

# Literary Explorations I

*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 the American experience, current events, and social tensions through the lens of literature, 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. You'll also become familiar with the language of rhetoric – author/audience relationship, modes of persuasion, and so forth.

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.

## INSTRUCTOR:

- Name: Tracy Townsend (Pronouns: She/Her)
- Office Number: A115C (all days by appointment, see sign-up sheet at door)
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## **Meeting Days, Time and Room(s)**

**A119, Mod 4, 11:00-11:55 A, C, D days**

**A113, Mod 8, 3:20-4:15 A, C, D days**

## **Texts:**

*The Golem and the Jinni*, by Helene Wecker; *The Concise Anthology of American Literature* (in selections); selections from *AmericanRhetoric.com* and other sources.

## **Essential Content:**

- 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].

### **SSLs and Outcomes:**

- 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.

### **Required Materials:**

Your computers will be used regularly, as this class strives to keep paper use to a minimum, 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 and taking notes are crucially important. Failure to bring any of these items, when necessary, could result in being counted absent from this class.

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

The main credit-bearing work for this course falls into a few categories: Papers, Reading Quizzes, Homework, and Presentations/Projects.

Papers, Reading Quizzes, and Homework are self-explanatory: you'll know them when you're given them. Reading Quizzes are always in-class and open-book/note; however, I may not give you warning that they are coming and the questions I ask are usually too complicated to just "look up" without actually having read the text. They are often in short-essay format, and will require you to cite the text specifically. Be wary, and keep on top of the reading load. You may want to form discussion and study groups outside this class to help stay on top of things.

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.

Your quarter and semester grades are based on a running total of calculated category weights, which are as follows:

Papers: 60%  
Presentations/Projects: 20%  
Quizzes: 10%  
Homework 10%

Any late work will receive a penalty of one half-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.

Grades are to be interpreted in the following manner:

A (90-100%) = Exceeds course requirements  
B (80-89%) = Meets course requirements  
C (70-79%) = Credit awarded, needs improvement  
D (<70%) = Does not meet course requirements; no Academy credit awarded  
I = Incomplete  
WF = Withdrawal from course with failing grade; no Academy credit awarded.

W = Withdrawal from course; no Academy credit awarded

### **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 "How to Write an Error and Comment Log" 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 new 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 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.

***Please Note: It is the policy of this instructor, and the policy of the English department at IMSA, not to round quarter or term grades. Do not ask to have your grade rounded, as the instructor cannot 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 calendar 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.*