

LITERARY EXPLORATIONS I

Sections 7 & 10 • Fall 2018 • Dr. Eric Rettberg • Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy

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Basic Information

INSTRUCTOR

Dr. Eric Rettberg
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REQUIRED TEXTS AND MATERIALS

- Your laptop and charger, which you must have with you and which will be used regularly in class
- Pen and paper
- Readings distributed as pdfs on the course site
- Other texts distributed in class
- *The Golem and the Jinni*, by Helene Wecker

USUAL OFFICE HOURS

ACD: 10 a.m.-10:50 a.m.; 2:20 p.m.-3:15 p.m.;
4:15 p.m.-4:30 p.m.
B: 9 a.m.-11 a.m.; 1 p.m.-3 p.m.
I: 1:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.
...or by appointment

CLASS MEETINGS

Section 7: Mod 6 ACD, A116
Section 10: Mod 8 ACD, A116

Course Description

This course serves as IMSA's introduction to writing and communication and to the study of literature and aesthetic culture. As they think about what it means to ask questions of texts and to build interpretations from them, students will learn to write sound, persuasive academic arguments and to present ideas in engaging ways.

Throughout the course, we'll consider aspects of the American experience, current events, and social tensions through the lenses of literature and culture. We'll pay special attention to the ideas, concepts, values, and problems that follow this culture and its people through time.

On the level of content, the course focuses on the formation of America as a nation and as a culture. In the first quarter, we'll use Helene Wecker's *The Golem and the Jinni* as an entry point to a series of texts related to cultural mythologies and to immigration. In the second quarter, we'll sample short stories and poems crucial to the development of American literature.

Policies

GRADING

While grades may show up in the gradebook as either point values, percentages, or letter grades, the primary logic of the grade is based on letter grades. Grades do not represent a starting point of 100 from which various deductions are made, but a qualitative assessment of the whole. Generally, A is the highest grade awarded in the class. To translate letter grades into numbers, assume that A = 95, A- =

92, B+ = 88, B= 85, and so on. Using those translated numbers, the English department calculates final grades that roughly signify the following:

A (90-100): Exceeds course requirements

B (80-89): Meets course requirements

C (70-79): Credit awarded but needs improvement

D (69 or below): Does not meet course requirements; no Academy credit awarded.

Your semester grade will be calculated based on the accumulation of grades in the categories for the entire semester (that is, the quarter grade represents a snapshot in time, not a set percentage of your final grade).

Instructors in the English department do not round quarter or semester grades.

GRADING CATEGORIES

Timed Essays	10%
Major Essays	50%
Presentations and Projects	20%
Homework and Quizzes	10%
Participation	10%

REVISIONS

Excellent writing almost never emerges whole from the writer's mind on the first try. The strongest writers use an iterative process of planning, drafting, and revision. We'll spend time in class even before your essays are due producing multiple drafts. You will also have an opportunity to revise major essays for an improved grade.

"Revision" is not the same as "editing." Merely correcting a few superficial convention or style errors will not improve your grade. Rather, you should expect to rethink, restructure, and rewrite during the revision process.

To receive credit for revisions, you must complete and submit a 250-300 word revision memo along with the revised essay. Detailed requirements of the revision memo are posted on the course site. All revised essays and revision memos will be due approximately two weeks after they have been returned, on a due date specified in class. Since revisions are optional, no late revisions will be accepted.

LATE ESSAYS AND PROJECTS

Assignments in the homework category may not be turned in late. Until the last two weeks of the semester, penalties for late essays are assessed as follows:

0 - 8 hours: no penalty

8-48 hours: 1 letter grade deduction

48-168 hours: 2 letter grade deduction

168+ hours: essay/project receives half credit

All work due in the last two weeks of class must be turned in within 72 hours of the due time to receive any credit. Unless there are severe extenuating circumstances, you should plan on presenting presentations on the day on which you are scheduled.

For essay deadlines, extensions of up to 24 hours may be granted to students who request an extension at least 12 hours before the deadline on a case-by-case basis. If the student fails to meet the extended deadline, late penalties are calculated according to the original deadline.

