

ELIZABETH STROUT'S LINKED SHORT STORIES

This discussion course for avid readers will explore Pulitzer Prize winner Elizabeth Strout's use of inter-related short stories to create complex novels of character and place. Her voice is compelling and her themes (love, marriage, infidelity, trauma, terrorism, aging, art, depression, poverty, class consciousness, anger) diverse. In *Olive Kittredge*, *Olive Again*, *Anything Is Possible*, and *I Am Lucy Barton*, Strout creates two American villages: Crosby, Maine, and Amgash, Illinois. She treats her complicated and difficult characters with compassion, understanding and humor.

Textbooks are available as new and used paperbacks as well as on Kindle through <http://www.amazon.com> and elsewhere. In the past students have found books much easier than Kindles to access for class discussion. A detailed syllabus as well as additional discussion materials will be provided both in a Xeroxed package and emailed to students as a Word document file.

Anything Is Possible, Elizabeth Strout, Random House, 2018.

My Name Is Lucy Barton, Elizabeth Strout, Random House, 2016.

Olive Again, Elizabeth Strout, Random House, 2019.

Olive Kittredge, Elizabeth Strout, Random House, 2008.

Tentative Syllabus

Date	Tentative Assignments	Discussion Points
Class 1	Bring the four books to the introductory session. We will refer to them.	Overview of Strout's landscapes, villages, styles (linked stories as novel), characters, recurring themes and symbols.
Class 2	<i>Anything Is Possible</i> , 3-149	Characters and characterization: the traveling lens—emphasis on style and what it accomplishes.
Class 3	<i>Anything Is Possible</i> , 150-254	Revelations and Resiliency: the Imperfectability of Love
Class 4	<i>My Name is Lucy Barton</i>	Life of the Artist from a Hospital Bed; Mother and Daughter(s)
Class 5	<i>Olive Kittredge</i> , 3-139	Mothers and Sons; Husbands and Wives; Teachers and Students
Class 6	<i>Olive Kittredge</i> , 140-270	For Better or Worse: Death, Divorce, Nastiness, Re-birth
Class 7	<i>Olive, Again</i> , 3-147	Birth and Death, Widowhood and Marriage—some moral issues.

Class 8	<i>Olive, Again</i> , 148-289 Closing discussion and celebratory review.	Death and Re-birth, Imperfect Love, Strout's "One Story"; the Compassion Issue.
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Leader: Lois Marie Harrod's 17th collection *Woman* was published by Blue Lyra in February 2020. Her *Nightmares of the Minor Poet* appeared in June 2016 from Five Oaks; her chapbook *And She Took the Heart* appeared in January 2016; *Fragments from the Biography of Nemesis* (Cherry Grove Press) and the chapbook *How Marlene Mae Longs for Truth* (Dancing Girl Press) appeared in 2013. A Dodge poet, she is published in literary journals and online ezines from *American Poetry Review* to *Zone 3*. She teaches at the Evergreen Forum in Princeton and at The College of New Jersey. Links to her online work www.loismarieharrod.org

Wednesdays: 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m., 8 weeks: September 23 through November 11

Maximum: 15 seats