Welcome English 208 students. I invite you to enjoy an exciting journey through the literature of major American writers from the Civil War to the present. Our focus will be to gain a greater understanding and appreciation for literature as we explore how authors use language and themes and characters to convey various perspectives on life. Some of the authors we will read have long been dead, and others may be alive and as young as you (!). The exciting nature of literature is that it becomes as vital, vivid, and vibrant when we read a story as it was when the writer first wrote it. Stories have a life of their own, and in this class, we will search and explore why this is so.

In this course you will read literary works that have entered the ‘canon’ of American literature because of their artistry and excellence. And as you read, analyze, discuss, and write about these stories, you may question why a certain work deserved a place in the canon of American literature; you may wonder why a certain author you love is not included in the canon; you may be curious why the anthology we are using included one author over another. Hopefully, we can have a respectful and lively debate throughout the weeks of our class on all the questions raised by the literature we read and that you begin to see how works of American literature have influenced our culture as well as generations of writers and artists.

If you have taken an online class before, then you know how it works. You understand that the entire class is conducted without actually meeting face-to-face, that we have ‘discussions’ online, that assignments are submitted online (NOT via email), that the technology is durable, exciting, and flexible.

But for those of you who have never taken an online class before, the idea that we never sit in a classroom together, that you never see me ‘lecture’ at the front of the room, that no essays or assignments are actually ‘handed’ over to me, may all seem like a foreign concept. I suppose it’s like explaining an *iphone* to someone from the 19th century: “Yeah, it’s this little 3 inch plastic rectangle that holds hundreds of songs, emails, and contact information, and you can access the Internet, find driving directions, weather reports, and the latest news, all by simply tapping the screen with your finger and sliding it across the screen. Oh yeah, and it can take photographs.” I imagine the 19th century person would be quite perplexed.

Have no fear! If you can navigate through this ‘Welcome Letter,’ visit the Virtual Valley site on the LAVC homepage, find your username and password, take a quiz on the VV site to determine if you’re ready for an online class (and you succeed), then you are good to go!
Remember, whether you’re an online class pro or a relative beginner, please read this entire letter to understand some specifics of the class. Also, make sure you purchase the required textbook before the class begins.

**To start, you will want to know the structure of the class:**

The class is entirely on-line – there are no required on-campus meetings.

The class will begin February 8, 2010 through the ETUDES-NG website. The website and information on how to determine your username and password can be found at: [http://www.lavc.edu/virtualvalley/loggingonline.htm](http://www.lavc.edu/virtualvalley/loggingonline.htm).

The most direct way to logon to the Etudes class is the following: myetudes.org

[Please note that this is a NEW URL for the Etudes site that begins immediately after Christmas 2009.]

This class will travel at the same pace as a face-to-face class section. To keep up with the class and important announcements and discussions, you will need to log on regularly, if only for a short time to check in.

An online class can be both challenging and exciting. You need to have and make the time to complete all the assignments, participate in discussions, and be open-minded to learning. And for a literature class, you must carve out time to read the assignments. A ‘rush’ job or ‘speed read’ will not suffice here. You will need the time to thoroughly read and absorb the assigned works from the text. You also need to be self-motivated and self-disciplined to succeed. If you want to determine if an online class is really for you, take the quizzes at: [http://www.lavc.edu/virtualvalley/areyouready2.htm](http://www.lavc.edu/virtualvalley/areyouready2.htm).

**Next, here’s what you need for an online class:**

1. Make sure that you have easy and reliable internet access.

2. Check to make sure that your computer system is adequate, that you have all the needed software and that your cache settings are correct. Even if you have taken an Etudes class before, please check your settings and make certain you are using only the recommended browsers and browser version.

   To learn how to set up your computer browser please visit [www.etudesproject.org](http://www.etudesproject.org) and click on the “login” link on the upper right side of the page and then click on the link for “system requirements” on the left navigation bar.
You can also visit the LAVC Virtual Valley website at http://www.lavc.edu/virtualvalley/index.htm and click on the “Technical Information” link on the left.

For you Mac users, you will need to use only the recommended browsers or you will experience problems. (Please visit both sites listed above.)

Failure to set up your computer properly may result in problems in your formatting, loss of points on assignments, and impact your success in this class.

3. To read more about the logon requirements go to http://www.lavc.edu/Distance/etudes_login_tips.htm on the LAVC Virtual Valley website.

4. To learn more about Etudes and online classes go to the LAVC Virtual Valley website at http://www.lavc.edu/virtualvalley/index.htm and click on the link to FAQs. While you’re on the site, check out the “Online Learning Success Tutorial,” and the “Student Resource Page” link.

5. Have a back-up computer (know the computer lab locations on campus) in case of problems. Technical difficulties will not be an acceptable excuse for late or missed work. Have a back-up plan in case you computer decides to crash on you. Most public libraries have free computer access. The LAVC campus has several computer labs. And if all else fails, there are 24 hour computer/Internet rental services at places like FedEx Office.

6. Have a working email address that you check regularly. Announcements containing important information are both posted on our Etudes class homepage and sent to you via email.

7. If you have any technical issues, visit the Virtual Valley “Help Desk” page at http://www.lavc.edu/virtualvalley/helpdesk.htm where you can call or email to get help.

And finally, roll up your sleeves, watch your posture, set your hands to the keyboard and have a great time in the class. Here’s how you begin once the class opens on February 8th:

1. Review all Announcements
2. Read the Syllabus
3. Review the Class Schedule for important due dates
4. Familiarize yourself with the Modules (which contain the online lectures and important information)
5. Review any open Assignments
6. Create your Profile (directions are given to you in the first week’s module)
7. Read and participate in Discussion #1

**Required Textbooks:** You are required to purchase the one book before the class begins. The book is available at the LAVC Bookstore, online through the LAVC Bookstore, or online through a vendor of your choice (for example, Amazon.com).


My hope is that you learn from this course, enjoy the experience, and have fun in the process. See you online!

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