

# PL140 PHILOSOPHY OF FRIENDSHIP

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Office Hours: by appointment

## Course Description

What is the nature of friendship? This question is one of the most frequent and fundamental in philosophy. Friendship has even been considered constitutive of philosophy as a practice. We explore the history of philosophical ethics in regard to this theme: how do the pleasures, social meanings, obligations, and limits of friendship illuminate moral issues and dilemmas more generally? What role do reflections on friendship play in philosophical systems and theories? How would we revise or update such reflections in the light of new, virtual forms of human interaction? Is the familiar opposition between sexual desire and friendship altered by an understanding of varieties of gender identity? Readings are from Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Seneca, Plutarch, Aelred, Thomas Aquinas, Montaigne, Bacon, Hume, Kant, Emerson, Kierkegaard, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Arendt, de Beauvoir, Derrida, and Nehamas.

## Course Readings

Required books (you must have your own copy of the specific edition with this ISBN)

(1) *Other Selves. Philosophers on Friendship*, ed. by Michael Pakaluk (ISBN: 978-0-87220-113-2)

(2) Alexander Nehamas, *On Friendship* (ISBN: 978-0465082926)

Students are expected to purchase or loan the required books. All other readings will be available in a Dropbox folder and are expected to be physically printed.

## Requirements

### Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the staunchest regard for academic integrity and expects good academic practice from students in their studies. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

### Attendance

Attendance at ALL classes is expected. More than two absences (that is absences from two sessions of 90 minutes) in a semester will significantly affect the participation grade for the course. For regulations governing periods of illness or leaves of absence, please consult the Student Handbook.

### Required Texts

Generally, there will be one or two compulsory readings for each session. These are mainly selected passages on friendship by different authors, many of them from the anthology by Michael Pakaluk (*Other Selves*). All students are responsible for preparing all the texts in advance of each week (with the exception of the first session). In addition to the two main books (see above), a digital reader will be provided at the beginning of the semester on Dropbox. However, all texts should be physically printed

and available for reference during the course time. The secondary readings, also uploaded to the Dropbox, are not mandatory, but highly encouraged.

## Assessment

### Participation

Students should arrive to each class on time and prepared. Being prepared means

- (1) having completed the assigned reading,
- (2) bringing to class a non-electronic copy of the assigned reading, and
- (3) being ready to initiate and to contribute to discussion.

Engagement in class discussion should be regular as well as productive; quantity alone will not favorably affect the participation grade.

### Class Presentations

Students will present on one text as per a sign-up sheet. Each presentation of about 15 minutes will examine key passages of your choice. In addition, you will provide a handout for the class that focuses your reading of the text. You are encouraged to write your midterm or final papers on the text that you present on. In this manner, your essay can expand on the insights and questions that arose from your class contribution and the discussion that follows your readings.

### Writing Assignments

There will be two principal assignments over the course of the term: a midterm essay of 2000 words due at 23:59 on March 15 and a final essay of 3000 words due at 23:59 May 10 (for senior students) and May 15 for other students.

### Policy on Late Submission of Papers

All written work must be submitted electronically and on time. As the Student Handbook states: *essays that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where an instructor agrees to accept a late essay, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline and cannot receive a grade of higher than C.*

*Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.*

## Grade Breakdown

Class participation: 25%

Presentation: 20%

Midterm essay (2000 words): 25%

Final essay (3000 words): 30%

## Schedule

Session 1 Jan 27	Introduction – <i>No reading assignment</i> –
Session 2 Feb 3	Plato, <i>Lysis</i> (in: <i>Other Selves. Philosophers on Friendship</i> )
Session 3 Feb 10	(1) Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> VIII & IX (in: <i>Other Selves. Philosophers on Friendship</i> ) (2) Alexander Nehamas, "A Friend Is Another Self" (in: <i>On Friendship</i> )
Session 4 Feb 17	(1) Cicero, <i>On Friendship</i> (in: <i>Other Selves. Philosophers on Friendship</i> ) (2) Seneca, <i>On Philosophy and Friendship</i> & <i>On Grief for Lost Friends</i> (in: <i>Other Selves. Philosophers on Friendship</i> )
Session 5 Feb 24	Plutarch, <i>How to Tell a Flatterer from a Friend</i> (PDF) & <i>On Having Many Friends</i> (PDF)
Session 6 Mar 2	(1) Aelred of Rievaulx, <i>Spiritual Friendship</i> (in: <i>Other Selves. Philosophers on Friendship</i> ) (2) Thomas Aquinas, <i>Questions on Love and Charity</i> (in: <i>Other Selves. Philosophers on Friendship</i> )
Session 7 Mar 9	(1) Montaigne, <i>Of Friendship</i> (in: <i>Other Selves. Philosophers on Friendship</i> ) (2) Francis Bacon, <i>Of Friendship</i> (in: <i>Other Selves. Philosophers on Friendship</i> )
<b>Mar 15</b>	<b>Midterm Papers Due</b>
Session 8 Mar 16	(1) David Hume, <i>Of Self-Love</i> (PDF) (2) Immanuel Kant, <i>Lecture on Friendship</i> (in: <i>Other Selves. Philosophers on Friendship</i> )
Session 9 Mar 23	(1) Ralph Waldo Emerson, <i>Friendship</i> (in: <i>Other Selves. Philosophers on Friendship</i> ) (2) Søren Kierkegaard, <i>Either/Or Part Two: Equilibrium between the Aesthetic and the Ethical in the Development of Personality</i> (extract) (PDF) & <i>You Shall Love Your Neighbor</i> (PDF)
Session 10 Mar 30	(1) Arthur Schopenhauer, <i>Counsels and Maxims. Our Relation to Others</i> (extract) (PDF) (2) Friedrich Nietzsche, selected passages on friendship (PDF)
<b>Apr 6 - Apr 13</b>	<b>Spring Break</b>
Session 11 Apr 20	(1) Hannah Arendt, <i>On Humanity in Dark Times</i> (PDF) (2) Simone de Beauvoir, selected passages (PDF)
Session 12 Apr 27	Jacques Derrida, <i>The Politics of Friendship</i> (extract) (PDF)
Session 13 May 4	Alexander Nehamas, <i>On Friendship</i>
<b>May 10</b>	<b>Final Papers Due for Senior Students</b>
Session 14 May 11	Summary
<b>May 15</b>	<b>Final Papers Due</b>

## Essay Deadlines

Midterm paper (2000 words): March 15

Final paper (3000 words): - for senior students: May 10

- for other students: May 15