

## Feeling American

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Office hours: MW 1-2pm, and by appointment; sign up at [mendelman.youcanbook.me](http://mendelman.youcanbook.me)

Section 2: MW 11:10-12:30pm\*

Section 3: MW 2:10-3:30pm\*

\* Brawner 446

What does it mean to “feel American”? How do different people imagine and experience national belonging? How have cultural notions of this collective phenomenon and individual enterprise changed over the past few centuries? This course will consider these questions by examining the dynamics of feeling in works by artists somehow tethered to the United States. We will listen to music, read poetry, fiction, and non-fiction, watch films, look at visual art, and examine a few choice pieces of our national literature. As we discuss these works and the evolving cultural sensibilities they reflect, we will explore how different people imagine emotional experience to intersect with (and perhaps be determined by) social categories like gender, race, and sexuality and social structures like education, religion, and socioeconomics.

English 102 is an introduction to textual analysis designed to help you develop your critical reading and writing skills. With these aims in mind, we will hone specific strategies of close reading and devote serious attention to the writing process. We will pay special attention to how feeling functions in textual objects. How do words on paper express sensation and evoke visceral responses? How do we assess tone? We will study these key components of literary analysis and investigate the language we use to narrate and distinguish feeling (e.g., “love,” “affection,” “intimacy,” and “compassion”; “disdain,” “disgust,” “horror,” and “hatred”). As we discuss the interchanges between words and feelings, we will dwell most often on the links and leaps between the two, and we will consider how these associations, expectations, and assumptions change over time. In so doing, we will aim to learn both about the nature of language and communication, and the material realities these projects seek to describe. Through informed conversation and constructive questioning, we will appraise our course texts in their historical and formal contexts, as well as contemplate the larger, thematic concerns inherent in any study of what it means to be human.

### Required course texts

Available at the Campus Store:

- Alexie, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (2006)
- Course reader
- Didion, *Play It As It Lays* (1970)
- Hacker and Sommers, *The Bedford Handbook* 10<sup>th</sup> ed. (2016)
- Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951)

Available on reserve at Bowman Library:

- *West Side Story* (1961)

- *Clueless* (1995)
- *Snowden* (2016)

### Assignments and grading

- Paper #1: Short form prose analysis / 3 page minimum (15%)
- Paper #2: Long form prose analysis / 4 page minimum (20%)
- Paper #3: Research-supported prose analysis / 6 page minimum (20%)
- Final exam (10%)
- Classwork: homework assignments, reading quizzes, oral presentation (20%)
- Participation (15%)

### Grade calculus

- A (✓+) = 95
- A/A- = 92.5
- A- = 90
- A-/B+ (✓/✓+) = 89
- B+ = 88
- B+/B = 86.5
- B (✓) = 85
- B/B- = 82.5
- B- = 80
- B-/C+ (✓/✓-) = 79
- C+ = 78
- C (✓-) = 75
- C- = 70
- D+ = 68
- D = 65
- D- = 60
- F = 50

### Classwork

The required assignments for this course include weekly writing exercises and one oral presentation. The writing assignments will focus on specific aspects of analytical writing (e.g., thesis statements, close reading paragraphs). These exercises will function as building blocks for each of the course papers. We will work with these assignments in class on their due date, so they must exist, **in hard copy**, at the start of each class period. Late homework will not receive credit, but **you must complete all class assignments to pass the course.**

The oral presentations will be done in small groups (2-3 students) and will focus on a single course text, beginning in Week 3. These ten minute presentations will initiate class discussion on their assigned day and thus should aim to raise questions

rather than provide answers about the given work. I will deliver a sample presentation in our second class.

I will also give infrequent reading quizzes. Quizzes will be given at the beginning of class and will feature three straightforward questions about key story elements (e.g., how does the protagonist get to and from work?). So long as you do the reading, you will pass with flying colors. If you miss a quiz on a day when you have an excused absence, your grade will be calculated without it. There will be no make-up quizzes.

