



Dear Students of Friendship:

We are delighted to welcome you to “Friendship” and to The Evergreen State College. This two-quarter program has ambitious goals, but we are also eager to help you explore your own interests. We hope this academic experience will provide you with a solid foundation for your future work both at Evergreen and in other areas of your life. The basic question we want to ask is: “What kind of work does friendship do for us as a culture?” But we are also looking forward to hearing what you think. Why does this subject interest you? What kinds of friendships are central to your life, and what makes them so important to you? Do they overlap with family or workplace relationships? What forms of communication do you use to keep in touch? Do you worry about what will happen to your friendships over time?

Our hope is that in exploring these questions together we will develop a new set of friendships within and around the program, friendships that are built around a mutual sense of respect for each other’s thoughts and feelings. As faculty members, we will do our best to support you, both inside the classroom and out of it; **please consider us your primary sounding boards for any concerns you have about your experience at the college.** We will not always have answers, but we may know people who do—and we’re always happy to listen.

Appropriately enough, our program was inspired both by existing friendships and by the desire to create new ones. During the fall quarter, the program will be led by Nancy Allen, Virginia (Jin) Darney, and Elizabeth Williamson. Nancy and Jin are veteran faculty members with broad ranging interests: Nancy focuses on Spanish language and the culture of Spain and Latin America while Jin’s specialties include American literature, feminist studies, film studies, and humanities. Elizabeth is a new faculty member who specializes in Renaissance literature but is eager to branch out into other areas including film. In the winter we’ll be joined by another Evergreen expert, Nancy Taylor, who has taught everything from classical literature to Japanese fiction. Throughout the summer we have been working as a group to flesh out the goals of this program, meeting over bagels in the morning and Nancy Allen’s wonderful salads in the evening. We think we have come up with some concrete aims for this potentially enormous topic, but we’re still looking forward to hearing your thoughts about where you’d like the program to go.

First, some nuts and bolts. The program will meet four days a week: Tuesday through Friday. On Tuesday we’ll have an all program meeting from 1-2 and seminar from 2-4. On Wednesday we’ll have a workshop from 10-1, a time we’ll typically use to work on writing. Thursday from

10-12 will be our Perspectives Workshop, in which we'll explore a variety of methodological perspectives on friendship including psychology, philosophy, anthropology, and sociology. Then from 1-5 we'll have a film screening and discussion, accompanied by tea (one of Nancy Taylor's favorite traditions). Finally, on Friday, we'll have our second seminar from 10-12.

In constructing the syllabus, we've done our best to include a wide variety of literary texts and films from different chronological periods and from different cultures. We'll be looking at classic works such as Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, a piece of comical satire that still makes us giggle four hundred years after its original publication. We'll also be covering two of Shakespeare's plays: you may already be familiar with *As You Like It*, a light comedy centered around a cross-dressed heroine. But the play is also a sly attack on love itself, and the friendship between the two women in the play is far more compelling than the traditional relationship between the protagonist and her Prince Charming. Aside from re-thinking canonical works, we'll also be reading books by contemporary authors, including Ann Patchett, who wrote a fascinating memoir about the life and suicide of her dear friend Lucy Grealy. Finally, we'll be watching a ton of films, including classic buddy movies like *Stand By Me*—but we're starting off the semester with a much darker, more troubling film called *Gods and Monsters* that deals with a volatile cross-generational friendship.

We're particularly excited about reading *Don Quixote* with you this year because it's the 400th anniversary of this great novel's publication. Edith Grossman, a leading translator of Latin American literature, was asked to produce a new translation for this anniversary year; her translation has received excellent reviews from Spanish scholars, is by far the most lively and readable English version, and is likely to be the definitive one for decades to come. If you do buy this book early, please purchase the Edith Grossman translation; it's in paperback, and you'll be very glad you did.

We designed this program because we believe friendships are central to our culture, yet often go unexamined in academic settings. As Shakespeare points out in *As You Like It*, most of us are able to use complicated language to describe romantic relationships, but friendships are much less easy to define. In our program description, we cited novelist Katherine Mansfield, who writes that, "I always felt that the great high privilege relief and comfort of friendship was that one had to explain nothing," and perhaps this is precisely the point—a friend is that person who understands you implicitly, almost without the need for words.

On the other hand, we all know that this ideal is very difficult to maintain (let alone to discover in the first place). For this reason, one of the projects of this program is to understand why we, as a society, are so interested in this seemingly impossible relationship. We also want to know whether the experience of friendship in other cultures is markedly different from our own. Finally, we want to observe the ways in which friendship blends into other social contexts in which groups of people come together with a shared interest, such as art, religion, or making money. Thus, in the second quarter, we want to move from studying pairs of friends to studying friendships in a group context. We'll approach our books and films primarily from a literary perspective, but "Friendship" will also give you experience in other disciplines: we're particularly excited about incorporating student-produced interviews into our discussions.

Please feel free to contact us before the fall quarter begins—all of our e-mail addresses are listed below. We are terrifically excited about this program, about working with each other and working with you, and if there's anything we can do to help you have a successful experience in the program, please let us know.

Finally, we want you to be aware of the **Orientation Week activities** that are open to you. We especially recommend the following events: a) Not sure which program to choose? Come talk with us and other faculty members at **First Year Program Previews**, from 9-10:30am on Monday, September 19. b) Concerned about how you'll get through *Don Quixote*? Check out the first **Learning to Learn** workshop later that day, from 2-4; it deals specifically with time management. c) Curious about the world beyond Evergreen? We **strongly suggest** that you join us in **Community to Community**, an afternoon of public service outreach from 1-5 on Thursday, September 22. We'll be meeting by the clock tower; contact access services at (360) 867-6348 if you need assistance with attending this event. *If you can only make one orientation week activity, please consider this one.*

We look forward to meeting all of you!!

Nancy Allen

Jin Darney

Nancy Taylor

Elizabeth Williamson

Required Summer reading: Daniel Clowes, *Ghost World*. This graphic novel shows us two characters on the edge of adulthood who are unsure about whether their friendship can sustain them in the world beyond high school. We hope you will find this a useful jumping off point for your experience at Evergreen, and for our program.

Books we'll be reading fall quarter (other readings may be added): Jonathan Lethem, *The Fortress of Solitude* (you may want to get started on this one now), Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, Ann Patchett, *Truth and Beauty*, William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, William Shakespeare, *Henry IV*, Jane Austen, *Emma*