

IDH2930: (Un)CommonReads

Friendship After Fascism: Elena Ferrante's *My Brilliant Friend*

A UF Honors Course | Section 26793 | Spring 2026

Instructor: Dr. Sean Trainor (he/him) | Instructional Associate Professor
Management Communication Center | Warrington College of Business

Email: sean.trainor@ufl.edu | **Phone:** 352.273.3215

Office Hours: Wednesday, 2-4pm (233G Bryan Hall) and by appt.

Class Meetings: Mon., Periods 8 (3:00 PM – 3:50 PM ET) | **Location:** Little Hall 119

In this section of IDH2930, we will read and analyze Ann Goldstein's beautiful translation of Elena Ferrante's 2011 coming-of-age novel, *My Brilliant Friend* (*L'amica geniale*).

The primary goal of this course is, quite simply, to introduce you to one of the twenty-first century's finest pieces of literature. Along the way, the course will also:

- Improve your ability to analyze and write about the concepts of childhood, friendship, and community
- Strengthen your ability to analyze the impact of violence, deprivation, and authoritarianism on individuals and communities
- Enhance your knowledge of Italian history and culture – in particular, the history and culture of Naples – between the rise of fascism and the "Years of Lead"

COURSE POLICIES

COURSE FORMAT

This section of IDH2930 will be offered exclusively in a face-to-face modality. As such, you are expected (barring health, personal, or family emergencies) to attend each class session live in the assigned classroom. If you must miss individual class sessions, please see the "Attendance and In-Class Discussion" section below for information on excused absences.

COURSE TEXT

To succeed in this course, you must purchase a physical or ebook version of the following text:

Elena Ferrante (trans., Ann Goldstein), *My Brilliant Friend* (New York: Europa Editions, 2012), ISBN: 978-1-60945-078-6.

Copies of *My Brilliant Friend* are available for purchase at [The Lynx](#) bookstore in downtown Gainesville (limited numbers available); at the UF Bookstore in the Reitz Union; and at online retailers.

OFFICE HOURS

I will hold drop-in office hours from 2-4pm every Wednesday in my office, [233G Bryan Hall](#), inside the Management Communication Center.

You may also book an office hours appointment using the Outlook scheduling assistant. Instructions on how to use the scheduling assistant are available on Canvas.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

To successfully navigate this course, you must complete the three categories of assignments described below.

READING REFLECTIONS

Over the course of this semester, you will post ten times on the Reading Reflection Discussion Board. Your posts should be 1-2 paragraphs in length and should detail any thoughts or questions that came to mind while completing the week's reading. You should use these posts to begin developing your contributions to class discussions.

I will not evaluate these posts for grammar, style, or mechanics. So long as your posts reflect a strong familiarity with the week's reading, you will receive full credit.

ATTENDANCE AND IN-CLASS DISCUSSION

This section of IDH2930 is a discussion-intensive class. We will spend most of each class session discussing the week's readings. The success of the class therefore depends on your regular attendance and participation which, together, represent a large portion of your final grade.

To receive full credit for attendance and participation, you must attend at least eleven (of thirteen) class sessions and make regular, thoughtful contributions to class discussions. You may miss class for illness, religious observance, university-sponsored events, job interviews, or family emergencies. If you *do* miss class, please provide a written explanation (and, if possible, documentation) for why you were unable to attend. I will excuse two absences per module.

REFLECTION PAPERS

You will write three, 2-3-page Reflection Papers over the course of this semester. I will evaluate these assignments for both substance and style. Assignment prompts and evaluation criteria for these papers are available on Canvas.

While you should aim to meet assignment deadlines, you may always request extensions. I would much prefer to read your best work late than mediocre work on time.

GRADING POLICIES

I will grade your three Reflection Papers using a standardized, four-category rubric. As I grade your work, I will link any point deductions to one or more of the rubric categories using Canvas's in-line feedback function. You can access this in-line feedback by clicking Grades > [Assignment Name], then scrolling to the bottom of the page where you'll find a gray window with both your assignment submission and my accompanying comments.

If you have questions about your feedback, wait 24 hours after receiving your grade before contacting me. This buffer will give you time to read and learn from your feedback. You may then

email with questions or concerns at any time during the next four days. While I will be happy to provide insight into your grade, all grades for this course are final.

