

Modern Theater

“I feel I should spread newspapers around. Caution: Man Acting!”

-Paul Rudnick, *I Hate Hamlet*

Course Description:

Although nearly every IMSA student graduates with a rather firm grounding in Renaissance theater owing to their work with Shakespeare as a junior, not all can claim much experience reading, performing, and viewing works of modern theater (mid-20th century and beyond). In this course, students will be challenged to read, analyze, perform, direct, critique, and even write texts for the stage, focusing especially on the unique characteristics of urgency, impermanence, and interpretation that make live theater a vigorous art form quite separate from film. It is our goal that by the end of the class, students will understand that the actor of live theater is both the medium and the agent of dramatic art, that the notion of “theater” and “performance” extends into virtually all human interactions, that a theatrical work is comprised of both its visible artists (the actor and writer) and the invisible (the director), and that great theater has certain enduring and recognizable elements no matter its genre or style.

Instructor:

- Name: Dr. Leah Kind
- Office: A117B
- Office hours: I am on campus and available every day. My class times are posted at my door, and you are free to drop in and/or make an appointment for a specific time.
- Phone: (630) 907-5491
- E-mail: lkind@imsa.edu (the best and quickest way to get in touch with me.)

Meeting Days, Time and Room(s)

A-Mod 4, C-Mods 3 and 4 (A119)

A-Mod 8, C Mods 7 and 8 (A119)

Text(s) / Materials:

You will be expected to bring something to write on and with, whatever texts we are currently discussing or portraying, and of course your laptop, to each class. Laptops won't always be utilized. Your major texts for this course are:

Take Ten: New 10 Minute Plays, and *Laugh Lines: Short Comic Plays* edited by Eric Lane and Nina Shengold

Los Vendedos Luis Valdez

Waiting for Godot or *Endgame*, Samuel Beckett

All My Sons, Arthur Miller

33 Variations, Moisés Kaufman

August: Osage County, Tracy Letts

reasons to be pretty, Neil LaBute

The History Boys, Alan Bennett

Other works as assigned—these subject to change as course needs demand

Essential Content:

This course will focus on a range of concepts central to the English team learning standards, and the SSLs but most particularly:

I.B. Construct questions which further understanding, forge connections, and deepen meaning.

II.B. Find and analyze ambiguities inherent within any set of textual, social, physical, or theoretical circumstances.

I.C. Precisely observe phenomena and accurately record findings.

IV.A. Construct and support judgments based on evidence.

IV.B. Write and speak with power, economy, and elegance.

IV.C. Identify and characterize the elements of structures and systems.

Student Expectations:

- Consistent **attendance** and significant **participation** in class. It is not sufficient for you to simply be present; all class periods will require ongoing and active participation in the class – you will be acting, shouting, running, costuming, staging, blocking, feigning death, and otherwise throwing yourself into the texts with regularity. If you cannot do this, you should reconsider your choice of electives quickly. (If it helps, a portion of your grade is also devoted to your participation in class-so it won't benefit you to be a silent observer.) I may be a bit biased, but this class ROCKS—and it rocks best when everybody is involved, generous to each other, and willing to put their egos aside.
- Civilized behavior. Classes of this type thrive based on students' ability to express their ideas not only forcefully and clearly, but with respect for the opinions and feelings of others. As you will be commenting and critiquing on the performances and interpretations of others, this becomes especially crucial.
- Work produced in accordance with instructor deadlines and IMSA's policies of academic honesty. Academic dishonesty in any form will be penalized to the fullest extent of the guidelines provided in IMSA's student handbook.

Course Work / Assessments:

This course will be comprised of essays, performances, and daily work and discussions. There will also be a graded performance per quarter, Q1 is a monologue, Q2 is a group performance in which some of you will serve as directors. Each quarter is weighted equally, and there are no exams.

Essays—60%

Q1/Q2 Performances—20%

Participation –20% (includes any small homework/daily assignments and reading quizzes)

Revisions/Late Work:

All major essays are revisable, and you are encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity to continue your growth as a writer. You will have a week from the time you receive the graded paper to complete your revision. The third major assignment (performance/write-up) is not eligible. The old grade will be averaged with the revised grade. Any late work will receive a penalty of one letter grade per calendar day it is turned in late. One week after the original deadline, late work will no longer be accepted for grading and will receive a zero.

If you miss a reading quiz because of an unexcused absence, you will receive a zero. If you miss one because of an excused absence, the quiz is marked as Exempt—it neither works for or against Specific assignments and deadlines will be posted on Moodle and will be discussed in class.

In order to be eligible to revise an essay:

- original paper must have been submitted on time
- you must have the original with my comments
- submit the original and your revised essay a week after the original was returned (the due date will be written on the top of your paper)
- received less than an A- on your original

Participation

As should be evidenced by the nature of this course, active, productive, and constant participation is both crucial and expected. YOU are now the responsible performers! You will receive a participation grade based on, but not limited to, your attitude, willingness to take chances and engage yourself in class, and (obviously) your lively contribution to daily activities. This is **not** a course where “But I like to just listen to what everybody else is saying!!” is a viable claim. It cannot be overstated that this is a class of action and engagement that works best when everyone is participating.