**PH 190-1: Friendship & Trust**

**Spring 2025 M/W: 3:30-4:50**

**A group of girls sitting on a couch

Description automatically generated**

Course Image: *Stamford After Brunch* oil painting by John Currin, 2000.

*“A good friend is a connection to life, a tie to the past, a road to the future and the key to sanity in a totally insane world”*

*~Lois Wyse*

*“You know a real friend? Someone who will look after your cat when you are gone.”*

*~William S. Burroughs*

*“A friend is someone who knows all about you and still loves you”*

*~Elbert Hubbard*

**Instructor Information**

Dr. Kelly Cunningham

Email: [kcunnigham@bentley.edu](mailto:kcunnigham@bentley.edu)

**Office Hours and Location**

Jennison 221

Tuesday 2:00pm-3:15pm

Thursday 11:00am-12:30pm (via Zoom)

Or by appointment

**Course Description**

*Friendship is a topic of perennial philosophical interest. It’s also the subject of films, novels, songs, and other works of art. Many philosophers have argued that friendships are essential to our moral development. Others focus instead on how friendships form our identity or expose us to danger. Most agree that good friendships require trust, but it can be difficult to determine when trust is genuine. Moreover, questions about how to repair and cultivate trust require a deep understanding of particular relationships. In this course, we’ll explore these and related questions about friendship and trust through historical and contemporary philosophical perspectives as well as through films and novels.*

**Course Expectations**

Attendance and participation in class discussions are expected. Students are also expected to conduct independent research for their final paper assignment. Disrespectful and disruptive behavior in class discussions will not be tolerated. In addition to developing a familiarity with the literature on trust and friendship, goals for this course include the refinement of argumentative writing and critical thinking skills. By the end of the course students will be able to explain several philosophical accounts of friendship. They will also develop a perspective on how trust and friendship are related. Students will complete independent research for their final paper, which will provide an answer to a question of their choice about friendship.

**Learning Goals**

* Ability to explain several philosophical accounts of trust & friendship
* Formulate independent research questions & conduct research
* Identify ethically salient dimensions of friendship & trust across different cultures and time periods

**Grading Scale**

Your final grade will be calculated based on the points you earn for each of the assignments in this course. I use Bentley’s standard grading scale for assigning letter grades at the end of the semester. Extra credit opportunities require additional time and since not all students have equal access to leisure time, extra credit tends to disadvantage student-parents, students who provide care for other family members, and students who work. For this reason, **I do not offer extra credit outside of class.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Grade Point** | **Letter Equivalent** | **Numerical Equivalent** |
| 4.0 | A | 95-100 |
| 3.7 | A- | 90-94 |
| 3.3 | B+ | 87-89 |
| 3.0 | B | 83-86 |
| 2.7 | B- | 80-82 |
| 2.3 | C+ | 77-79 |
| 2.0 | C | 73-76 |
| 1.7 | C- | 70-72 |
| 1.3 | D+ | 67-69 |
| 1.0 | D | 63-66 |
| .7 | D- | 60-62 |
| 0.0 | F | Below 60 |
| P | C- or better | 70 or better |

**Policies and Procedures**

All courses offered at Bentley University reflect our institution’s commitment to a set of core values and practices.  The links below will take you to full explanations of our policies and procedures related to accommodations and equitable learning environments.  As a student, you are expected to review and be familiar with each of these policies:

* [Bentley’s honor code and academic integrity system](https://catalog.bentley.edu/graduate/academic-policies-procedures/academic-integrity/)
* [Equity and bias reporting forms and procedures](https://www.bentley.edu/equity-reporting)
* [Student Disability Accommodations](https://www.bentley.edu/offices/disability-services)
* [Religious observances](https://catalog.bentley.edu/undergraduate/academic-policies-procedures/#Religious_Observances_Policy)
* [Bentley’s core values](https://www.bentley.edu/about/mission-and-values)

The links above spell out these policies in more detail, but I have copied several policies below for your reference.

**FERPA Compliance Reminder**

To protect student privacy, FERPA guidelines state that professors are not to discuss grades via email. If you would like to discuss your grades, please come to office hours or email me to make an appointment.

**Technology and AI Use Policy**

Technology like tablets and laptops can be a distraction for both the user and others in the classroom. However, they are often essential for students with accessibility needs and may be the preferred notetaking method for some students. Similarly, AI programs ChatGPT, Perplexity, and other large language models can be useful tools, but are also subject to errors and raise ethical concerns about academic integrity. In order to best meet the needs of all students in our class, we will discuss and determine our technology and AI use policy together as a class within the first week. Our class policy will then be posted to Brightspace for future reference.