Final grades will be based on obtaining the percentage of total course points listed in the table below. The grade-point value per credit hour associated with each letter grade is assigned by the Office of the University Registrar and also appears in the table below. For more information on grades, visit: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>.

Grade	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	E
Percent	100-94	<94-90	<90-87	<87-83	<83-80	<80-77	<77-73	<73-70	<70-67	<67-63	<63-60	<60-0
GPA	4.0	3.67	3.33	3.0	2.67	2.33	2.0	1.67	1.33	1.0	0.67	0.0

Please note: A minimum grade of B is required to earn academic points towards Honors Completion Requirements. Once you have earned your final grade in this course, please upload the course information and final grade from your Unofficial Transcript into the module entitled 'Honors Canvas Cohort: Honors Requirements.' Doing so will enable you to earn Honors Milestone / Completion credit.

The point values for your assigned work are listed in the table below.

COURSE ITEM	POINTS
Reading Reflections (10 at 5 points each)	50
Attendance and In-Class Discussion	100
Reflection Papers (3 at 50 points each)	150
Total Points Possible	300

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE POLICY

In this class, you may use generative artificial intelligence tools like ChatGPT as well as digital writing aids like Grammarly.

Please use these tools carefully, critically, and in moderation. Thanks to AI tools, clear, grammatical writing is now cheap. By contrast, writing with a voice and perspective is more valuable than ever. Use AI tools to help ensure that your writing possesses the former qualities; use your own original insights and critical thinking skills to help you cultivate the latter qualities.

When you do use AI, please report what tools you used as well as how you used them. This approach will not only ensure that your class submissions are compliant with UF's (evolving) academic integrity standards; it will also help me understand your writing process, how AI tools are changing over time, and how I can best support your growth as a writer.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Students are required to know and comply with the university's policy on academic honesty. This policy is detailed in the Undergraduate Catalog and by reference is included in this course syllabus. For more information visit: <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/process/honor-code/>.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students requesting classroom accommodations must first register with the Dean of Students Office. Support services for students with disabilities are coordinated by the [Disability Resource Center](#) in the [Dean of Students Office](#). All support services provided for University of Florida students are individualized to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

To obtain individual support services, each student must meet with one of the support coordinators in the Disability Resources Program and collaboratively develop appropriate support strategies. Appropriate documentation regarding the student's disability is necessary to obtain any reasonable accommodation or support service. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor a minimum of ten days prior to the requested accommodation.

U MATTER, WE CARE

Your well-being is important to the University of Florida. The U Matter, We Care initiative is committed to creating a culture of care on our campus by encouraging members of our community to look out for one another and to reach out for help if a member of our community is in need. If you or a friend is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu so that the U Matter, We Care Team can reach out to the student in distress. A nighttime and weekend crisis counselor is available by phone at 352-392-1575. The U Matter, We Care Team can help connect students to the many other helping resources available including, but not limited to, Victim Advocates, Housing staff, and the Counseling and Wellness Center. Please remember that asking for help is a sign of strength. In case of emergency, call 9-1-1.

HONORS PROGRAM CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions or concerns about the Honors Program, please consult one or more of the following resources:

- For in-person assistance, please visit the Honors Program in Honors Village Complex #4
- For help by phone, please call 352-392-1519
- For simple question that require the assistance of an Honors advisor, please email advisor@honors.ufl.edu
- For more detailed issues that require an Honors advising appointment, please schedule a meeting via Microsoft Bookings at the following link: <https://bit.ly/UFHonorsAdvising>
- For questions related to Honore Program event scheduling, please consult the online Event Calendar at <https://www.honors.ufl.edu/news--events/calendar-of-events/>

ADDITIONAL POLICIES AND RESOURCE

For additional university-wide policies that pertain to this course, as well as additional resources available to all UF students, please consult the following page: <https://syllabus.ufl.edu/syllabus-policy/uf-syllabus-policy-links/>

COURSE SCHEDULE (all times in eastern US time)

CLASS 1: Monday, 12 January (Introduction to the Course)

