

English 336: Critical Approaches to Adolescent Literature

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Spring 2019
 Section YM01
 Friday 12-2:40pm
 Carman 311

Course Description

Catalog: 3 hours, 3 credits. Critical study of literature of special interest to adolescents. Readings will include fiction, drama, and memoirs that focus on such themes as coming-of-age, knowing good and evil, confronting mortality, leaving home, discovering love and sexuality, and defining one's identity.

What makes adolescent literature a separate category from “regular” literature? Surely not just the reading level, since teenagers are quite capable of reading literature enjoyed by adults. Rather, adolescent literature is characterized by forms and themes specific to the experience of adolescence. In this section of English 336, we will attempt to answer these questions:

- What is the experience of adolescence?
- What sets adolescence apart from childhood and adulthood?
- How does adolescent literature address the unique experiences of adolescence?

Our reading schedule is designed to give you opportunities to delve into themes and narrative forms in each text, as well as to compare these themes and narrative forms across texts. Our writing schedule is designed to progress from close reading (intensely examining one aspect of the text) to thesis-driven analysis. We begin Week 1 with an overview of some important Young Adult texts, including *The Hunger Games*, *Harry Potter*, and *Persepolis*. For Week 2, we'll go on to *Sometimes We Tell the Truth*, a text that will help us think about narrative form, fictional narrators, and the concerns of contemporary teenagers. From there, we'll read books in a variety of genres, time periods, and points of view. We'll talk about how identities (of writer, character, and reader) affect which stories are told and how they are told; how genre opens up possibilities for some kinds of stories; how adolescent literature breaks boundaries or conforms to social norms; etc.

In addition to concerns specific to adolescent literature, we will approach the texts with more general questions. Some questions we might consider: Why do we read? What happens when we read? What do we pay attention to or ignore as we read? How and why do our readings change? Why do authors write? What strategies do authors use to position their texts or to engage readers in a particular manner?

Course Objectives

- to develop an awareness of a variety of literary genres, structures, values, and purposes
- to write about literary texts with imagination, precision, and detail
- to place literary texts within their aesthetic, political, religious, and historical contexts
- to develop an understanding of adolescent literature and the adolescent experience

Course Goals

- demonstrate the ability to compose well-constructed and rhetorically effective writing in various modes and media, including formal essays, creative think-pieces, and use of social media
- refine use of critical methods and approaches to literature in written work
- demonstrate effective pre-writing techniques, including active reading, drafting, and responding to critique from peers and the professor
- demonstrate mastery in use of English language conventions and MLA formatting

Required Text(s) (in the order we will read them)

1. *Sometimes We Tell the Truth*, Kim Zarins, 2016 *PDF will be provided
2. *Feral Youth*, Shaun David Hutchinson and Suzanne Young, 2017 *PDF will be provided
3. *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, Mildred Taylor, 1976 (edition: Scholastic, 1976) ISBN: 0-590-98207-9
4. *The Hate U Give*, Angie Thomas, 2017 (edition: Balzer + Bray, 2017) ISBN: 978-0-06-249853-3
5. *Two Boys Kissing*, David Levithan, 2013 (edition: Ember, 2013) ISBN: 978-0-307-93190-0
6. *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, Sherman Alexie, 2007 (edition: Little, Brown and Co. 2009) ISBN: 978-0-316-01369-7
7. *The Hero and the Crown*, Robin McKinley, 1984 (edition: Ace Books, 1987) ISBN: 0-441-32809-1
8. *Speak*, Laurie Halse Anderson, 1999 (edition: Square, Macmillan, 1999) ISBN: 978-0-312-67439-7
9. *Diary of a Young Girl / The Diary of Anne Frank* *PDF will be provided
10. *Violent Ends*, Shaun David Hutchinson and Neal Shusterman, 2016 *PDF will be provided