That being said, **your cell phone, earbuds, or headphones should not be used during class.** I will call you out if you are caught using them and if the behavior persists you will not receive participation credit for that day.

**Academic Integrity**

All students are expected to adhere to Bentley’s Academic Integrity policy and Honor Code, which can be found on Brightspace and in the Undergraduate Student Handbook/Graduate Catalog. The policy essentially states that a student should not represent someone else’s work as his or her own. Plagiarism, cheating on exams or quizzes; or other instances of academic dishonesty will result in an “F” (0) on the assignment, and possibly for the course**. Serious violations of our class AI Policy will also result in a report to the Honors council.** In short, do not cheat. If you are struggling to complete assignments or understand course material, come to office hours, or arrange a time to talk with me.

**Accessibility & Accommodations**

If you are comfortable disclosing, please notify me privately if you have a documented disability that will interfere with the timing of your work or that requires other forms of accommodation. Bentley University abides by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, which stipulate that no student shall be denied the benefits of an education solely by reason of a disability. If you have a hidden or visible disability that may require classroom accommodation, please call the Office of Accessibility within the first 4 weeks of the semester to schedule an appointment. The Office of Accessibility Services is located in the Office of Student Success (JEN 336, 781.891.2004). The Office of Accessibility Services is responsible for managing accommodations and services for all students with disabilities.

**Course Materials**

With the exception of your book club novels, all course will be available as PDFs or links posted to our course Brightspace page. Once book club groups are determined, students will be required to purchase a physical or digital copy of their book club novel. Students may listen to their book club novel as an audio book, but are required to have a text version available to reference during class discussion and for their book club assignments. A copy of each book is on reserves at the Bentley University Library

Students may also find *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Friendship* to be a useful resource for their independent research projects. A copy of this book is on reserve at the Bentley University library.

***Students should bring a writing utensil, the assigned readings, and something to write on to class every day.***

**Course Assignments & Grade Breakdown**

**Participation (15% of final grade)**

The participation category of your grade will be calculated based on your efforts on exit slips and in-class activities. To complete them, you must be present on that day of class. Exit slips merely and in-class activities/handouts will be graded on a ✓-, ✓, ✓+ scale. A ✓ or higher average will earn you full points for this category.

I understand that conflicts may arise, so I allow **three “no-questions-asked” absences** over the course of the semester. You can use these absences for any reason (job interview, mental health day, routine appointment, attending a wedding, etc.). Excused absences will also not count against you. Excused absences include illness, travel for unplanned family emergencies, and co-curricular activities. Advance notice is expected for excused absences. **Excessive absences will be reported through the proper channels.** It is acceptable to leave early or arrive late on occasion, I just ask that you do so quietly and in a way that respects our learning environment**. Patterns of lateness or early departure from class, as well as violations of our technology use policy will adversely affect your final participation grade.** In compliance with federal guidelines [and Bentley University Academic policy,](https://catalog.bentley.edu/undergraduate/academic-policies-procedures/?_ga=2.267311691.459464984.1721947924-731384486.1706020812) students who do not attend or engage academically in any courses during the first week of class will be designated as a “no show” and will be dropped from all courses.

**In-Class Exams**: **(2x 15%=30% of final grade)**

Twice during the semester we will have two in-class, written exams designed to assess your comprehension of the assigned readings in this course. Exams questions will be a mix of defining key terms, identifying important passages from the text, and short written answers. A study guide for each exam will be provided at least two weeks prior to the exam and we will devote some in-class time to review prior to each exam. Exam one will be on **Wednesday, February 19th** Exam two will be on **Wednesday March 26th.**

**Book Club Participation & Presentation (20% of final grade)**

Throughout the semester, portions of our in-class time will be devoted to your book club discussions. Students will take turns leading their group discussion by presenting on their assigned chapters. Book club presentations should be approximately 10 minutes long and should include a handout or worksheet for other group members to reference during their discussion. A template and rubric for book club presentations is available on Brightspace. The presenter of the day will also oversee documenting the group’s discussion on the day of their presentation.

**Independent Research Paper Planning Worksheet (5% of final grade)**

Within the first half of the semester students are required to complete the Independent Research Paper Planning Worksheet available on Brightspace. This worksheet will help you formulate and refine a research question on a topic related to trust and/or friendship. Students are strongly encouraged to come to office hours or arrange a time to meet with me to discuss their ideas prior to turning this worksheet in. This assignment should be uploaded to Brightspace by **Wednesday, February 26th.**

**Annotated Bibliography (10% of final grade)**

Your final paper will be on a question about trust of your choosing. To help guide your research for this paper, you are required to complete an annotated bibliography. Your bibliography should include 5-7 sources, properly cited and accompanied by a one-paragraph description of the source’s main ideas and how it might be useful for your final paper. We will go over an example in class two weeks before this assignment is due. Assignment should be turned in via Brightspace by **Monday, April 7th.**