- **Class Activities:**
 - Course Introduction
 - Student Introductions
- **Due After Class:**
 - Post on Private Class Introductions Discussion Board (due Fri., 16 Jan., 11:59pm)
 - Post on Public Class Introductions Discussion Board (due Fri., 16 Jan., 11:59pm)

CLASS 2: Monday, 26 January (Setting the Scene)

- **Due Before Class:**
 - *Read:*
 - *My Brilliant Friend*, 13-41 (Index of Characters; Prologue, chs. 1-3; Childhood, chs. 1-5)
 - *Complete:*
 - Weekly Reading Reflection Discussion Board Post
- **Class Activities:**
 - Reading Discussion

CLASS 3: Monday, 2 February (Childhood Friendships)

- **Due Before Class:**
 - *Read:*
 - *My Brilliant Friend*, 41-85 (Childhood, chs. 6-18)
 - *Complete:*
 - Weekly Reading Reflection Discussion Board Post
- **Class Activities:**
 - Reading Discussion

CLASS 4: Monday, 9 February (Discovering Sex)

- **Due Before Class:**
 - *Read:*
 - *My Brilliant Friend*, 89-119 (Adolescence, chs. 1-8)
 - *Complete:*
 - Weekly Reading Reflection Discussion Board Post
- **Class Activities:**
 - Reading Discussion
- **Due After Class:**
 - Submit Reflection Paper 1: Childhood (due Fri., 13 Feb., 11:59pm)

CLASS 5: Monday, 16 February (Expanding Horizons)

- **Due Before Class:**
 - *Read:*
 - *My Brilliant Friend*, 119-153 (Adolescence, chs. 9-16 [and re-read Adolescence, chs. 7-8])
 - *Complete:*
 - Weekly Reading Reflection Discussion Board Post
- **Class Activities:**
 - Reading Discussion

CLASS 6: Monday, 23 February (The World “Before”)

- **Due Before Class:**
 - *Read:*
 - *My Brilliant Friend*, 153-182 (Adolescence, chs. 17-23 [and re-read Adolescence, ch. 16])
 - *Complete:*
 - Weekly Reading Reflection Discussion Board Post
- **Class Activities:**
 - Reading Discussion

CLASS 7: Monday, 2 March (Unwanted Attention)

- **Due Before Class:**
 - *Read:*
 - *My Brilliant Friend*, 183-209 (Adolescence, chs. 24-29)
 - *Complete:*
 - Weekly Reading Reflection Discussion Board Post
- **Class Activities:**
 - Reading Discussion

CLASS 8: Monday, 9 March (Getting Away / First Loves)

- **Due Before Class:**
 - *Read:*
 - *My Brilliant Friend*, 209-233 (Adolescence, chs. 30-35)
 - *Complete:*
 - Weekly Reading Reflection Discussion Board Post
- **Class Activities:**
 - Reading Discussion
- **Due After Class:**
 - Submit Reflection Paper 2: Community (due Fri., 13 Mar., 11:59pm)

CLASS 9: Monday, 23 March (Tough Choices)

- **Due Before Class:**
 - *Read:*
 - *My Brilliant Friend*, 233-252 (Adolescence, chs. 36-40)
 - *Complete:*
 - Weekly Reading Reflection Discussion Board Post
- **Class Activities:**
 - Reading Discussion

CLASS 10: Monday, 30 March (Becoming Adults)

- **Due Before Class:**
 - *Read:*
 - *My Brilliant Friend*, 252-287 (Adolescence, chs. 41-50)
 - *Complete:*
 - Weekly Reading Reflection Discussion Board Post
- **Class Activities:**
 - Reading Discussion

CLASS 11: Monday, 6 April (Those Who Leave and Those Who Stay)

- **Due Before Class:**
 - *Read:*
 - *My Brilliant Friend*, 287-331 (Adolescence, chs. 51-62)
 - *Complete:*
 - Weekly Reading Reflection Discussion Board Post
- **Class Activities:**
 - Reading Discussion

CLASS 12: Monday, 13 April (What Have We Learned?)

- **Class Activities:**
 - Class Discussion
- **Due After Class:**
 - Submit Reflection Paper 3: Friendship (due Fri., 17 Apr., 11:59pm)

CLASS 13: Monday, 20 April (Farewell, For Now, to Lila and Lenù)

- **Class Activities:**
 - Class Discussion