Course Requirements

1. **Regular attendance.** Regular attendance is essential. Since this class meets only once a week, more than *two* absences will significantly affect your grade.
2. **Participation.** Stay on track with the reading schedule, read carefully and attentively, and take notes as you read. Bring your text with you every day, and be ready to contribute to the class discussion. Participation will be graded holistically (ie you won't get a certain amount of points per class; rather, your grade will be based on your overall participation over the course of the semester). Quality comments will: 1) offer a unique but relevant perspective; 2) contribute to moving the discussion and analysis forward; 3) build on other comments from classmates and professor; 4) include evidence, argument, etc. (ie indicate reflective thinking based on the text rather than purely subjective responses).
3. **In-class Blackboard posts and exit slips.** Our class meets in a computer lab, CA/311. This gives us an excellent opportunity to do some writing that can be uploaded and shared immediately with your classmates and with me. We will use this to our advantage in thinking through specific points about the texts we discuss, as well as in preparing and practicing for the essays you will write. I will also ask you to fill out a short online exit slip at the end of each class. There is no making up Blackboard posts if you miss a class.
4. **Three formal essays.** Papers are due via Blackboard on the dates indicated in the schedule. Your first paper will be an in-depth study of one aspect of one book. Your second essay will be a thesis-driven analysis of one text, and your third will be a thesis-driven analysis of one or more texts *or* a theme in adolescent literature. Detailed assignment sheets for each essay will be provided in class. *Make every effort to attend class on days when papers will be assigned and when peer review is scheduled.* Being present for those discussions will be essential to your ability to write an effective paper.
5. **Extra credit: Live-Tweet as you read.** I will award extra credit (up to five points) if you live-tweet as you read each book. You could - and should - take notes in addition to what you post on Twitter,

but make sure to post at least *three* tweets before each class session to get the extra credit. Your tweets can be raw reaction (“omg I can’t believe they followed through on their plan! I bet they get in major hot water”) or analysis (“the image of the bluebird when Carrie goes home echoes the bluebird when her mom gave birth to her”) or questions (“why doesn’t Richard tell Emily how he feels?”). Use the hashtag #eng336lehman in every tweet. See these threads for examples of live-tweeting books: https://twitter.com/Ernest_Robyn/status/1061816767272677376
<https://twitter.com/DainyBernstein/status/1085306006761021440>
<https://twitter.com/profchander/status/1064687070713704448>

*****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.*****

Assessment

15%	Essay 1
25%	Essay 2
30%	Essay 3
15%	In-class BlackBoard posts
15%	Participation

CLASS POLICIES

Computer lab. The rules of the computer lab are set by the school: no food or drink in the lab. Closed drink bottles can be stored in your bags, but cannot be used during class time. Care should be taken that your possessions (phones, pens, etc.) do not fall into the space where the computers are stored, beneath the desk.

Breaks. This class runs from 12:00 until 2:40 - two hours and forty minutes. We will take a short 15-minute break around the midway point of each class, to allow you to grab a quick coffee or snack, drink some water, or stretch your legs.

Office hours. I will be in my office (Carman 393) every Friday after class, from 2:45-4:00. If this time does not work for you (ie, you have a class or work during that hour), please email me to set up an alternative appointment.

Accessibility and accommodations. 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 reasonable accommodations. These can range from speech-to-text devices to more frequent breaks - anything you need, please ask.

Names and Pronouns. If you would like to be called by a name other than the one given to me via CUNYFirst, please let me know. I will ask for each student’s pronouns on the first day of class. If you would like me to change the way I refer to you at any point, or if you would like me to use different pronouns in class versus via email (for example), please let me know.

Point of view. The readings, class lecture, and my comments in class will suggest a particular point of view. This perspective is my own and does not have to be yours! I encourage you to disagree with the ideas in the readings and lectures as well as the perspectives of your colleagues in the course. Please express yourself! A significant part of a college education is learning about the complexity of various issues; therefore, it is important that we listen and respect one another but we do not have to agree. A richer discussion will occur when a variety of perspectives are presented in class for discussion.

Diversity and inclusion. It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that the students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength, and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender identity, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, nationality, religion, and culture. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally, or for other students or student groups.

