**BARD EARLY COLLEGE in NEW ORLEANS**

**Course** | First Year Seminar, Spring 2015 ~ What is the Identity?

Mondays 9-10:15am, Thursdays 9-11am

**Professor** | Julia Carey Arendell

**Composition Instructor** | Cassie Pruyn, Wednesdays 9-10:15am

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**PURPOSE** | The First Year Seminar at Bard College is designed to cultivate close reading and question-asking without the adherence to specialty or traditionally closed subject matter. As a multi-disciplinary course, it exploits the pleasure of not adhering to one school or direction of thought, one path of research, or one department of study. By discovering the connections and overlaps of content, we evoke ideas that are irreducible, growing in richness and diversity, as opposed to drilling down to singular or small sets of finite answers. Our goal is not to focus on canonical content, but a genealogy of ideas. How are things related? What ends and means do they share? Why and how are their divergences important? By reaching into multiple fields, new territory of critical and creative thinking can be developed.

**ATTENDANCE |** Students who miss more than five classes per semester without a valid excuse will be placed on Academic Probation. Please consult the Bard Student Handbook for what constitutes an excused absence. As with most issues in life, communication and organization are key to our joint success in this class together.

**PLAGIARISM |** All written work is expected to be original to each student. It is intellectually and academically dishonest to pass off the words or ideas of others as your own in any graded assignment. While the incorporation of texts and concepts introduced by authors, professors, or fellow students is encouraged, these sources must be appropriately cited. Failure to distinguish your own work from that of others, intentional or otherwise, will be considered plagiarism. Consequences include being placed on Academic Probation, not receiving credit for the assignment or course, and possibly expulsion from the program.

**COMPONENTS |**

Essay #1 15%

Mid-term exam 10%

Essay #2 15%

Final Paper 15%

Composition 10%

Participation 11%

Reading Responses (4) 5% each

Presentation 4%

**GRADING |** The grading scale is in the Bard Student Handbook (i.e. what percentage constitutes an ‘A’). The grades you will receive on written work from me will be a point system, so if the reading responses, for example, are each worth 5% of your final grade, each one will be worth 5 points. A 5/5 would be a perfect score for that assignment. In this manner, you can, at any point, add all of the points earned on your written work and have a clear understanding of exactly what your percentage in the class would be. Yes, I do offer partial points, so it is possible to score a 2.85 (or such) on an assignment.

**ESSAYS |** You will receive essay assignments well in advance of the paper due dates so you have opportunity to draft and develop them in workshop. Quality papers will demonstrate a high level of thought and interaction with the content, not just a summarization. They should be well-organized so a traceable line of reason and scrutiny can be followed, with supporting evidence to back each argument and conclusion. All essays are expected to be between 4 and 6 pages. Details will be outlined in printed assignments. Unless arranged in advance, no late work accepted, and hard copies only. *Failure to turn in drafts before their due dates will negatively impact grade.*

**MIDTERM EXAM |** Written in class, this challenge is designed to help you advance your writing skills under pressure so that you explore your own tendencies for brainstorming, organizing, and synthesizing.

**PARTICIPATION |** Being present means more than physically occupying a space. It is a conscious exercise of deliberation and attention. You are part of something, listening to what is happening around you and within you, documenting what you need to remember, asking questions to gain understanding, and offering your perspective to the group. Being an active and respectful listener is just as important as engaging your voice in the discussion. It is these skills that build meaning, not only in our forum, but in our lives. Limit your distractions and take this opportunity to unplug from devices, and plug into the group. No laptops or phones during class, or unnecessary or frequent departures from the classroom. Be respectful of one another, even in disagreement, and please refrain from eating food in class.

**COMPOSITION WORKSHOP |** The workshop functions in concert with the Seminar and accounts for 10% of your final grade. This is the important mechanical work of writing – learning to revise, organizing your thoughts and material, and utilizing proper grammar and diction. You will draft and workshop all essays with your Composition instructor, with drafts due as noted on the syllabus via e-mail to cassie.pruyn@gmail.com by the Monday night before the Wednesday workshop.

**READING RESPONSES |** Four, one full page, single-spaced responses are due as noted on the syllabus. You have great freedom with these responses, as they are to help you make connections, ask questions, or bring in other reactions we may not have been able to accommodate in our limited class time together. These should not be summaries or “book reports,” but rather the foundation of your engagement with the texts. What moved you? Why were you moved? What does it remind you of? What confuses or troubles you and why? What do you disagree with and why? Often we have very emotional reactions that are not necessarily appropriate in our intellectual debates, but are quite useful in helping us understand a text’s importance or relevance. This is your place to start in exploring the material. While they may be personal or tangential, they should still make sense as a piece of organized writing that flows. *I will be strict about the length, so it is better to go longer than skimp.*

CALENDAR of READINGS | subject to change

Week One:

12 Jan | Soundbites (pgs 18-23); Wendy Doniger

15 Jan | DuBois, Borges, and Gish Jen

Week Two:

19 Jan | MLK Jr. Day – NO CLASS

22 Jan | West, Scott

Week Three:

26 Jan | RESPONSE #1 DUE; Walker, hooks

29 Jan | Blatt

Week Four:

2 Feb | Drafts of Paper #1 due to Ms. Pruyn; Rankine

5 Feb | Newton, Ruykeyser

Week Five:

9 Feb | Asante, Baldwin

12 Feb | PAPER #1 DUE, Screening of *Ink*

Week Six:

16 Feb | Mardi Gras Break – NO CLASS

19 Feb | Mardi Gras Break – NO CLASS

Week Seven:

23 Feb | Nabokov, Brooks

26 Feb | Descartes, Ryle

Week Eight:

2 Mar | *Orlando*

5 Mar | *Orlando*

Week Nine:

9 Mar | *Orlando*

12 Mar | *Orlando*

Week Ten:

16 Mar | Midterm Exam

19 Mar | Gaiman, Discussion about Judith Butler video

20 Mar | Midterm Grades Due

Week Eleven:

23 Mar | Wittig handout

26 Mar | RESPONSE #3 DUE; Sojourner Truth

Week Twelve:

30 Mar | Drafts of Paper #2 due to Ms. Pruyn; Spivak

2 Apr | Majaj

Week Thirteen:

6 Apr | Spring Break – NO CLASS

9 Apr | Spring Break – NO CLASS

Week Fourteen:

13 Apr | Danticat

16 Apr | PAPER #2 DUE, Burroughs

Week Fifteen:

20 Apr | RESPONSE #4 DUE; Rousseau, Harjo

23 Apr | Sacks

Week Sixteen:

27 Apr | Drafts due for Final Papers to Ms. Pruyn; Whitman

30 Apr | Murphy

Week Seventeen:

4 May |Dunbar-Nelson

7 May | FINAL PAPERS DUE;Screening *Zelig;*

Week Eighteen:

11 May | *Zelig* discussion

14 May |Happy Graduation! Last day of class

Final Grades Due