**Independent Research Paper (5% for draft, 20% for final paper= 25% of final grade)**

Your final paper will be on a question about friendship that makes use of one of the case studies we cover in class. You may choose a different film or novel for your case study with approval from me. A rubric and assignment description will be available on Brightspace by week 4. A rough draft and/or detailed outline of your paper is due by **Monday, April 14th** to allow me ample time to provide you with detailed feedback. Your revised final paper is due by midnight on scheduled day for final exams **Monday, May 5th.** Both your draft and final paper should be uploaded to Brightspace. During our scheduled final exam time, you will have the opportunity to ask me to look over a draft and ask any lingering questions about your final paper.

**Book Club Novel Options**

During the second week of the course, you will be asked to select your top two choices from the following list of novels. I will introduce them briefly in class, but you are encouraged to explore them on your own before making your choice.

1. *Under the Net* by Iris Murdoch
2. *All You Have To Do Is Call* by Kerri Maher
3. *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck
4. *Sorry* by Gail Jones
5. *My Brilliant Friend* by Elena Ferrante
6. *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton

**Additional Resources**

**Writing Center**

The Writing Center offers one-on-one tutoring for writing and presentations, for students of all years and skill levels. Located on the lower level of the Bentley library (room 023), the Writing Center provides a welcoming and supportive environment in which students can work on writing or presentations from any class or discipline. Students are encouraged to visit at all stages of the process; they can bring a draft, an outline, or just some initial thoughts and questions. Staffed by highly skilled student tutors, the Writing Center is open six days a week, with conferences available online or in-person. Students are encouraged to make appointments in advance. Appointments can be made at https://bentley.mywconline.net. Hours and additional information are available on the Writing Center SharePoint site.

**ESOL Center The English for Speakers of Other Languages Center**

The ESOL Center, located in the lower level of the library, Room 026) offers writing and English language support to students who are English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). Its faculty tutors specialize in working with multilingual writers and can provide feedback and strategies on writing for all your course and career-related writing.

**Bentley Library**

The Bentley Library supports the research and learning needs of the Bentley community through our spaces, technology, collections, teaching, and expertise. Open 99 hours per week during the semester, the Library provides spaces for quiet study and group collaboration, as well as computers, printers and other equipment. Research assistance is available until 9:00 p.m. most nights in-person at the Reference Desk and via email ([refdesk@bentley.edu](mailto:refdesk@bentley.edu)), phone (781.891.2300), text (781.728.0511), and live chat ([https://www.bentley.edu/library/research/help](https://nam11.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.bentley.edu%2Flibrary%2Fresearch%2Fhelp&data=05%7C02%7Ckcunningham%40bentley.edu%7C0232ff063b394dda8c3108dcdbd28730%7C9030beae3cfc4788a9e2130204ff1f10%7C0%7C0%7C638626944488965544%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=sIuIZr3qEY3cxFMP1%2FgRyFN3y%2BxmzUE9EQPXGFAw1GY%3D&reserved=0)). Reference Librarians can help you develop research questions and topics, select databases and other resources, evaluate information, and properly cite sources. Research consultations for individuals and small groups are available in-person and via Zoom by appointment. For more information about the Library’s hours, services, and resources visit [library.bentley.edu](https://nam11.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Flibrary.bentley.edu%2F&data=05%7C02%7Ckcunningham%40bentley.edu%7C0232ff063b394dda8c3108dcdbd28730%7C9030beae3cfc4788a9e2130204ff1f10%7C0%7C0%7C638626944488986570%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=s%2BXEN5micHl6dcIl%2Bwh5Jza9K5F6vGFToU3TywpQNGQ%3D&reserved=0).

