



COURSE DESCRIPTION

2016 Winter Session (2016-2017 Academic Year)

ENGL 110-002: Constructing a Life - Bo Earle

Approaches to Literature

Term 1

MWF, 10:00 - 11:00 a.m.

This course aims to introduce students to university level literary study by exploring a set of texts concerned with a question of perhaps particular relevance to first-year students: what should guide how we design our lives? Technical knowledge? The profit motive? Devotion to one's family? One's nation? One's God? One's own will? Romantic love? Sensuous hedonism? Prudent practicality? Imprudent idealism? Visionary fantasy? All, some or none of the above? The question of your destiny may seem especially wide open at the beginning of your university career, but one lesson of the texts of this course is that this question is never resolved. The one thing that can be said about your destiny is that it will never stop posing questions. This can be both a good and a bad thing: while it grants us inexhaustible potential for self-determination, it also exposes us to manipulation and even coercion by social, political, technological and economic forces outside ourselves. Such issues challenge us no less than they challenge the writers and characters you will study in this course, which suggests that the task of literary study has a lot in common with the task of designing a life. Texts include: *Hamlet*, *Frankenstein*, *Bartleby the Scrivener*, Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon*, and a selection of modernist poetry, film and popular music.