ATTENDANCE

Whether or not you are present in class, you are responsible for class activities, presentations, and assignments. Please refer to the student handbook for the full attendance/tardy policy.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

Writing classrooms depend on trust between students, peers, and teachers. It is always better to contact me about the difficulties you're having with an assignment than to plagiarize. I trust my students, but that trust is matched by the seriousness with which I take academic honesty. Instances of academic dishonesty will be forwarded to Student Life for disciplinary action.

ANNOTATING TEXTS

Whether you are reading a print text or an electronic text, you should plan to have a system to annotate it in preparation for class. For print texts, you can use pen and post-its. You may print electronic texts or read them on screen—as long as you have a way to take notes on them.

LAPTOPS

We will use laptops regularly in this class, and you will need to use your laptop to access and annotate electronic texts. In general, I permit laptop use in class—but if I notice a pattern of distraction, I will ask you to forego your laptop in favor of printed copies of texts. If I ask you to bring printed copies of texts, you must have a printed copy of each text each day.

TECHNOLOGY EXCUSES

You live on a campus inundated with computers, and your IMSA Google Drive account lets you back up your work automatically. If you aren't working in Google Docs or another program that automatically saves your work, use Google Backup & Sync to make sure you always have a current backup of your work. Unless a technology problem is a system-wide failure, IMSA's fault, or my fault, please don't share it with me as an excuse. If you plan ahead and have good backup plans, you won't lose access to up-to-date copies of your work.

I can only grade what you turn in. If you submit an incomplete, corrupted, or outdated file, that is the file I will grade—so be careful with your submissions.

Course Objectives

ENGLISH LEARNING STANDARDS

- Students will understand conventions of poetry, drama, and fiction as genres and be able to explain their uses and effects [English A.1, B.4].
- Students will evaluate the influence of historical context on form, style, and point of view [English A.5].
- Students will work collaboratively to come to an understanding of readings [English E.1-2, E.4-5].
- Students will develop greater autonomy as readers and writers by generating and responding to their own substantive questions about authors and literary works [English A.3-7, B.1, C.1, D.1].
- Students will experience writing as an incremental and recursive process by drafting, critiquing, and revising expository works [English B.2-3, C.3-5, D.2, D.4, E.3].
- Students will use research to provide an historical perspective on readings and to relate readings to contemporary issues [English A.8-9, C.2, D.1-4].
- Students will reflect upon literacy learning as a lifelong endeavor and set goals for themselves as literacy learners based on their strengths, needs, and aspirations [English C.1, D.1, E.3, E.5].

IMSA STANDARDS OF SIGNIFICANT LEARNING

- I.A: Develop automaticity in skills, concepts, and processes that support and enable complex thought.
- 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.
- III.A: Use appropriate technologies as extensions of the mind.
- III.B: Recognize, pursue, and explain substantive connections within and among areas of knowledge.
- III.C: Recreate the beautiful conceptions that give coherence to structures of thought.
- IV.A: Construct and support judgments based on evidence.
- IV.B: Write and speak with power, economy, and elegance.
- IV.D: Develop an aesthetic awareness and capability.
- V.B: Make reasoned decisions which reflect ethical standards, and act in accordance with those decisions.

IMSA ENGLISH OUTCOMES

At the conclusion of their IMSA English experience, students will be able to:

Rhetorical Knowledge

- Compose texts in forms appropriate to their rhetorical situation, with attention to audience, purpose, context, and mode.
- Respond critically to a variety of rhetorical situations.
- Explain textual evidence to generate multiple meanings and support an argument.
- Compose arguments in a variety of modes and media that engage with, critique, or synthesize multiple points of view.

Reading

- Comprehend a range of informational and imaginative works.
- Evaluate the quality and legitimacy of sources of information.
- Read texts with attention to rhetorical situation and purpose, language choices and patterns, literary techniques, thematic patterns, context, genre, and structure.
- Ask questions to produce intellectual debate about and find meaning in texts.
- Connect the concerns of texts to their lives, to the lives of others, to larger cultures, and to other intellectual disciplines.

