Fall 2018

ASC 1138 Freshman Seminar

Professor Patricia Sieber

**Close Reading: Make Ten New Friends You Did Not Know You Had**

Class Hours: One hour once a week

Classroom: TBD

Format: Lecture and discussion

Instructor: Professor Patricia Sieber

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**Objectives:**

This course is designed to accomplish three things. First, it will allow the students to grapple with one of their biggest life transitions to date—the movement from being a more or less supervised teenager to becoming an autonomous, responsible, and engaged member of an academic and social learning community--in the context of how other human beings have dealt with life cycle challenges in their respective lives. In other words, the course is designed to invite everyone to think about how life presents many challenges and what kinds of resources we can fashion to meet such challenges. Second, the course will introduce students to a range of writers through the ages who tackled difficult experiences with thoughtful explorations of their own responses and that of their contemporaries. The characteristic that we want to explore in most detail is the notion of resilience in the face of adversity. What is resilience, how does it manifest, and how can it be cultivated? In that regard, the course fits into DEALL’s newly evolving cluster of course offerings structured around the notion of “self-cultivation.” Third, the course will introduce the students to the art of close reading and associated methods of literary, cultural, and historical studies. In order to stimulate engagement with the humanities, the course will offer a range of analytical and creative assignments. On the whole, it is hoped that the course will allow to students to become more resilient on the one hand and more knowledgeable about what literature and literary studies have to offer to their own lives.

**Course content:**

We will read very short pieces of literature drawn from Chinese, German, and US literature from different periods. They are chosen for their brevity, acclaim, and ability to shed light on a particular issue confronting the author. The course presents them in largely chronological order. The discussion will be organized in such a way as to draw parallels between now and then and between the authors’ lives and contemporary experiences.

**Assignments:**

All assignments will be graded on a satisfactory/unsatisfactory basis. The reason for this kind of grading system is to encourage exploration, creativity, risk taking, and initiative rather than simply seeking to fulfill standard norms.

**1. Reading journal (25%):** Everyone will keep a private reading journal that they will edit for submission to the instructor at the end of the term. Any genre of commentary is acceptable.

**2. Analytical paper (15%):** Create a small literature review of the idea of “resilience” (4 pages)

**3. Bibliography (15%):** Everyone will choose one writer for whom they will develop a short bibliography. At least three items on that bibliography should be annotated by a paragraph-long summary.

**4. Discussion Leads (5%):** Each class session will feature at least two students who will generate questions for the class to consider.

**5. Creative final project (30%):** Everyone will develop a creative project that will involve a simulated or actual encounter with one of the writers discussed in the course.

**6. Active Class Participation (10%):** Everyone should contribute regularly to the discussion.

**Readings:**

All short readings will be available on CANVAS.

All contemporary book-length works will be on reserve at the Thompson Library and available for purchase through SBX.

**Course Schedule**

**Week of August 21**

Introduction: Getting Acquainted

**Week of August 27: Resilience**

Discussion: Deepening the learning community through an identification of issues we can to explore together

**Week of September 3: Why Write? Why Read?**

**Reading:**

Martha Nussbaum. Excerpt from *Poetic Justice*: *The Literary Imagination and Public Life*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1995.

**Trailor:** Nussbaum explains how reading and writing can nurture our awareness of what it means to live a life well-lived.

**Week of September 10: The Stigma of Living On**

**Reading:**

Sima Qian, “The Letter to Ren An: An English Translation.” In Stephen Durrant et al., eds. *The Letter to Ren An and Sima Qian’s Legacy*. Seattle: University of Washington, 2016.

**Trailor:** In the most famous letter in Chinese history, Sima Qian, China’s greatest historian, explains why he chose the political punishment of castration rather than the honorable route of suicide.

**Week of September 17: The Taint of Divorce**

**Reading:**

Li Qingzhao, “The Afterword to *The Record of Bronze and Stone.*” In Ronald Egan, *The Burden of Female Talent: The Poet Li Qingzhao and Her History in China*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2013.

**Trailor:** Li Qingzhao, China’s most famous female poet, grapples with her divorce from an abusive man in the wake of the fall of the dynastic government and of the death of her first husband.

**Week of September 24: The Toll of Education**

**Reading:**

Excerpts from Gao Ming, *The Lute*. Tr. Jean Mulligan. New York: Columbia University Press, 1980.

**Trailor:** In one of China’s most well-known plays, Gao Ming explores the wrenching dilemma of wanting to cultivate close family ties, while pursuing higher education, a conflict that the author struggled with in his own life.

