

## Literary Explorations II

**Ms. Tracy Townsend**

**Contact:** [ttownse@imsa.edu](mailto:ttownse@imsa.edu) / (630) 907-5954 (email is always swifter and more reliable than the telephone)

**Office:** A115C

**Hours:** Please consult the appointment schedule on my office door.

*The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference  
between lightning and the lightning bug.  
- Mark Twain*

### **Course Objectives:**

The purpose of this course is consider aspects of American literature including genre, epoch, and cultural context, paying special attention to what ideas, concepts, values, and problems follow this culture and its people through time. You'll be asked to read, think, and write with a critical eye, learning to interrogate literature the way we think of interrogating a living person. .

We will use presentations, papers, quizzes, mock trials, creative compositions, debates, and other forms of assessment and homework to make the value of what we read and discover come alive. Ultimately, it is the goal of this course to support and inspire inventive, insightful thinking in its students – the kind of thinking that is most valued not only at this institution, but in the wider world.

### **Required Materials:**

Your tablet computers will be used regularly, as this class strives to be paper-free (as much as can be done practically), so be sure to bring it and your power supply regularly. Also, a copy of whatever our current reading is and a writing utensil for marking that reading are crucially important. Failure to bring any of these items, when necessary, could result in your dismissal from this class.

### **Course Work / Assessment:**

The main credit-bearing work for this course falls into a few categories: Essays, Homework/Assessment, Projects, and Participation.

Essays, Homework, and Assessments (usually reading quizzes) are self-explanatory: you'll know them when you're given them.

Presentations/Projects are also self-explanatory. Typically, they will be performed in-class and often in groups. I'll explain how each presentation or project will be assessed at the time it's assigned or shortly after.

Participation comes down to being a vocal, productive, responsive member of the class. You are to make your presence known, and make it a positive one.

### **Paper, Revisions, and Error and Comment Logs:**

When you get your papers back from me, I'll include comments on grammar, organization, content, and so forth. You may choose to revise any work you write at any point in the quarter it is assigned for an improved grade. In order to receive credit for your revision, you must acknowledge that you have paid attention to my comments on

your previous draft(s) by recording what I had to say about it in an error and comment log. A document found on Moodle called “Open Revisions Policy” should help you with this process, but here’s a quick rundown: Write a summary paragraph on what my concerns were; after that paragraph, note the passages where you made grammatical or stylistic errors. Search online or in the library for a style guide, identifying the appropriate rule(s) to repair your mistakes, writing the rule(s) down, and then writing a correction of your error. You will make these changes, mechanical and holistic, a part of a revised version of your paper, which will be a cleaner, stronger, better-argued and altogether more fabulous version of the first paper you gave me. **Every time you turn in a revision, you need to turn in an Error/Comment Log entry appended to the first page of that revision.**

I will average together the point value of the original grade and the subsequent revision grade for your recorded grade. Remember to use all the resources this school makes available to help you do the best job you can when you first start writing: The Writing Center @ IMSA can provide one-on-one tutoring sessions, from brainstorming through proofreading; the Writing Center also maintains satellite centers in the IRC and in certain residence halls on a regularly-scheduled basis.

#### Category Weights

Papers: 65%

Presentations/Projects: 20%

Homework/Reading Quizzes: 15%

#### **Department Rounding Policy**

Simply put, it is the policy of teachers in the English department not to round term grades. Given factors such as revisions, participation points, and various forms of extra credit that can be made available, you have ample opportunity to earn your grade and improve upon it over time. Do not ask your instructor to round your grade as it is not possible for them to ethically comply with that request.

#### **Policies and Expectations:**

*What I will require from you –*

- Consistent **attendance** and significant **participation** in class (both in person and online). If you come unprepared, are disruptive to the class, or are unwilling to speak when called upon, I reserve the right to mark you absent for the day. If you didn't bring your brain with you, or didn't do the work expected of you, you don't count as being here.
- Civilized behavior. The success of this class relies upon students treating their peers and their ideas with courtesy and respect. You should challenge each other, argue points, and of course be willing to challenge me, but remember to do so in a way that reflects your own dignity and intelligence.
- Timeliness and honesty. All assignments should be turned in on time. Late work will be marked off one half-letter grade per day late. I do not tolerate plagiarism

or other forms of academic dishonesty. Expect no credit and disciplinary action for any acts of deception you may attempt.

*What you should expect from me -*

- Accessibility and clarity. I am happy to meet with you during my office hours, to speak to you over the phone, or to exchange e-mails with you (it is always easier to get me over email than on the phone).
- Flexibility and respect. Just as I expect you to treat each other with interest, compassion, and civility, I strive to do the same for you.
- High standards. I don't toss around A's lightly in my class – students who wish very high grades will need to work hard to earn them. But they'll also find me an avid supporter and guide as they strive to improve their work. I am happy to spend time with you helping you improve your performance and meet the standards you set for yourself.

*FINALLY . . .*

Be aware that there are certain virtues I value above all others. I hope to see them in abundance among us.

*Courage, tenacity, honesty, curiosity, creativity, and a sense of humor.*