Composition Process

- Give critical feedback with empathy and awareness of audience.
- Consider and apply feedback to take ownership of their writing.
- Develop flexible strategies for reading, drafting, reviewing, collaborating, revising, rewriting, rereading, and editing.
- Reflect on how composition processes influence their work.

Knowledge of Conventions

- Use conventions of grammar and language appropriate to the rhetorical situation.
- Cite sources using professional standards and demonstrate knowledge of the purposes of doing so.
- Demonstrate an understanding of distinctions between the conventions of different genres.
- Manipulate conventions intentionally for rhetorical, aesthetic, and expressive effect.

Literary Knowledge

- Describe the elements and features of a text using the methods and terminology of literary studies.
- Explain the relationship between a text and literary traditions, movements, styles, genres, and forms.

- Situate a text within historical, social, cultural, theoretical, and philosophical contexts.
- Apply knowledge gained from literature to understand contemporary issues and perspectives.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM ME

RESPECT: I assume that my students have ideas to contribute to our discussions and to the world. Even when students have difficulties in class, I believe in their capacity to improve their thinking, writing, and communication. I will strive to take your ideas seriously and to fully acknowledge you as a person with a complex life.

HELP AND GUIDANCE: I want you to succeed in my class, and I have chosen this profession because I want to work with you inside and outside of class to make that happen. If you are confused by an assignment or are struggling with something we are doing in class, stop by my office so we can talk about it. If you are having trouble understanding something, contact me early and often. Plan ahead so if you need help, you have time to get it.

AVAILABILITY: I will respond to clear, self-contained questions direct to my IMSA email within 24 hours during the working week. I will make myself available during office hours.

ENTHUSIASM FOR YOUR IDEAS: As a teacher, I am interested in helping you understand my ideas and the ideas of authors. I'm even more interested, however, in helping you hone and communicate your own ideas. If you're having trouble connecting the content of the course with the things that interest and concern you most, please come see me during office hours so I can help you find the connections.

USEFUL FEEDBACK: I will spend a lot of time crafting comments and feedback on your assignments. It is important to me that you do your best to understand that feedback and produce work that responds to it. If you have trouble understanding my comments on your work, please see me during office hours.

HIGH STANDARDS: I believe that writing and literature are serious, important stuff that will be crucial to your life, education, and career whether you end up being a biologist, a mathematician, a doctor, an engineer, a teacher, or a novelist. Grades in my class are not "given," and points in my class are not "lost" from some arbitrary beginning point. Instead, grades in my class are earned through hard work and the difficult process of completing excellent assignments and projects.

WHAT I EXPECT FROM YOU

CONSISTENT ATTENDANCE AND SIGNIFICANT PARTICIPATION: At the scheduled start time of class, you should be in your seat and ready for a conversation. Come prepared with questions and observations about the text, and be willing to share those questions and observations in small groups and in the large-group conversation.

RESPECTFUL ENGAGEMENT WITH CLASSMATES' IDEAS: Discussions of literature—and contemporary ways of thinking about literature—can involve challenging, contentious topics. Even when you disagree with your classmates, it is absolutely crucial to the success of our conversations that you treat them with respect. I will treat you like adults, and I expect you to treat your classmates like adults engaged in a respectful conversation.

HONESTY: I assume that you will tell me the truth and that your work represents your own effort. Please match my respect with your honesty.

COMMITMENT TO PROCESS: You will probably enjoy many of the texts we read in this class, but there are some you may not enjoy. Even if you realize a certain text is not your cup of tea, work through it and try to find what's interesting about it, even if it's hard. Similarly, commit to improving your writing, whether you believe you are a strong writer or a weak one. All of us, including me, still have lots to learn when it comes to writing.

WILLINGNESS TO SEEK HELP: I love nothing more than helping students improve their work. I can only do so, however, if students seek out my help. Taking advantage of my help—and, as importantly—the help of tutors at the writing center—will help you become a stronger writer, thinker, and communicator.