**Course Schedule**

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| **Date** | **Topic** | **To do before class** | **Reminders & Optional Readings** |
| Week 1: 1/20-1/26 | **Welcome Week:** |  |  |
|  | M : No Classes MLK Day |  |  |
|  | W: Syllabus Scavenger Hunt; Defining Friendship & Trust |  |  |
| Week 2: 1/27-2/2 | **Unit One: Friendship & Trust in the History of Philosophy** |  |  |
|  | M: Aristotle’s Three Kinds of Friendship |  | Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* Books VIII and IX |
|  | W: Aristotle on Friendship (cont.) |  | Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* Books VIII and IX |
| Week 3: 2/3-2/9 | **Unit One: Friendship & Trust in the History of Philosophy** |  |  |
|  | M: Foundational Texts in Philosophy of Trust | Read your group’s section of Annette Baier’s “Trust and Antitrust” | **Exam #1 Study Guide Available** |
|  | W: Trust & Emotions |  | Jones “Trust as an Affective Attitude” |
| Week 4: 2/10-2/16 | **Unit One: Friendship & Trust in the History of Philosophy** |  |  |
|  | M: Kantian Perspective on Friendship: Friendship and Altruism | Read: Blum Chapter IV of *Friendship, Altruism, and Morality*, “Friendship as a Moral Phenomenon” | **Final Paper Rubric & Assignment Description Available** |
|  | W: Historical Views on Friendship Cont. & Book Club Day #1 | Book Club Day #1 Reading | Annas, “Plato and Aristotle on Friendship and Altruism” |
| Week 5: 2/17-2/23 | **Unit One: Friendship & Trust in the History of Philosophy** |  |  |
|  | M: In-Class Exam Review | Study for Exam #1 |  |
|  | W: In-Class Exam #1 | Study for Exam #1 |  |
| Week 6: 2/24-3/2 | **Unit Two: Friendship, Trust & Moral Development** |  |  |
|  | M: Friendship Among Children | Healy, “Friendship Between Children” |  |
|  | W: Friendship Among Children | Finish Watching *Stand By Me*  **Complete Independent Research Paper Planning Sheet (due by midnight on Brightspace)** |  |
| Week 7: 3/3-3/9 | **Unit Two: Friendship, Trust & Moral Development** |  |  |
|  | M: Trust & Interpersonal Relationships | Niker and Specker Sullivan- “Trusting Relationships and the Ethics of Interpersonal Trust” |  |
|  | W: Mid- course Check-in & Book Club Day #2 | Book Club Reading Day #2 | **Exam #2 Study Guide available** |

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| Week 8: 3/10-3/16 | **Spring Break: No Classes** |  |  |
| Week 9: 3/17-3/23 | **Unit Two: Friendship, Trust & Moral Development** |  |  |
|  | M: Friendship, trust, and knowledge, | Mason “Insights on Friendship from Iris Murdoch” |  |
|  | W: Friendship & Personal Identity   Book Club Day #3 | Dover “The Conversational Self”  Book Club Day #3 Reading |  |
| Week 10: 3/24-3/30 | **Unit Two: Friendship, Trust & Moral Development** |  |  |
|  | M: Review for Exam #2 | Study for Exam #2 |  |
|  | W: In-Class Exam #2 | Study for Exam #2 |  |
| Week 11: 3/31-4/6 | **Unit Three: Varieties of Trust & Friendship** |  |  |
|  | M: Moral Risks of Friendship & Trust | Cocking and Kennett “Friendship and Moral Danger” |  |
|  | W: Changes in trust and friendship over time & Book Club Day #4 | Finish Watching *Fried Green Tomatoes*  Book Club Day #4 Reading | Bennett- “Demoralizing Trust” |
| Week 12: 4/7-4/13 | **Unit Three: Varieties of Trust & Friendship** |  |  |
|  | M: Trust & Animal Friends | Abbate. “Are Our Companion Animals Friends or Family?”  **Annotated Bibliography due on Brightspace by midnight** |  |
|  | W: Family or Friend? | Betzler, “Friendship and Family” |  |

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| Week 13: 4/14-4/20 | **Unit Three: Varieties of Trust & Friendship** |  |  |
|  | M: Friendship in the Digital Age | Elder, “Friendship and Social Media”  **Final Paper Drafts due by Midnight on Brightspace** |  |

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|  | W: Friendship & AI, Book Club Day #5 | Read: Kyle Chayka’s “Your AI Companion Will Support You No Matter What” in *The New Yorker* https://www.newyorker.com/culture/infinite-scroll/your-ai-companion-will-support-you-no-matter-what  Book Club Day #5 Reading |  |
| Week 14: 4/21-4/27 | **Unit Three: Varieties of Trust & Friendship** |  |  |
|  | M: Patriot’s Day, No Classes |  |  |
|  | W: Friendship & Politics | Watch: Robert Talisse’s TED Talk on Civic Friendship, “Putting Politics in Its Place”   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GVhiFTUbJno | “Civic Friendship” from *Overdoing Democracy* by Robert Talisse |
| Week 15: 4/28-5/4 | M: Betrayals of Trust & Ends of Friendship | Baier, “How to Lose Friends: Some Simple Ways” |  |
|  | W: Rationality & Friendship; Book Club Day #6 | Book Club Day #6 Reading | Jeske, “Feminism, Friendship, and the Grounds of Reasons” |
| **Finals Week** | Attend your final block to workshop and proofread your final paper with a peer. You may also use this time to ask questions about your final paper. |  | **Final Paper Due by midnight on Monday, May 5th (turn in via Brightspace)** |