## Papers

The details of each paper will be discussed as the dates approach. Topics are always flexible (translation: if you have an exciting idea/question/hunch/puzzle, just ask!). Papers should include a well-formulated, argumentative, focused thesis (a.k.a. debatable claim), ample, pertinent textual support (a.k.a. close reading), and compelling analytical structure. Papers must also be typed, double-spaced, MLA- or APA-formatted with a proper heading, margins, and Works Cited. We'll review citation guidelines early in the semester; if you have questions or concerns about this protocol (or about anything else), I'm happy to talk in office hours.

A few other guidelines: I will not answer content-related emails in the 24 hours preceding the paper deadline (trust me, this policy benefits everyone involved). **Your paper is due in hard copy at the beginning of class and must be uploaded to MOLE before you arrive that day.** Papers cannot be submitted via email. Late papers will be penalized one third of a letter grade for every day past the deadline, including weekend days. After five days, you will receive a zero for the essay (note, however, that you must complete all assignments to pass the class). The final essay must be submitted at the final exam session; no late papers will be accepted.

Writing is really about rewriting. To encourage you to keep revising your work beyond deadlines that are necessary but arbitrary, I invite you to submit any course assignment to the Menlo Oak Press. If your piece is selected for publication and you work with the editors to revise and publish the piece, I will grade your new product. You will either earn this new grade on the assignment (replacing your former grade) *or* augment your former grade by one third of a letter—whichever comes out in your favor.

## Participation

The success of our seminar depends on the active participation of every student. Accordingly, participation constitutes a large portion (15%) of the final grade for the course. I will calculate it as follows: I will not keep track of the number of times you raise your hand; I will attend to the evidence that you actively, regularly engage with the material, share your insights and questions with the class, and incorporate these thoughts as well as my feedback into the course assignments.

**I have a no-screens policy in class.** If I see you on your phone during class, it will drastically affect your participation grade. The same rubric applies to your physical classroom presence: arrive on time; stay for the entire session; do not take bathroom breaks on your own terms (I will pause class after roughly 40 minutes to allow for a collective break, during which time you can use the restroom and catch up on all missed social media).

The chance to attend to one subject for eighty minutes, with a community of other people, is a rare opportunity; take advantage of it.

For those who prefer a more quantitative rubric, I offer the following guidelines.

### *Absences*

- 3 unexcused absences will lower your participation grade by 1/2 of a letter.
- 5 unexcused absences will lower your participation grade by 1 letter.
- **6 unexcused absences will result in your failing the course.**
- Note that absences are *only* excused with medical documentation or prior approval from me (athletic absences are approved provided you contact me 48 hours beforehand.)

### *Late arrivals*

- **Each tardy arrival will lower your participation grade by 1%.**
- If you arrive without a hard copy of an assignment due that day, that counts as a tardy arrival for the day (owing to the missed time it takes you to go print).

### *How to positively influence your participation grade:*

- Arrive on time.
- Stay for the entire session.
- Electronic devices must remain unseen and unheard for the duration of class (yes, all 80 minutes, class breaks excepted).
- Actively engage with class material:
  - Take notes on the framework I offer for our reading each day and the discussions that ensue.
  - Review and cite class material—both when prompted and unprompted by me.
  - Ask questions.
  - Volunteer to read material out loud.
  - Contribute to discussion.
- If you struggle with the latter, I encourage you to come to class each day with a question or observation from the reading.

### *How to negatively influence your participation grade:*

- Miss class.
- Arrive late.
- Use an electronic device.
- Fail to bring class materials (books, course reader, notebooks, writing implements).
- Have items other than class materials and food or drink on the seminar tables (e.g., bags, headphones).
- Zone out in class.
- Ignore instructions to review (look at) the reading.
- Make no effort to answer questions or participate in discussion.

## Academic Integrity Policy

“Menlo College expects that students will do their own work and that their quizzes, tests, examinations, lab work, research papers, essays, projects, internships, and all other assignments honestly reflect their own learning and knowledge in the course. [V]iolations of this policy [include]: copying from another student during an exam; having another person write a paper [on a student’s behalf]; any form of plagiarism or cheating; etc. Students found in violation [of the policy] are given a failing grade on the assignment. Students found in violation during a final examination, final project, or related final evaluation [or] assignment will receive a failing grade for the course” (*Menlo College Academic Procedures Manual*, 17).

