

Comprehensive Course Syllabus

The Idea of the Individual

Course Description:

What makes up an individual? Is there a universal “individual” or does it vary depending on internal and external factors? This course is primarily concerned with the individual’s struggle to find, form, and maintain an identity, often against overwhelming powers and challenges—both external and internal. Cultural, political and even historical forces often work to obscure or even deny an individual’s identity. These forces derive their power from varied and diverse sources – governments, prejudices, biases, and even social systems. How, in the face of these pressures, can an individual hope to craft and retain an individual identity?

We will examine how authors in different cultures and different historical and literary periods have treated the subject of the individual. Texts have been grouped by what struggles and challenges the individual finds for themselves within the greater world, although naturally some of these categories will remain quite fluid.

Instructor:

Dr. Leah Kind

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I am available every day I’m on campus. Please stop by or email me to make a specific appointment.

Dedicated office hours are 2pm-4pm on normal C-days

Meeting Days, Time and Room:

Mod 1 ABD (A116)

Mod 7 ABD (A119)

Essential Content/SSLs and Outcomes:

Students will understand conventions of poetry, drama, and fiction as genres and be able to explain their uses and effects [English A.1-3, B.2-4, E.1; SSL IV.A-D].

Students will evaluate the influence of historical context on form, style, and point of view [English A.4, A.7-8; SSL II.A].

Students will work collaboratively to come to an understanding of readings [English A.5-6, C. 1-2, E.2, E.5; SSL I.A-B].

Students will develop greater autonomy as readers and writers by generating and responding to their own substantive questions about authors and literary works [English B.1, D.1-3, E.3; SSL I.B].

Students will experience writing as an incremental and recursive process by drafting, critiquing, and revising creative and expository works [C.3-5; SSL I.A, II.A, III.A, IV.A-D].

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 E.3; SSL II.A, III.B, V.C].

Instructional Design and Approach:

Literature is, at its core, an articulation of the history of ideas. As such, it is both part and product of history, philosophy, art, psychology, science, and other fields. Our examination of literature will thus examine it through these various lenses, while also fostering an appreciation for its aesthetic value and approach. We will explore literature through reading, writing, discussing, researching, and – sometimes – performing it. Activities and assignments will range from individual to small group to broad class discussion. With every reading, students should challenge themselves to consider: do I like this, what does this mean, how does this challenge my ideas, and why is it important today?

Student Expectations:

In class I expect that you will approach readings, discussions, and each other with maturity and respect. Many of the texts we will read this semester deal with highly mature concepts, but I expect students to rise to the occasion. You are not here to agree wholeheartedly with me or your classmates, but productive disagreement must be courteous and tolerant. If this is a communication skill that you need additional practice in, all the better.

This course demands the courage to investigate what you do not know and what you think you already know. Please try to face this investigation with openness and intellectual honesty – these will serve you well through complicated terrain. Your beliefs may change, and you will come to know yourself better. Further—give yourself the space and opportunity to allow for some of your ideas to change.

Reading:

Careful reading is essential for this class. Please set aside time to read with attention. Reading loads are not always equal. Plan accordingly. Your participation grade will be negatively impacted if it is clear that you have not read the material. I will also use unannounced reading quizzes to ensure careful and timely attention to assigned reading.

(The definition of an unannounced quiz is that you do not get advance warning about it.)

Participation:

If there's one thing that students talk about after they've taken this class, it's the quality of the discussions. This comes from YOU. Active, engaged, and **productive** participation is expected and required. Questions are just as valid as comments, and often much more so; please share your confusions and whatever inchoate ideas that you haven't fully worked out yet! The class will be a collaborative idea space. You will receive a participation grade each quarter based on your productive and engaged presence in the class. Repetitions/parroting/purposefully open-ended or vague questions/summarizing of texts or each other does not constitute productive participation. I love and encourage open discussion; I do not allow rude, disrespectful, and unproductive classroom behavior.

Revision:

You may revise major papers within one week of the paper's return. I suggest you meet with me if you are unsure about the changes to make or would like to think through an adventurous rewrite. The paper's final grade will be an average of the original grade and the revision grade.

If you earn a C- or below on a paper, you MUST revise that paper. If you do not, the grade will revert to a grade of “F” (failing) for the assignment.

When handing in a revision, you must submit both the original and the revised version on time (one week or sooner from the date you received the graded paper). If you no longer have the original paper (with my comments) your paper is not eligible for revision. Late papers cannot be revised.

Homework, class activities, and quizzes cannot be revised. All grades will count towards your course grade, nothing is “dropped”.

Late and missing work:

In the case of major essays, you lose one grade per class day late. A week past the due date, the paper receives a grade of “F” (failing).

If you miss a reading quiz due to an unexcused absence, you will receive a zero for it. If your absence was excused, the quiz does not count for/against your overall class grade—it will be marked as ‘exempt’ in the gradebook.

Plagiarism:

IMSA is very strict on this topic, and I have followed official protocol when academic integrity problems have surfaced in the past. If you are caught plagiarizing an assignment, you risk failing the assignment, and may put your course grade in jeopardy. In short: if you have ANY questions here, make sure to ask me. Please do not risk failing the class because of misinformation about citation, paraphrase, etc.

Assessment Practices, Procedures, and Processes:

Assignments: Essays will be on a variety of topics over the semester. Each essay must have a clear point and supporting evidence; you should be concise and discriminating so that your paper is as powerful as possible. There is no page length or word min/max for any essay – you will have to decide for yourself how much writing and analysis you need to do to honor the assignment and your own ideas.

You will make two presentations in this class. The first will be a class activity that you lead with a partner in order to introduce that day’s reading/portion of the reading (for longer works) with an original activity and guiding discussion. The form and nature of the activity is up to you and your partner, and I have seen some incredibly creative and well thought-presentations done in Idea. The second presentation will be done individually on your Podcast assignment. More on that presentation will be given when we get closer to it.

Grading:

Essays	60%
Presentations	15%
Participation	15%
Reading Quizzes:	10%

It is the policy of the English Department not to round quarter or semester grades.

Sequence of Readings (subject to change—stories may be added/subtracted as needed, we may need more time to work through some of the readings, etc.)

Week 1—Intro to the course, secondary readings

Week 2-5

The Individual within and vs. Society

Olive Kitteridge (Elizabeth Strout) novel

Fahrenheit 451 (Ray Bradbury) novel

Individual vs. Technology

“Dark They Were and Golden Eyed” (Bradbury) and “Kaleidoscope” (Bradbury) short stories

Never Let me Go (Ishiguro) novel

“Brainburgers and Bile Shakes: A Love Story” (Jim C. Hines) short story

Paper 1 Due

Week 5-8- The Individual and Internal/Self-Conflict

Brave New World (Aldous Huxley) novel

The Immortalists (Chloe Benjamin) novel

“The Red Convertible” (Louise Erdrich) short story

End of Quarter 3-Paper 2 Due

Week 9-10 Individual vs. the Myriad Challenges of Adulthood

“Where Are you Going, Where Have you Been?” (Joyce Carol Oats) and “Victory Lap” (George Saunders) short stories

We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves (Karen Joy Fowler) novel

Week 11-13 Individual vs. Identity (racial, sexual, cultural)

China Boy (Gus Lee) novel

“The Resemblance between a Violin Case and a Coffin” (Tennessee Williams) short story

No Country for Old Men (Cormac McCarthy) novel

Paper 3 Due

Week 14-15--Final catch-up for readings, Podcast Presentations, Podcast Due