

ENGLISH 335: CRITICAL APPROACHES TO CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Fall 2018 – Carman 315

Thursday 6pm-8:40pm

Instructor: Dainy Bernstein, Adjunct Lecturer

Office hours: Thursday 4:30-5:30pm

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

3 CREDITS, 3 HOURS

Critical examination of selected works written for children and enjoyed by children and adults.

Consideration of fantastic and realistic fiction and analysis of appropriate literary forms, such as fairy tale, animal fable, adventure story, and the novel of development.

SECTION OVERVIEW

This course has several goals. You will become familiar with genres including those listed above, learning the **forms and conventions** of each genre. You will also become familiar with **critical approaches** useful for analysis of all literature, including children's literature. We will be examining the ideologies embedded in texts, as well as the **ideologies** that guide our culture, particularly in terms of children and the literature they read or are given. We'll examine these questions from perspectives of literary scholars as well as educators.

Some of the questions we'll be addressing throughout the semester:

- a. What *is* children's literature? Can we settle on one definition to encompass all children's texts?
- b. What is its purpose, and how does it function?
- c. What are adult expectations of children as set forth in these texts?
- d. What might these texts say about the culture of their times? about our culture?
- e. Why study children's literature in the first place?

Please note: We will be discussing children's literature critically and theoretically. I ask that you refrain from discussions about what is appropriate or inappropriate for children, what they might like or dislike, or what they comprehend. While some of you may have children and may be tempted to use them as an example of what children will or won't understand or like, please remember that those are your children – we cannot base our analysis or observations on one or two children, just as we don't base our analysis or observation of "regular" literature on one or two adults. The texts we will discuss will be contemplated the same way you would Shakespeare, Steinbeck, or any other piece of literature.

COURSE GOALS

Students will:

1. critically examine how children's literature reflects and promotes society's views of childhood, gender roles, race and ethnicity, etc.
2. develop skills necessary for recognizing, identifying, and communicating the role of ideology in children's texts
3. examine issues relevant to the reading and teaching of children's texts at home and in the classroom, including the censorship of children's literature and the use of children's texts as tools for critical thinking and/or moral instruction
4. discuss and critique pedagogical methods for teaching children
5. explore traditional storytelling motifs, symbols, and techniques

6. develop an awareness of a variety of literary genres, structures, values, and purposes
7. learn to place literary texts within their aesthetic, political, religious, and historical contexts

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. read texts closely, critically, creatively, intellectually, and theoretically
2. write about literary texts with imagination, precision, and detail
3. demonstrate understanding of works of literature as expressions of individual and cultural values in historical and social contexts
4. analyze and clearly articulate interpretations of the various meanings of texts, with particular reference to contexts and subtexts
5. compose well-constructed and rhetorically effective writing in various modes and media, including formal essays, creative think-pieces, and use of social media
6. refine use of critical methods and approaches to literature in written work
7. use effective pre-writing techniques, including active reading, locating and evaluating secondary sources, and using both physical and digital resources
8. effectively integrate primary and secondary sources in written work
9. demonstrate mastery in use of English language conventions and MLA formatting

COURSE TEXTS

The required texts for this course are:

- a. Coolidge, Susan. *What Katy Did*. 1872 (2010). ISBN: 978-0141326719. \$5.
- b. Juster, Norton. *The Phantom Tollbooth*. 1961. ISBN: 978-0394820378. \$7.
- c. Pierce, Tamora. *First Test*. 1999. ISBN: 978-0375829055. \$8.
- d. Curtis, Christopher Paul. *The Watsons Go to Birmingham*. 1995. ISBN: 978-0440414124. \$8.
- e. Burnett, Frances Hodgson. *The Secret Garden*. 1905. ISBN: 978-0064401883. \$7.
- f. Paterson, Katherine. *Bridge to Terabithia*. 1977. ISBN: 978-0064401845. \$6.
- g. L'Engle, Madeleine. *A Wrinkle in Time*. 1962. ISBN: 978-0312367541. \$5.
- h. Konigsburg, E.L. *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*. 1967. ISBN: 978-1416949756. \$8.
- i. Lowry, Lois. *Number the Stars*. 1989. ISBN: 9780440227533. \$14
- j. Bruchac, Joseph. *The Journal of Jesse Smoke, A Cherokee Boy, 1838*. 2001. ISBN: 978-0439121972. \$5
- k. MacDonald, Betty. *Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle*. 1947. ISBN: 978-0064401487. \$6.
- l. *The Adventures of Akbar*, Flora Annie Steel, 1913 (<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/18307/18307-h/18307-h.htm>)

Make sure to get these books as soon as possible. ***Waiting for a book to arrive is not an excuse for not reading.*** You may purchase the books or borrow them from a library – but you must have them in class with you on the day they're assigned. All **picture books** that we read in class will be provided for you – no need to get them for yourself, though you most certainly can if you want to!

