

# Reading, Thinking, Writing

Dave Denny, Professor Emeritus in English

## COURSE SYLLABUS

### Required Books

- *My Name is Lucy Barton* by Elizabeth Strout
- *Aimless Love* by Billy Collins
- *John* by Annie Baker

### Required Materials

- Blue or black ink pens for in-class writing
- Journal: composition book with lined paper
- Access to a personal computer with a reliable internet connection

### Course Description

The reading for this section of English is comprised of books by contemporary American authors, each of whom has achieved notoriety within their field and written many books over a lengthy and productive career. The books provide us with a sample of each of the three primary genres of imaginative literature: fiction, poetry, and drama. The writing for this course will focus on the skills of analysis, interpretation, and creativity, culminating in a comprehensive in-class essay exam. Along the way we'll hone our research and synthesis skills to better evaluate and use sources as we develop our ideas.

### Objectives

In this class we will learn to read for grace, nuance and subtlety; we will learn to interpret, analyze, and compare; and we will learn to write with clarity, vigor, and freshness, often incorporating secondary sources into the fabric of our writing. Beyond these modest academic goals, I hope this course will also engender an appreciation for the literary arts that will enlarge your vision of humanity and encourage your sense of belonging in the world.

So, on a practical level, our objectives are to raise language competency in reading, thinking, and writing. But the bigger picture has to do with not just what you can *do* but with who you *are*. I hope you will see this class as an opportunity to discover more about yourself and the world around you as reflected in our readings, lectures, activities, discussions, and writings. Education is a transformative process. Who are you in the process of becoming? What part will this course play in that process?

### Assignments

Out-of-class writing: 190 points possible

- *1 Full-length, Research-enhanced Essay*—approximately 1,500 words, 30 points possible.

- *3 Moderate-length Essays*—tightly-focused interpretive arguments on each of our three books, approximately 1,000 words each, 20 points possible (x 3).
- *10 Brief Writing Assignments* in response to our weekly Canvas modules—a series of written analyses of video lectures, approximately 500 words each, 10 points possible (x 10).

In-class writing: 80 points possible

- *Journal*—10 exploratory writings achieved in class, each approximately 500 words (**no make-ups for missed classes**), 5 points possible (x 10).
- *Final Essay Exam*—a cumulative essay written in class during our final exam session, 30 points possible.

Participation: 30 points possible

**Note: In this class, there are no make-ups, rewrites, or extra credit opportunities; you must take the class as it is taught. If this policy is not to your liking, then this may not be the right English class for you.**

**Grades**

There is a total of 300 available points in our course which Canvas, our online educational platform, will calculate according to its standard default academic grade scale. It will be the keeper of your point values, updated with each entry, available to you at any point during the quarter. All grades are final and not open to negotiation.

**Policies**

- **Attendance/Participation**: With only half of our contact hours being in-person instruction, regular attendance in a hybrid class is essential to success; therefore, *if you miss more than four class hours, you will be dropped from the course*. Two tardies will be counted as one absence. *There are no excused absences in this course*. There is a separate grade category for participation because it's essential: it's impossible to improve your communication skills without regular deep-seated verbal engagement. You will read and write *aloud* often in this class.
- **Masking**: If you or someone close to you has been sick, please wear a facemask while you are in our class. We do this not just to keep ourselves healthy, but to protect those around us and those they love and care for. Many of your fellow-students have close family members with compromised immune systems. Respect them by not accidentally spreading germs to their loved ones.
- **Paper Business**: The full-length essay topic will be announced and described in the appropriate module on our class Canvas site two weeks in advance of its due date; one week in advance of the moderate-length essays. **There are no rewrites for poorly\hastily written papers**; by now, revision and editing should be a regular feature of your composition process.
- **Turnitin.com**: You will submit your papers for this course to Turnitin.com, which is fully integrated into our Canvas site. Among other things, Turnitin.com

will search the web for language matches with your paper once you upload it, issuing an “originality report,” which tells the percentage of language your paper shares with other similar writings found on the internet. A certain low-level amount of shared language is probable, considering brief quotes, etc. The sweet spot for shared language in an academic research-enhanced essay is approximately 10-15%. If your originality report on any paper that you submit to this class reveals plagiarism (more than 30% of shared language), whether intentional or accidental, you will receive a '0' on that assignment. If there is time left in the quarter to do so, you may rewrite the essay, at which time the grade will be reconsidered.

- **AI:** The use of artificial intelligence *in any format* to produce or contribute to an original paper for this course is inconsistent with course goals. We will not be using AI in this particular class. If Turnitin.com reveals AI content in your writing, it will be considered plagiarism, and you will receive a '0' on that assignment. If there is time left in the quarter to do so, you may rewrite the essay, at which time the grade will be reconsidered.
- **Tutoring & Assistance:** One important goal of this English course is to prepare you to read, think, and write at a level necessary for success at the university and beyond; however, not everyone who enrolls in this class is prepared to succeed at this level. If you find yourself struggling or falling behind, please take advantage of the many opportunities our campus provides for tutoring or individually paced skills courses in reading, grammar, or writing. You may find this course particularly challenging if English is not your native language, or if you have a learning disability that causes difficulty in reading and/or writing. If so, seek help early and often from Disability Support Services or the Student Success Center's Writing and Reading Center.
- **The Importance of Friday:** Each Friday of the quarter I open the new Module in Canvas for the following week. And each Friday is a firm deadline for all work in that week's Module. Since the submission windows lock *before midnight* on Friday (actual time: approx. 11:45 pm), you will have to contact me via email for an extension. There is a **20% grade deduction for each day late**. *If you are unable to abide by this strict policy, then this might not be the right English class for you.*

### Contact

I will hold an office hour immediately after our class session in F61c for anyone who has questions. You can also email me at any time; I will answer within 24 hours, usually sooner, but slower on weekends: [dennydave@deanza.edu](mailto:dennydave@deanza.edu).

### Contract

In effect, a Course Syllabus is a contract between students and instructor: it gives both parties a public basis for relationship and an understanding of course expectations and boundaries. If you choose to remain in this class after Week One, it is assumed that you agree with this syllabus and intend to be held accountable to its contents.