Important note: Given the sensitive and challenging nature of some of the material discussed in class, it is imperative that there be an atmosphere of trust and safety in the classroom. I will attempt to foster an environment in which each class member is able to hear and respect each other. It is critical that each class member show respect for all views expressed in class. It is expected that some of the material in this course may evoke strong emotions; please be respectful of others' emotions and be mindful of your own. Please let me know if something said or done in the classroom, by either myself or other students, is particularly troubling or causes discomfort or offense. While our intention may not be to cause discomfort or offense, the impact of what happens throughout the course is not to be ignored and is something that I consider to be very important and deserving of attention. If and when this occurs, there are several ways to alleviate some of the discomfort or hurt you may experience:

1. Discuss the situation privately with me. I am always open to listening to students' experiences, and want to work with students to find acceptable ways to process and address the issue.
2. Discuss the situation with the class. Chances are there is at least one other student in the class who had a similar response to the material. Discussion enhances the ability for all class participants to have a fuller understanding of context and impact of course material and class discussions.
3. Notify me of the issue through another source such as your academic advisor, a trusted faculty member, or a peer. If for any reason you do not feel comfortable discussing the issue directly with me, I encourage you to seek out another, more comfortable avenue to address the issue. The Counseling Center's information is listed below in the Resources section.

Children in the classroom. I understand that you are more than a student, and some of you may be mothers, fathers, or guardians. Nursing babies are always allowed in class. If your child's school is cancelled, or if for any other reason you need to bring your child along to class, please check in with me before the start of class, and try to sit near the door for that day so you and your child won't disturb the class if you need to take a bathroom break etc. at any time. Although we are in a computer lab, you cannot allow your child to use the computers. You can bring a desk in from another classroom so your child has a place to sit.

How to succeed in this class:

- Read the material thoroughly (including any introductions or forewords) before class. Read it all again after!
- Annotate your reading(s). Underline key passages (not everything), record reactions in the margins, ask questions, use asterisks and other symbols to indicate your process. Make that text your own!
- Attend every class. If you miss, get notes from a classmate (make sure you have someone's contact info).
- Listen and take notes by hand (unless otherwise prevented). Research has shown that taking notes by hand is a far better learning strategy than doing so on a computer. You have to hear, think, summarize, and write – each of which engages your brain and body differently and more comprehensively than typing on a keyboard. But by all means do whatever your physical situation requires.
- Participate in class discussion and ask questions when you're unclear about something, if you have a question, or if you have an interesting thought or idea. You never know - your comment may make or break the class for another person! If you tend to be quiet in class, that's fine, but I may call on you from time to time.
- Talk with others about what you're learning, what you're confused about, and what you're interested in. Respond to classmates' tweets and Blackboard posts, even when I'm not grading it!
- Reread the text, and let your annotations guide your reflection. And (re)annotate!
- Create a reading group. Read together, share notes and insights.
- Plan ahead for discussions and writing assignments so that you have time to prepare thoroughly and to revise your essays prior to turning them in.
- Take advantage of my office hours. Don't wait until you're struggling to get help. Stop by when you're only slightly confused, or when you're excited about something you read - stop by for a chat about anything at all!

Four Key Words:

1. **Community:** We're in this together, and this unique group of people have come together to study this material. This is the only time in the whole of human history that this event will occur!
2. **Dialogue:** Let's talk about it together. We learn more together than we do singly, and we learn more together about more than just the content of the course.
3. **Reflection:** As we work through this together, let us always reflect back on what brought us here, singly and together. We each have a history, just as each of these texts has a history, and your final project asks you to think back across your experience of the semester.
4. **Serendipity:** My favorite word as a teacher! Because we have come together uniquely for this class, you never know what discoveries we might make singly and together!

RESOURCES

The Academic Center for Excellence. ACE provides appointment-based and drop-in tutoring in the humanities, social sciences, and writing, as well as general writing skills. For more information, visit their website at <http://www.lehman.edu/issp> or call 718-960-8175. Please make use of this valuable service early and often throughout the semester.

Office of Disabilities Services. Lehman College is committed to providing access to all programs and curricula for all students. Students with disabilities who may need classroom accommodations are

encouraged to register with the Office of Student Disability Services. For more information, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services at Shuster Hall, Room 238, email disability.services@lehman.cuny.edu, or call 718-960-8441.

