**Comparative Literature and Translation Studies**

**BC3123 POETICS OF FRIENDSHIP**

 

 **POETICS OF FRIENDSHIP** FALL SEMESTER 2021

 **World Literature and the Question of Social Justice**

 BARNARD COLLEGE Instructor: E.Grimm

Comparative Literature and Society BC3123

**POETICS OF FRIENDSHIP**

**World Literature and the Question of Social Justice**

BARNARD COLLEGE Course number 07595

TR 10:10am-11:25am Contact: E. Grimm, Milbank Hall 320 b

1. BRIEF ORIENTATION: Participants are introduced to 19th c./20th c. literary and intellectual approaches to friendship as intermediary between individualism and communal life. Comparative analyses of major works of literature will shed light on how and why rituals of bonding and ethical recognition of self and other inform modern storytelling in different cultural contexts.

2. COURSE CONTENTS: In moving from an examination of the idea/ideal of friendship in early modernism to contemporary literary reflections on civic virtues, we will explore a number of historical and geo-cultural situations which raise important question about loyalty, shame, solidarity, reciprocity, and symbolic gift economies and will ultimately lead to a deeper understanding of companionship under different cultural, social, and political circumstances. In light of the long-standing tradition to single out pairs of exemplary, the course will begin with a contemplation on how friendship was cherished by the early modernists; we will then study a number of modern texts which how friendship is compromised by the presence of a third person or by social conventions favoring one group over the other. This discussion of modern and ancient idealisms will lead to a critical examination of gender stereotypes, with an emphasis on how distinguished women writers challenged traditional views. In the last third of the semester, we will study the impact of social environments in the era of colonialism and explore facets of biracial relationships; our conversation will illuminate underlying forms of racial differentiation and discrimination. Our aim is to determine how literary depictions of amiable companionships can provide us with models of how to bridge the social and cultural gaps between dominant and marginalized groups of society. A final reflection on the tension between democratic consensus and conflict gives us a chance to come up with an answer to the question of friendship as a democratic virtue and sincere contribution to equality and greater mutual recognition.

3. COURSE REQUIREMENTS: Active participation; 3 term papers; and a final

4. READINGS: Internationally recognized novelists such as Zadie Smith; Hermann Hesse; Natsume Sōseki; Olga Tokarczuk; Valerie Tagwira; Nuruddin Farah; Aminatta Forna; Marcela Serrano; Elena Ferrante; Tan Twan Eng; Kazuo Ishiguro; Lawrence Osborne, Jenny Erpenbeck (most of theirs works are available as ebooks).—

While the readings will concentrate on modern literature, though several theoretical pieces will inform our discussions of friendship. Aristotle, Emerson, and Schopenhauer will be as useful as Putnam and Derrida in defining the “poetics” of human bonding and social justice. Feminist studies of social alliances (N.Baym) provide us with insights about bonding in the so-called “Digital Age” (2010).