

LINFIELD COLLEGE  
ENG 376: SEARCH FOR MEANING:  
WRITING & THE SPIRIT  
Summer 2008

CREDITS: 3 credits, IQS, IA, UQ, DG

LOCATION: Linfield College, Portland DCE

DATES/TIMES: Thursdays, 6/19 - 8/21, 6:00 - 9:30 pm  
Saturday, July 26, 9-5 pm

INSTRUCTOR: Elizabeth Watzke, PhD.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

A therapist questions the meaning of survival in a Nazi concentration camp. Sixteen-year-old Pi Patel finds himself stranded in a lifeboat with only a Bengal tiger for company. A young successful couple in Seattle learns that their five-year old son may be the reincarnation of a Dalai Lama. In 1964, a young girl flees the memory of her mother's shooting death and makes her way to a trio of beekeeping sisters who hold the keys to the mystery of her identity. In a country house in Derbyshire in 1809, a young girl and her tutor attempt to discover the formula that will explain everything. In 1630, a group of religious exiles embark on a journey that will test the limits of their faith.

What do these characters have in common? Each is thrust by changing circumstances to question, reflect upon and finally to search for meaning and purpose in their lives; new realities challenge and call them out of everyday patterns into a quest that engages their minds, bodies, and souls, as they are called to question the deepest ideas that underpin existence, including meaning and mystery itself.

Beginning with Viktor Frankl's short book, "Man's Search for Meaning", we shall explore the stories of these characters as they are awakened by war, love, loss and art into a dimension of existence that changes them and alters not only their lives but their relations to others, to life and to mystery itself. Through reading fiction, nonfiction and film, we shall also explore the role of narrative and storytelling in relation to meaning and mystery.

Students will read, come up with questions and do exploratory writing that

seeks to make connections between our reading, discussion and their own personal experience, as well as write two essays and do one brief presentation. The goal of the class is to expand students' understanding of life-changing experiences and writings from a variety of perspectives; to learn something about different cultural and faith traditions and approaches to the spiritual; to learn how to listen and work in an attitude of inquiry and understanding in an academic context; and to reflect on our own experiences of these issues as well as contribute to a more enriched understanding of others, crossing borders of culture, ethnicity and faith. Given the historical times in which we live, learning how to understand and respect each other's basic humanity is becoming crucial to peaceful survival both on and for our planet; it is hoped this class will form a basis or bedrock for each student's reflections and relations to others in communities outside of as well as within the classroom, and inspire them to further journeys and explorations.

Books Required:

*Man's Search For Meaning*, Victor Frankl

*Life of Pi*, Yann Martel

*The Secret Life of Bees*, Sue Monk Kidd

*Arcadia*, a play by Tom Stoppard

These books are available at Linfield Bookstore, as well as at Powell's, Barnes & Noble, Borders, Amazon.com and at your public library. You are required to obtain and read these books by the first day we discuss them in class.

Assignments/% of grade:

**Participation (20%):** This includes class participation and timely completion of all assignments. Read all assigned material and arrive prepared to refer to it on the day it is assigned. Be present (alert, attentive, thoughtful) and contribute consistently and respectfully to class discussions. Do all Exploring Language writing assignments and homework questions, both in-class and take-home by the day they are due; if necessary I will

replace these with quizzes. Do these BEFORE class begins, not during class, or your grade may be affected.

Consistent attendance is also required to pass this course. **Absences:** 0-2, no effect on your grade; 3-4, your grade goes down one letter; 5 or more, you are failing the class (missing half or more of the total weeks of the term). You are responsible for finding out what work you missed and for handing it by the next class period, and for keeping up with the reading.

**Lateness:** consistently being late to class will affect your participation grade; please let me know of any extenuating circumstances. Assignments will be accepted no more than one week after the due date.

**Two Essays (30% each):** Two essays based on our reading. These essays will be typed, double-spaced, 5-8 pages each. Essay topics will be discussed in class and ok'ed by me. Academic writing standards will be required; finding your voice within those standards will also be discussed. If we have time, we will work on essays in class.

**Research: Brief Presentation and Writing (20%):** You will give a brief (10 minute) presentation to the class on a specific topic relevant to one of the books we are reading. Suggested topics include: biography of author; literary reviews & responses to the author's work; historical contexts; cultural contexts. Each student is responsible for locating at least three sources on their topic.

