



The Centre for Research on Children's and Young Adult Literature at the Faculty of Letters of the University of Wrocław has the honor to invite you to the 16th lecture in the series "International Voices in Children's Literature Studies"

**Prof. Kenneth Kidd**

## **F is for Florida: Politics and Children's Literature in the Sunshine State**



With a population of over 21 million, Florida is the third-largest U.S. state and boasts a diverse population of people, both native and transplants. It was the first area in the continental U.S. to be permanently colonized by Europeans and it has long-standing ties with Spanish, British, and French culture. Florida also enjoys a huge Cuban-American population and is part of what John Wharton Lowe calls the "circumCaribbean." Many South Floridians have roots in Central and South America, too. But Florida also remains part of the "deep"/American South, and entered the Union as a slave state, with firm commitments to racial capitalism. In short, it's a complicated place, with a history of diversity and innovation but also settler colonialism, racial violence, anti-queer activism, and environmental spoilage.

And Florida is famously home to two high-profile right-wing politicians, former President Donald Trump and current Governor Ron DeSantis, rivals for the 2024 U.S. Republican presidential ticket. Beginning in 2021, DeSantis has ushered into law sweeping new policies designed to beat back progressive culture in the state and in the process satisfy his conservative base. Florida, he proclaims, is "where 'woke' goes to die." DeSantis supports book censorship and homophobia and has tried to suppress African-American history (that is, American history). He even took on Disney, and won. This talk considers the longer arc of politics and children's literature in the so-called Sunshine State, putting our current challenges into broader context by looking at historical and contemporary materials and movements. I'll review the slow evolution of Florida-based children's literature away from colonizer genres like the Robinsonade to more contemporary and diverse forms and titles, some of which openly challenge the sorts of attitudes and initiatives championed by DeSantis. Florida authors considered include Marjorie Stoneman Douglas, Zora Neale Hurston, Lu Vickers, and Maria Ingrande Mora.

**Kenneth Kidd** is Professor of English at the University of Florida, where he teaches courses in children's literature, queer studies, and theory studies. He is author of three books, most recently *Theory for Beginners, or Children's Literature as Critical Thought*, and co-editor of four more, with a fifth co-edited collection (with Derritt Mason) forthcoming from University Press of Mississippi, *Alt Kid-Lit: What Children's Literature Might Be*. With Elizabeth Marshall he co-edits the Routledge monograph series "Children's Literature and Culture".

**DATE:** 12 April 2023

**TIME:** 18.00 (CET)

**VENUE:** MS Teams

If you are interested in taking part in the lecture, please contact us by email by 10 April at the following address: [mateusz.swietlicki@uwr.edu.pl](mailto:mateusz.swietlicki@uwr.edu.pl)