Also note that a student who fails a course as a result of violating this policy will not be allowed to withdraw from the course, and that all violations of the Academic Integrity Policy will be recorded through the Office of Academic Affairs. Repeat offenders will be subject to disciplinary action as determined by the Academic Dean. Such disciplinary action will normally result in the expulsion of the offending student from Menlo College.

## Plagiarism

Plagiarism is unacceptable. I define plagiarism as presenting someone’s words, ideas, or any other work that can be considered intellectual property as if it was your own. If you use someone else’s work without quoting or citing completely, you have committed plagiarism. Do not copy and paste text from any source without quotation; do not paraphrase without citation or adapt information from Cliff’s Notes or Wikipedia; do not submit versions of the same paper more than once—all of these are considered plagiarism.

If you have questions about whether you may be inadvertently committing plagiarism, there are many resources available to help you. You may visit any of the centers listed below. I am also always happy to talk about these or any concerns.

## Resources

On campus:

- The Writing and Oral Communication Center:
  - All students are required to visit the Writing Center to workshop the first course paper. Written confirmation of this appointment must be attached to your submitted final draft.
  - Students who make additional appointments at the Writing Center over the course of the term and who document these sessions with written confirmation from the Center will receive a 24-hour extension on the assignment due date.
  - Students who make use of the Oral Communication Center for their in-class presentation and who document this session with written confirmation from the Center will increase their presentation grade by one third of a letter.

- Bowman Library:
  - We will visit Bowman for research workshops on Wednesday of Weeks 12 and 13. These workshops will facilitate your independent research for the third course paper, which must integrate one historical and one scholarly source into its analysis of a course text.
  - Following these workshops, all students are **required to meet individually** with a librarian to further independent research. The calendar of 15-minute appointments will be available at the second workshop and then at the Library's circulation desk. It is your responsibility to claim a slot and then keep your appointment; the librarians (who are wonderful people!) will email these attendance rosters to me.
  - I encourage you to make use of this excellent resource throughout the term.
- Academic Success Center (ASC):
  - The ASC, located between the Bookstore and the Library, is open Monday through Friday from 9am to 6pm. Students may drop in for assistance at any time, but appointments are recommended.
  - The ASC also runs a drop-in Peer Tutor Lab from 2:30 to 5pm, Monday through Wednesday and 7pm to 9pm Sunday through Wednesday.

#### Online:

*Be wary of online sources, especially Wikipedia. Always consult more than one source and look for consistency. Here are a few reputable sites for cross-checking purposes:*

- CCTC's Grammar Site: [cctc.commnet.edu/grammar/index](http://cctc.commnet.edu/grammar/index)
- Purdue University's Online Writing Lab: [owl.english.purdue.edu](http://owl.english.purdue.edu)
  - Includes MLA and APA formatting and style guides
- Google Scholar: [scholar.google.com](http://scholar.google.com)
  - Features a variety of critical commentary (books, journal articles)

#### Weekly schedule

With the exception of Monday January 9, all texts should be read and all writing assignments must be completed *prior* to the indicated class.

#### **Short Forms**

Week 1: National Texts: Or, Colin Kapernick's Argument with American Literature

M 1/9: Thomas Jefferson et al, *Declaration of Independence* (1776)

W 1/11: Francis Scott Key, "The Star-Spangled Banner" (1814);

The Pledge of Allegiance (four versions)

\* Writing diagnostic: *OED* definition of "feeling"

Week 2: Poetry

W 1/18: Walt Whitman, "I Hear America Singing" (1867);

Langston Hughes, "Let America Be America Again" (1936);

Allen Ginsberg, "A Supermarket in California" (1955)

Week 3: Essays and Short Stories

M 1/23: Zora Neale Hurston, "How It Feels to Be Colored Me" (1928);  
Flannery O'Connor, "Everything that Rises Must Converge" (1965)  
W 1/25: Gloria Anzaldúa, "How to Tame a Wild Tongue" (1987);  
ZZ Packer, "Brownies" (2003)