**Week of October 1: The Price of Love**

**Reading:**

Excerpt from Tang Xianzu, *The Peony Pavilion*. Tr. Cyril Birch. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002.

**Trailor:** In his signature play, Tang Xianzu thinks through the mystery of love and its unsettling need to confront all kinds of societal taboos.

**Week of October 8: On Not Meeting Parental Expectations**

**Reading:**

Excerpt from Cao Xueqin, *The Story of the Stone*. Tr. David Hawkes. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973.

**Trailor:** In China’s most famous novel, Cao Xueqin examines how the family’s most gifted child is also the source of its greatest disappointment.

**Week of October 15: On Being Down and Out**

**Reading:**

Lu Xun, “Kong Yiji.” Tr. Julia Lovell. *The Real Story of Ah-Q and Other Tales of China*. Harmondsworth: Penguins Classics, 2009.

**Trailor:** In this iconic short story, Lu Xun, China’s most famous modern writer, thinks back on an encounter with a poor scholar in his hometown.

**Week of October 22: Recap**

**Readings:** Articles on resilience from *The New Yorker*, The *Harvard Business Review,* and *The New York Times*

<https://hbr.org/2002/05/how-resilience-works>

<https://www.newyorker.com/science/maria-konnikova/the-secret-formula-for-resilience>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/25/well/mind/how-to-boost-resilience-in-midlife.html>

**Week of October 29: The Up and Downs of Friendship**

**Reading:**

Anna Seghers, “The Excursion of the Dead Girls.” Tr. Helen Fehervary and Amy Kepple Strawser. In *American Imago*, 74 (2017): 283-306.

**Trailor:** In this famous short story, Seghers examines what happens to childhood friendships in the wake of the rise of Nazism in Germany.

**Week of November 5: The End of Childhood Beliefs**

**Reading:**

Excerpt from Anthony Doerr, *All the Light We Cannot See*.New York: Scribner, 2014.

**Trailor:** In this Pulitzer Prize winning novel, Doerr explores the transformation of a scientifically gifted and conformist orphan in Nazi Germany into a courageous young adult.

**Week of November 12: Coming to Terms with Violent Death**

**Reading:**

Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me.*

**Trailor:** In a letter to his young son, Coates examines the emotional aftermath of the killing of a classmate from Howard University.

**Week of November 19: Recap**

**Reading:**

Excerpt from Sheryl Sandberg and Adam Grant, *Option B: Facing Adversity, Building Resilience, and Finding Joy*. New York: A. Knopf, 2017.

<https://hbr.org/ideacast/2017/04/sheryl-sandberg-and-adam-grant-on-resilience.html>

**Weeks of November 26 and December 3: Student Presentations**

Students will share their creative project on one of the writers with the other students in the course.

**Academic Misconduct**

**It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct** [**http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/**](http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/)**.**

D**isability services**:

**The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options.  To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Student Life Disability Services.  After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion. SLDS contact information:** **slds@osu.edu****; 614-292-3307;** [**slds.osu.edu**](http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/)**; 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue.**

**Mental health**

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student’s ability to participate in daily activities. The Ohio State University offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. If you or someone you know are suffering from any of the aforementioned conditions, you can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Office of Student Life’s Counseling and Consultation Service (CCS) by visiting [ccs.osu.edu](http://ccs.osu.edu/%22%20%5Co%20%22CCS%20website%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) or calling 614­-292-­5766. CCS is located on the 4th Floor of the Younkin Success Center and 10th Floor of Lincoln Tower. You can reach an on call counselor when CCS is closed at 614­-292-­5766 and 24 hour emergency help is also available through the 24/7 National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1-­800­-273-TALK or at [suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/%22%20%5Co%20%22National%20Suicide%20Prevention%20website%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank).

**Sexual misconduct/relationship violence**

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories (e.g., race). If you or someone you know has been sexually harassed or assaulted, you may find the appropriate resources at <http://titleix.osu.edu> or by contacting the Ohio State Title IX Coordinator, Kellie Brennan, at titleix@osu.edu

**Diversity**

The Ohio State University affirms the importance and value of diversity in the student body. Our programs and curricula reflect our multicultural society and global economy and seek to provide opportunities for students to learn more about persons who are different from them. We are committed to maintaining a community that recognizes and values the inherent worth and dignity of every person; fosters sensitivity, understanding, and mutual respect among each member of our community; and encourages each individual to strive to reach his or her own potential. Discrimination against any individual based upon protected status, which is defined as age, color, disability, gender identity or expression, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status, is prohibited.