essay #4 Due**