COURSE DESCRIPTION

Florida's beautiful beaches and sunny skies are fabulous, but in this course “fabulous” Florida doesn't refer to the way Florida actually is so much as the way poets and storytellers have imagined Florida. Often the Sunshine State is seen as a land of extremes—crazy weather, marginal subcultures, creepy-crawly swamp critters, and equally outlandish human characters. Sometimes Florida’s complex history and rich mixture of cultures and ethnicities provide the focus for creative invention or social criticism. And of course Florida's tourist culture sometimes becomes a symbol of all things kitschy, from pink flamingos and synchronized water skiing to strip malls, strip clubs, and the shrinking of the entire planet into a “Magic Kingdom” (@ $124 per child/per day).

In this course we will study Colson Whitehead's Pulitzer Prize winning novel *The Nickel Boys* (2019), based on discoveries made by USF students at the former Dozier School for Boys in Marietta, Florida. We will also read excerpts from the acclaimed memoir *Ordinary Girls* (2015), written by USF grad Jacquira Díaz, along with works of short fiction by Florida native Ana Menéndez and Florida transplant Lauren Groff, nominee for the National Book Award for 2021. We will sample poems and movies about Florida as well. Whether created by Florida natives, transplants, or outsiders, these works by diverse authors both contribute to and challenge stereotypes of Florida. They may make you aware of your surroundings in a new way.