English 3310: Young Adult Literature

Spring 2008
Thursday Evenings 5:30-8:30 pm
Davis Campus Room 106
Office: E-Hall 461; 626-6623 sbutler@weber.edu

Required Texts:

Recommended Text:

NOTE: The required text selections represent critical YA genres and authors and may not be substituted for other texts or authors. This course assumes that you are willing to examine the world of YA literature as it is, even though some of the language, contexts, or characters may be personally objectionable.

Course Description: This course provides a broad, practical background in young adult (YA) literature for non-teaching English majors and students interested in adolescent psychology or in acquiring a breadth of exposure to literature that appeals to adolescents. Selection and evaluation, ethnic and culturally diverse authors, the history of young adult literature, and prevalent themes and genres will receive special emphasis. Issues concerning community values and censorship will also receive our attention. In addition, this course includes a community involvement component in academic service learning.

Course Goals: By the end of the course you should be able to:

1) discuss, share, and evaluate a wide range of adolescent literature and YA authors;
2) explore and research the issues involved in adolescent literacy;
3) communicate with a number of adolescent readers regarding their reading habits, interests, concerns, and literacy development;
4) develop personal criteria for evaluating young adult books and use that criteria in your own literature collection;
5) assess the value of community involvement in fostering adolescent literacy and appreciation of young adult literature.

Expectations and Requirements:

**Class Attendance and Participation** (10%): You must come prepared for class as your insights, reactions to readings, and critical analysis will be central to course discussion and understanding. Take time to read and consider assignments in light of your own experience, interests, and
issues we discuss in class. Participation means that you willingly share your opinions and responses and treat others’ input with respect and thoughtful consideration. Missing any of the class periods or coming unprepared will affect your grade. No make-up will be allowed for missed class activities or presentations. If you must miss more than 2 class periods (equal to two full weeks of study), you should consider dropping the class.

Part of participation credit will include your involvement with Literature Circles designed to help us explore a variety of genres (science fiction, war, adventure, historical fiction, nonfiction). Short assignments and presentations coming from Literature Circles will be generated during class sessions.

**Common In-class Novels (15%):** The five novels selected to read as a class will be discussed on specific dates. In preparation for each discussion, you should annotate, journal, and note your responses, questions, connections, insights, and evaluation of each novel. A typed synthesis of your personal reading experience of each text will be due on the class discussion day.

**Common Readings Schedule**

- *Speak* - Jan. 14
- *Whale Talk* - Jan. 28
- *American Born Chinese* - Feb. 4
- *Chanda’s Secret* - Feb. 18
- *Bronx Masquerade* - Feb. 25

**Personalized Reading/Literature Collection (45%):** You will conduct an individual reading program in which you read a minimum of 20 young adult books which may include the 5 required common texts. Choose books from a variety of genres, developmental levels, authors, and topics. Create your own organized file of critical annotations using a standard format you design (possible content: short synopsis (5-7 sentences) followed by a brief commentary on quality of writing, nature and appropriateness of the art, treatment of the subject matter, likely audience, film connections, a brief passage, overall rating, etc). Include a standardized MLA bibliographic citation, and make sure the book's rating is clearly explained and documented. Your collection must include an introduction in which you: 1) explain specifically your criteria and your rationale for these criteria and 2) explain your rating system. This collection also requires a critique of four web sites for YA literature. (See additional specifications on separate handout). **Due: April 8 - no exceptions.**

**Community Participation in Adolescent Literacy (20%):** Volunteer a minimum of twelve contact hours to promoting young adult reading in your community. This time can be spent in several different ways: neighborhood reading with young adults, library book talks, one-on-one reading tutoring of a jr. or high school student, introduction to YA books for parents/YA caregivers, readings at homeless shelters or women's shelters, reading at local hospital children's wards. Keep a log of your hours with details of what you accomplished. At the completion of the project, write a reflective response of your insights and personal reactions about the service and what you learned about adolescent readers. Please secure the signatures of any supervisors directing your volunteer efforts and submit it with a log of your hours and place of service. **Proposal due: January 28. Final report due no later than April 15.** Refer to specifications
for the proposal and final reflection paper.

**Book-to-Film Connections** (5%): Refer to specifications sheet.  Due: According to sign-up date.

**Final Project/Exam** (10%): This project will ask you to demonstrate what you have learned about literary genres by creating the blueprint for a YA novel based on the life story of someone from the community.  You may work independently or with one other classmate on this project.  Refer to specifications on a separate handout.  **Due: No later than April 22.**

If you take the option of Final Exam, the exam will be take-home given out April 15 and due April 22.

**Grading:**

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<th>Component</th>
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<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Notes and discussion on common readings</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal Literature Collection</td>
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<td>Community YA literacy project</td>
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<td>Book-to-Film Connection</td>
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<td>Final Project or Exam</td>
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Plagiarism: All work submitted in this course must be your own and be written exclusively for this course. The use of sources (ideas, quotations, paraphrases) must be properly documented. Please ask if you have any questions about how to accurately cite sources. Any plagiarism is an act of academic dishonesty and a violation of University standards and Student Code of Conduct. It could result in failure of the course, a hearing before the Dean of Students, and therefore, could have serious implications for your academic career.

Students with Disabilities: Any student requiring accommodations or services due to a disability must contact Services for Students (SSD) in Student Services Center #181. SSD can also arrange to provide course materials (including this syllabus) in alternative formats if necessary.

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**Calendar**

Week I: January 7

Introduction to course, each other and the world of YA literature.
Week II: January 14
Introduction to themes in YA literature, attributes of YA readers, and the genre of realistic fiction. Discussion on *Speak*. Notes due.

Week III: January 21
What criteria should we consider when evaluating YA literature? A look at archetypes in YA.

Week IV: January 28

Week V: February 4

Week VI: February 11
YA literature and coming of age issues; censorship concerns.

Week VII: February 18
Class discussion on *Chanda's Secrets*. Notes due. Mulicultural YA literature. Guest - Dr. Kathleen Herndon

Week VIII: February 25
Class presentation on *Bronx Masquerade*. Notes due. YA literature and poetry.

Week IX: March 4
Literature Circles: Historical Fiction, YA War literature.

SPRING BREAK: READ, READ, READ, READ, READ, READ

Week X: March 18
Literature Circles: Survival and Fantasy Adventure
Week XI: March 25:
   Literature Circles: Science Fiction and Supernatural


Week XIII: April 8
   **Literature Collection due.** Discussion and sharing of collections.

Week XIV: April 15: **Academic community service reports due.** Oral presentations of service.

Week XV: April 22: **Final Project/Exam due.** Sharing of final projects. Course evaluations.