

# **Modern World Fiction**

## **Dr. Kind**

### **Course Description:**

As an IMSA student, you spent your first year-and-a-half in the core English courses, learning about foundational texts of American and British literature. But what comes after – what builds upon these foundations today? Who is writing now? And what about the literatures of non-western cultures?

This course endeavors to explore and to answer these questions. In this section of Modern World Fiction, you will examine world authors of the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. You'll read authors who span the globe—both in location, and in topics covered.

We will read a LOT of short stories. We'll read a novel, and we'll also explore a short play. In so doing, we will attempt to uncover not only the modern concerns – personal, social, and often political – unique to these cultures, but also the universal questions and topics that continue to fascinate and absorb authors.

### **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.

### **Text(s) / Materials:**

You will be expected to bring your current reading packets (critical essays, short stories, and novellas), whether in paper or .pdf form, to class, and your copies of our core texts as we read and discuss them. It's up to you if you prefer to print the short stories out—some people read/annotate much happier on tangible paper. If your computer is in use, I expect it to be in use for the class—either to look and refer to the story at hand, or for taking notes, nothing else. Abuse of this can result in loss of computer privileges.

### **Student Expectations:**

In class I expect that you will approach readings, discussions, and each other with maturity and respect. We are endeavoring to read authors with backgrounds and experiences (and thus, literature) which may be very different from our own, and in some cases, extremely alike. You are not here to agree wholeheartedly with me and 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 sometimes challenging or complicated terrain. Your beliefs may change, and you will come to know yourself better.

**Reading:**

Careful reading is essential for this class. Please set aside time to read with attention. I always suggest taking notes/annotating as you read. Reading loads are not always equal. Plan accordingly. Your participation grade will be negatively impacted if you do not stay up with the reading.

Pop quizzes are also utilized to encourage careful, diligent, and consistent reading. (The definition of a pop quiz is that you do not get advance warning about it.)

**Course Content:**

The readings we'll approach in this course will contain a wide variety of topics, and some of them may be difficult. These could potentially include: scenes of self-harm, sexual violence, abuse, individuals undergoing mental and physical challenges, violence based on racial/sexual/gender/religious identification, and others.

While I absolutely acknowledge and respect the fact that everyone brings a unique perspective to what they read, research has shown that specific "trigger warnings" for works can actually pose more harm than benefits for readers. Scientists, researchers, and psychologists offer the following advice, and I will follow with their expertise: If those are topics that you do not feel you can read/discuss because of previous trauma, I highly suggest you avail yourself of the counseling services available on IMSA's campus, and/or utilize outside mental health services. Avoidance of the issues, or warnings about the issues can actually produce more anxiety/distress. (See Benjamin Bellet et al., "Trigger Warning: Empirical Evidence Ahead" *Journal of Behavior Therapy and Experiment Psychiatry* 2018 and Abigail Fagan's 2019 article in *Psychology Today*).

Please let me know if you have any concerns or questions.

**Participation:**

If I had to pick a single item that I value most about my courses, it's the high 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! (Based on your reading—not your guesses!) 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/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 grade of A- or higher, you did great—and your paper is not eligible for revision.

-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.

**Late and missing work:**

In the case of major essays, the top grade possible will drop by 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’ for it 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 due 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. However, there is no word limit for each 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 formal presentations in this class. The first will be a class activity that you lead with a small group 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. More information as it approaches.

**Notes**

I expect you to take notes in this class. For every paper I assign in this class, you will have the option to propose your own topic. Think of your class and reading notes as massive brainstorms for your own unique papers.

**Essential Content:**

[Taken from English Learning Standards at <https://www3.imsa.edu/learning/standards/english.php>]

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

G. Students studying English at IMSA will use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g. for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information) by: [NCTE-12]

G.7 writing in both expressive and transactional modes. [SSL-I.A, IV.B]

### **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, anthropology, philosophy, art, psychology, science, and other fields. Our examination of literature will thus study 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 three questions: do I like this, what does this mean, and why is it important today?

### **Student Expectations:**

To succeed in this class, you must: arrive on time, be prepared by having read AND prepared to discuss or ask questions about the assigned materials (not just online summaries), be active in small group **and** classroom discussion, and demonstrate originality, thorough research, and comprehensive thought on papers and assignments. Being funny doesn't hurt, either.

### **Grading:**

Essays	60% (Essays and 1 Podcast. Podcast is non-revisable)
Presentations	15% (1 group, 1 individual presentation)
Participation	15%
Reading Quizzes:	10%

**It is English Team Policy to not round quarter or semester grades.**

### **Sequence of Topics**

(Schedule is a best guess approximation. Some sections may take less/more time than scheduled. Some readings may be added/some subtracted. We'll be flexible)

Week 1--Introduction to the course.

Native American Literature (Alexie, Erdrich, Orange)

Week 2—Ireland (McLaughlin, Barret, Barry)

Week 3—Africa (Adichie, Mukasonga, Daoud, Ali)

Week 4/5-US/Canada (Saunders—*Fox 8*, Larson, Sayrafiezade, King, Heti, Galchen)

Week 6—Latinos in the US (Cisneros,

Week 7—China (Yang, Li, Yan)

Week 8/9/10—England (Smith--*White Teeth*\*)

Week 11—India (Lahiri, Rushdie, Rao)

Week 12/13/14—Mexico, Caribbean, South American (authors tba)

Final weeks of the semester will be any catch-up that is needed, and Podcast Presentations