\* Paper 1 draft due M 1/30; final due M 2/6

### **Fiction**

Weeks 4-6: Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*

W 2/1: Chapters 1-6

M 2/6: Chapters 7-12

W 2/8: Chapters 13-18

M 2/13: Chapters 19-End

Weeks 6-8: Didion, *Play It As It Lays*

W 2/15: To end of Chapter 2 (p. 21)

M 2/20: To end of Chapter 20 (p. 70)

W 2/22: To end of Chapter 38 (p. 109)

M 2/27: To end of Chapter 65 (p. 174)

W 3/1: To end

Weeks 9-10: Alexie, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*

M 3/13: To end of "Hunger Pains" (p. 113)

W 3/15: To end of "Red Versus White" (p. 158)

M 3/20: To end

\* Paper 2 draft due W 3/22; final due 3/27

### **Visual Media**

Week 11: Visual media analysis

M 3/27: Field trip to the Anderson Collection

W 3/29: OWL, "Visual Rhetoric: Analyzing Visual Documents"

Week 12: *West Side Story*

M 4/3: Watch film prior to class

W 4/5: Research workshop @ Bowman Library

Week 13: *Clueless*

M 4/10: Watch film prior to class

W 4/12: Research workshop @ Bowman Library

Week 14: *Snowden*

M 4/17: Watch film prior to class

W 4/19: Writing workshop

Week 15: Research presentations

\* Paper 3 due Saturday April 29 at 10am

Final exam: Saturday April 29 10am-12:30pm. Location TBD.

## English 102 Learning Outcomes

From the *Menlo Writing Handbook*

“At the beginning of the semester students are expected to demonstrate the reading, critical thinking, writing, and research skills called upon for English 101. By the end of the semester, students will be expected to demonstrate the following competencies:

### Reading:

- Read complex texts in relation to one another, examining how one text may contextualize, illustrate or complicate another;
- Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of an argument;
- Evaluate relationships between claims and support;
- Show a critical awareness of writers’ uses of comparisons and analogies;
- Conduct research as critical readers—evaluating and selecting or discarding—in order to focus on sources appropriate to the topic;
- Employ a *good* dictionary (*O.E.D.*) in the service of critical reading.
- Critically evaluate the work of peers, recognizing and communicating the strengths and weaknesses of their arguments.

### Critical Thinking:

- Differentiate facts from opinions, but also show an awareness of how information is selectively presented;
- Employ reason and logic, avoiding generalizations;
- Recognize logical fallacies;
- Recognize various types of argumentative appeals, i.e., Aristotelian appeals;
- Identify and address underlying assumptions;
- Effectively manage the terminology of critical thinking, such as “assumption,” “claim,” “support,” “qualifiers,” “counterargument,” and “refutation.”

### Writing:

- Effectively manage compound and complex sentence structures, including parallelism, subordination, and apposition;
- Show a systematic understanding of punctuation, including commas, semi-colons, colons, em-dash, and en-dash;
- Show an understanding of how sentence structure affects style and tone;
- Produce thesis-driven essays that:
  - o make cogent, coherent arguments, with logical connections
  - o are organized and employ appropriate transitions between ideas
  - o are structurally cohesive without being repetitive;
- Create appropriate, useful, and interesting introductions & conclusions;
- Support claims with sound evidence from reliable sources;
- Effectively employ analysis to discuss and clarify support;
- Create appropriate and useful counter-arguments (concession) and rebuttals;
- Continue writing as process, thus proficiently engage in pre-writing, drafting, and editing;
- Employ a solid vocabulary for analyzing writing and grammatical issues;

- Use the *Bedford Handbook* to assist in the writing & editing process;
- Effectively employ summary, paraphrase and quotation, including introduction of sources with claims to authority and integration into writing.

Research:

- Draw upon the Bowman Library's academic databases and books to conduct research;
- Critically evaluate all research materials, including Internet sources, for usefulness and limitations; avoid reliance on sources that are not of critical merit;
- Integrate research from multiple sources with effective use of paraphrase, summary, and quotation;
- Recognize and engage with the academic discourse community at large, i.e., "join the conversation";
- Differentiate between APA and MLA styles;
- Avoid all forms of plagiarism by appropriate crediting of sources and managing of citations.