

**Course Title:** Narrating Survival**Professor:** Dr. Sarah Ropp (email me with questions: sropp@sas.upenn.edu)**Cross-listings:** COML 2192; ENGL 2192; ASAM 1211; SNF Paideia-designated course**Prerequisites:** none**Meeting time:** Mondays & Wednesdays, 1:45-3:15pm**Description**

This course critically examines the way in which “survival” has been/continues to be defined as individual triumph in the 20th and 21st century. The intent here is to dig deeper into current buzzwords like “resilience,” “wellness,” “grit,” and “care” to ask how such concepts have been constructed in different socio-historical moments, by and for whom, and towards what (social, cultural, political, economic) ends. We will pay special attention to the central role that the child plays in these discourses as an icon of both ultimate vulnerability *and* idealized resilience, and we’ll consider the burdens and privileges that such centering might confer upon real-life children. We engage with a generically diverse body of contemporary multiethnic and transnational literature featuring children and young people in crisis, including texts from Black, Latine, Native, Asian and White U.S. writers as well as Dutch, Argentine, Iranian, Malaysian, and Afghan authors. All non-English texts will be read in English translation, with the option for students to read in the original language if they wish and are able. This will be an SNF Paideia-designated course, meaning that learning *to* dialogue and learning *from* dialogue with these texts and one other will be an essential part of our approach to exploring these complex questions.

**Primary Texts (subject to revision)**

- *The Boy Who Would Make Everything Right (Een jongetje dat alles goed zou maken)*, Ischa Meijer
- *Things We Lost in the Fire (Las cosas que perdimos en el fuego)*, Mariana Enríquez
- *Diary of a Montonera Princess (Diario de una princesa montonera)*, Mariana Eva Perez
- *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, Jonathan Safran Foer
- *Flight*, Sherman Alexie
- *Towers Falling*, Jewell Parker Rhodes
- *An Emotion of Great Delight*, Tahereh Mafi
- *Everything Sad Is Untrue*, Daniel Nayeri
- *The Weight of Our Sky*, Hanna Alkaf
- *Earth and Ashes (خاکستر و خاک)*, Atiq Rahimi
- *Lost Children Archive*, Valeria Luiselli
- *Miss Meteor*, Anna-Marie McLemore and Tehlor Kay Mejia
- *American-Born Chinese*, Gene Luen Yang
- *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, Jade Snow Wong
- *The Magic Fish*, Trung Le Nguyen

**Assessment**Participation in class dialogues, including text-based pre-work = **30% of final grade**Facilitation of one in-class dialogue (planning, execution, and reflection) = **10% of final grade**3 critical analysis papers, 5-7pp each – 15% x 3 = **45% of final grade**Writing process (drafts, peer review, revisions) for each paper = 5% x 3 = **15% of final grade**