Students will give me two-three written pages: a summary of their findings; two discussion questions; a bibliography of their sources. Presentations are due on the second day the book is discussed; for Frankl and Stoppard, on the day of discussion.

See the class web page, [www.linfield.edu/library/dce/eng376meaning.html](http://www.linfield.edu/library/dce/eng376meaning.html) for help with research; you can also contact Carol McCulley, Linfield Librarian at [cmccull@linfield.edu](mailto:cmccull@linfield.edu).

**WRITING NOTES:** We will spend some class time setting up the essays and addressing academic standards. I encourage you to utilize your Exploring Language writings as a springboard for the essays. Exploring Language writings are 2-3 pages, handwritten is fine, typed and double-

spaced is also fine. These are fastwritings for you to explore your thoughts and ideas in response to the readings. I will always give you a prompt for these writings; we will do these in class together or as homework assignments.

**LATENESS:** under dire circumstances, I will grant one-week extensions for the major essays. Essays two weeks late: grade will go down one letter. I will not accept essays later than two weeks after the due date.

**PLAGIARISM:** Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- using the ideas, data, or language of another without specific and proper acknowledgement;
- misrepresenting another's work (paper, report, lab work, research, article, etc.) as one's own original creation and handing it in for an assignment;
- using someone else's ideas without attribution in documentation style;
- failing to cite a reference or to use quotation marks where appropriate;
- trying to pass off someone else's work as your own;
- submitting contrived or altered information (such as making up data, citing nonexistent or irrelevant articles);
- multiple submissions (submitting one paper for two classes in an attempt to fulfill two academic requirements with one paper);
- and other similar behaviors. Please ask me if you have any questions about plagiarism, especially regarding paraphrasing, and please see me if you feel any under any pressure to plagiarize. We will study how to avoid plagiarism in class so that you can expertly cite your research.

**WRITING CENTER:** The Writing Center is available to help you with drafts, editing and other elements of the writing process. Their email is: [pdx-writing@linfield.edu](mailto:pdx-writing@linfield.edu) and they are located in Peterson Hall, Student Club Room, Level One, between the phones and the copier; please contact them to make an appointment for any help with your writing/ reading/ studying needs.

**INCOMPLETES:** Incompletes will be given only if a student has attended all classes faithfully and done all required written work but at the end of the term, due to an unforeseen emergency, the student needs more time to complete a paper. Incompletes must be arranged two weeks before the end of term and are due by the end of the following term. At the conclusion of class the Incomplete becomes the student's entire responsibility.

Incompletes are therefore not a substitute for missing class and late assignments, and are given only under extreme circumstances (illness, accident, etc.).

**CONFERENCES:** Please don't hesitate to set up a conference time with me at any point in the term if you want explicit feedback on your writing or any other aspect of the course.

**ADA Statement:** Students who experience disabilities who may need accommodations, who have any emergency medical information the instructor should know of, or who need special arrangements in the event of evacuation, should make an appointment with the instructor as early as possible, no later than the first week of the term.

**Course Schedule:** Reading and writing assignments are listed next to the date they are due; writing assignments are due at the beginning of class, as are essays and presentations; Exploratory Writing prompts TBA. Schedule may adjust.

### **FACE TO FACE**

June 19      Course introductions.  
                 Exploring Language #1 in class (I will collect).

June 26      Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*.  
                 Exp. Lang. #2 is due (see handout)

### **MYSTERY**

July 3        *Life of Pi*, Author's note-Ch. 40 (pp. V-134).

July 10      *Life of Pi*, Ch. 41-76 (pp. 134-267).

July 17      *Life of Pi*, Ch. 77-100 (pp. 267-401).

### **THE STORY OF THE SELF: CREATIVITY, COMMUNITY, TRUTH**

July 24      *Bees*, Ch. 1-8 (pp. 1-164).

July 26      *Bees*, Ch. 9-14 (pp. 165-301); PM, Grotto, field trip.

Aug. 7      View film *Little Buddha*

Aug. 16     *Arcadia*

Aug. 23     View Film *Desperate Crossings*  
Course evaluations and wrap-ups.