Lehman College has some research guides that can help you find other books and sources as well:

<http://libguides.lehman.edu/c.php?g=331457&p=2226204>

<http://libguides.lehman.edu/juvenile>

You may also want to purchase or borrow the following books. They are *not* required reading. However, our class is based on some of their chapters. Some chapters will be available on Blackboard as PDFs.

1. Hintz, Carrie and Eric Tribunella. *Reading Children's Literature: A Critical Introduction*.
2. Coats, Karen. *The Bloomsbury Introduction to Children's and Young Adult Literature*.

PowerPoints based on these two textbooks will be uploaded to Blackboard as well.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. **Regular attendance and participation.** Regular attendance is essential. Come to class, bring the scheduled texts with you, and be prepared to share your thoughts about them. Stay on track with the reading schedule, read carefully and attentively, and **take notes as you read before class**.
2. **Reading Log.** Before each class, create a Blackboard post responding to that day's text, following the instructions on Blackboard.
3. **Two formal essays.** Papers are due via Blackboard on the dates indicated in the schedule. Detailed assignment sheets for each essay will be provided on Blackboard and in class.
4. **Picture Book.** Working in groups, you will write and illustrate a children's book during the last two weeks.
5. **Library Project.** Details forthcoming! I'm working with the librarian in charge of the children's collection to create a project for the class! (This replaces a midterm exam – rejoice!!)

*****In all areas and all requirements: if you see that you will have difficulty completing an assignment as described or by the due date, approach me as soon as you become aware of the problem. It is far easier to work out alternative solutions in advance of the deadline than to try to patch up missed deadlines, etc.*****

Deadlines will be strictly enforced. Because this class only meets once a week, and because we are going to move quickly and cover a vast amount of material, it is important that we stay on track. This isn't to say I will be unreasonable if you desperately need an extension. But an extension will be provided only if absolutely necessary.

If you require accommodation, please contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. Please also visit the Office of Disabilities Services in Shuster Hall, Room 238, to coordinate accommodations.

ASSESSMENT

15%	Award Paper
25%	Final Paper
25%	Reading Log
15%	Library Project
15%	Picture Book
5%	Participation

POLICIES AND RESOURCES

Attendance:

Students are expected to attend all class meetings as scheduled and are responsible for all class work missed as a result of late registration or absence. Excessive absences in any course may result in a lower

final grade. Since this course meets only once a week, two absences will significantly affect your grade, and three absences (20% of all scheduled classes) will result in failure of the course.

Accommodating Disabilities:

Lehman College is committed to providing access to all programs and curricula to all students. Students with disabilities who may require any special considerations should register with the Office of Student Disability Services in order to submit official paperwork to instructor.

For more information, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services, Shuster Hall, Room 238, 718-960-8441. For detailed information on services and resources visit: <http://www.lehman.edu/student-disability-services/> , or email: disability.services@lehman.cuny.edu.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism:

Academic dishonesty is prohibited in The City University of New York. Penalties for academic dishonesty include academic sanctions, such as failing or otherwise reduced grades, and/or disciplinary sanctions, including suspension or expulsion.” All violations are reported to the Department and college’s Academic Integrity Officer.

For detailed information on definitions and examples of Academic Dishonesty, including Cheating, Plagiarism, Obtaining Unfair Advantage and Falsification of Records and Documents, please refer to the student handbook or visit: <http://lehman.smartcatalogiq.com/en/2017-2019/Undergraduate-Bulletin/Academic-Services-and-Policies/Academic-Integrity>

Technology and Blackboard Information:

You are required to use **Blackboard** to access course materials, to post responses on the Discussion Board, and to submit papers to Safe Assign.

You are required to sign into your Lehman student **email** account for course messages—and check it! Blackboard will only allow me to send individual and mass messages to Lehman accounts. If there is an issue, this is the *only* account to which I can send, and if I email the class something, the fact that you didn’t know about an assignment or course change because you don’t use your Lehman account will never be accepted for not knowing the information.

<http://www.lehman.edu/itr/blackboard.php> For Information Technology: <http://www.lehman.edu/itr/>

Instructional Support Services (ISSP)

Lehman College’s Instructional Support Services Program (ISSP) is home of the Academic Center for Excellence (ACE) and Science Learning Center (SLC). Both offer students an array of activities and services designed to support classroom learning. Open to students at any level, there are individual, small group, and/or workshop sessions designed to improve “proficiency in writing, reading, research, and particular academic subject areas. Computer-assisted writing/language tutorial programs are also available,” as well as individual tutors, workshops and tutors.

To obtain more information about the ACE and the SLC, please visit Old Gym, Room 205 or <http://www.lehman.edu/academics/instructional-support-services/humanities-tutoring.php> or call ACE at 718-960-8175, and SLC at 718-960-7707. Regular tutoring hours for fall & spring semesters are: M—T 10 a.m.-7 p.m., and Sat. 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Library Tutors are also available in the Library. These tutors offer help with Library resources and computers. Please make use of these valuable services early and often throughout the semester. Tutoring sessions will supplement and enhance everything you gain from this class.

DAILY ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE
(*subject to change – all updates will be posted to BB*)

Date	Lecture	Read BEFORE CLASS	In-Class Reading
Week 1: August 30	Ideologies of Childhood		<i>The Tale of Peter Rabbit.</i> Beatrix Potter <i>Harold and the Purple Crayon.</i> Crockett Johnson <i>Amelia Bedelia.</i> Peggy Parish and Fritz Siebel <i>Madeline.</i> Ludwig Bemelmans
Week 2: September 6	History of Children’s Literature	<i>What Katy Did</i>	<i>A Child of Books.</i> Oliver Jeffers.
Week 3: September 13	Narrative Form / Elements of Story	<i>The Phantom Tollbooth</i>	<i>Where the Sidewalk Ends.</i> Shel Silverstein
Week 4: September 20 Award Paper on BB by 11:59pm	Critical Approaches: Gender and Sexuality	<i>First Test</i>	<i>Feminist Baby Finds Her Voice!</i> Loryn Brantz. <i>King and King.</i> Linda de Haan and Stern Nijland
Week 5: September 27	Critical Approaches: Race and Ethnicity	<i>The Watsons Go to Birmingham</i>	<i>The Sneetches and Other Stories</i> <i>The Snowy Day</i>
Week 6: October 4	Critical Approaches: Intersectionality	<i>The Secret Garden</i>	<i>Mufaro’s Beautiful Daughters</i>
Week 7: October 11	Critical Approaches: Psychology	<i>Bridge to Terabithia</i>	<i>How Does Baby Feel?</i> Karen Katz <i>I Am So Brave!</i> Stephen Krensky and Sara Gillingham <i>Where the Wild Things Are.</i> Maurice Sendak
Week 8: October 18	Genre: Realism and Fantasy	<i>A Wrinkle in Time</i>	<i>Almost Everybody Farts.</i> Marty Kelley.
Week 9: October 25	Genre: Novel of Development	<i>From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler</i>	<i>Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No- Good, Very Bad Day.</i> Judith Viorst and Ray Cruz
Week 10: November 1	Genre: Fairy Tales, Folk Tales, Fables	<i>Callaloo: A Jazz Folktale.</i> Marjuan Canady and Nabeeh Bilal. + selected fairy tales TBA	<i>Princess Princess Ever After.</i> Katie O’Neill. <i>The Worst Princess.</i> Anna Kemp and Sara Ogilvie

Week 11: November 8	Controversy: Girls Books vs Boys Books	<i>The Adventures of Akbar</i>	
Week 12: November 15	Controversy: Censorship and Selection	<i>Number the Stars</i>	<i>Click, Clack, Moo: Cows that Type.</i> Doreen Cronin and Betsy Lewin
<i>Week 13: November 22 Thanksgiving Break</i>			
Week 14: November 29	Non-Fiction	<i>The Journal of Jesse Smoke</i>	<i>The Magic School Bus Lost in the Solar System Here We Are</i>
Week 15: December 6	Film, Digital and New Media	<i>Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle</i>	<i>Farm</i> , Emma Grange Final presentations

ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS (detailed assignment sheets can be found under the “Assignments” tab on Blackboard)

1. **Award Essay:** Select one children’s book that was awarded a prize. Read your selected book and research the terms and criteria of the award itself. Use your research to explain why your selected book received its honor. You will not just describe the book but will also explain why you think this book received specifically this prize. Your essay must be titled (something other than the book’s title) and should name in the body of the essay the book title and author, artist (if applicable), and year of the award. Include a Works Cited page in addition to the 2-3 pages of text (500-750 words) in 12-point Times New Roman with 1-inch margins.
2. **Final Essay:**
 - a. Option 1: Critical Analysis - Focus on one approach and/or genre that we discussed this semester, and write an essay analyzing one of the books on the syllabus from that approach.
 - b. Option 2: Pedagogical Plan – Write an essay explaining how and why you would teach one of the books on the syllabus, one of the genres we discussed, or one of the issues we discussed.
3. **Picture Book:** Create a picture book for young children in groups of two or three. We will complete this project in stages, including story concept; rough sketches; and final product. The book will contain 24-32 pages with no more than 1000 words and should include text on almost every spread (maximum three text-free two-page spread), in a size no larger than thirty-point font (unless you want to create an effect on one or two pages).
4. **Reading Log:** This assignment will help you keep track of your notes as you read the books assigned this semester. Each book will have a log entry containing the following: full bibliographic information (title, author, publisher, date of publication, illustrator); genre designation; brief summary of content; any awards won; evaluation of the book highlighting three literary elements with examples from the book; analysis of the book’s ideology using formal elements and/or social/historical contexts to support your analysis.
5. **Library Project.** Details TBA.