PLAGIARISM. Plagiarism (intellectual theft) has serious academic consequences, including potential failure of the course, suspension, or expulsion. Remember to cite or acknowledge the help you received in formulating your ideas. This help includes but is not limited to magazine or journal articles, other textbooks, reference books, introductions to texts, web pages, friends, and classmates. Remember to cite quoted material as well. If you have any questions about plagiarism, CUNY's policy on academic integrity is clear and available for you to read: <http://web.cuny.edu/academics/info-central/policies/academic-integrity.pdf>. The statement in the Lehman College student handbook is available at <http://www.lehman.cuny.edu/student-affairs/documents/student-handbook-02.pdf>.

Counseling Center. The Counseling Center at Lehman College (Old Gym Bldg. Rm 114) is a safe place for students to talk about any concerns they may have. The Counseling Center offers free and confidential services in a safe environment. At the Counseling Center, students can address issues that may be keeping them from attaining their academic goals. All students are treated with respect and are seen as individuals with unique strengths. Students may seek our services for a variety of reasons, including: Stress/Anxiety; Depression; Grief/Loss; Loneliness; Family Stress; Difficulties in Romantic Relationships; Academic Concerns (e.g. poor time management/procrastination); Cultural Issues; [Life Coaching](#). Old Gym Building, Room 114. 718-960-8761. counseling.center@lehman.cuny.edu

Title IX. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 ("Title IX") is a federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in education programs and activities at universities receiving federal funds. Under Title IX, discrimination on the basis of sex can include sexual harassment or sexual violence, such as rape, sexual assault, sexual battery, and sexual coercion. Anyone – of any gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, citizenship status, race, class or educational level – can suffer from sexual harassment, including sexual violence. The goal of this website is to help you understand what sexual harassment means and let you know that there are people at CUNY and in the community who can help if you or others experience it. We want to make sure you understand your rights as a student, CUNY's policies, and other issues related to sexual harassment, gender harassment and sexual violence. Feel free to give us a call at (718) 960-8111 or send an email to dawn.ewing-morgan@lehman.cuny.edu or to maritza.rivera@lehman.cuny.edu

SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS: (Please note that this schedule is subject to change.)

Date	Reading Due	Writing Due
Friday, Jan. 25	What is adolescence? What is adolescent literature? Annotating, drawing, using bookmarks, live-tweeting Excerpts: <i>Hunger Games</i> , <i>Persepolis</i> , <i>Harry Potter</i>	Introductions
Friday, Feb. 1	<i>Sometimes We Tell the Truth</i> , Kim Zarins, 2016 (pp. 1-139) <i>Feral Youth</i> , Shaun David Hutchinson and Suzanne Young, 2017 (pp. 1-9)	
Friday, Feb. 8	<i>Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry</i> , Mildred Taylor, 1976 (pp. 1-105) + Paper #1 assigned	
Friday, Feb. 15	<i>Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry</i> (pp. 106-210)	
<i>Tuesday, Mar. 5</i>	---	Paper #1
Friday, Feb. 22	<i>The Hate U Give</i> , Angie Thomas, 2017 (pp. 3-219)	
Friday, Mar. 1	<i>The Hate U Give</i> (220-444) + Paper #2 assigned	
Friday, Mar. 8	<i>Two Boys Kissing</i> , David Levithan, 2003 (pp. 1-105)	Paper Proposal
Friday, Mar. 15	<i>Two Boys Kissing</i> (pp. 106-196)	
<i>Tuesday, Mar. 19</i>	---	Paper #2 Draft
Friday, Mar. 22	<i>The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian</i> , Sherman Alexie, 2007 (pp. 1-117) + Peer review	
<i>Tuesday, Mar. 26</i>	---	Paper #2
Friday, Mar. 29	<i>The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian</i> (pp. 118-230)	
Friday, Apr. 5	<i>The Hero and the Crown</i> , Robin McKinley, 1984 (pp. 3-110)	
Friday, Apr. 12	<i>The Hero and the Crown</i> (pp. 111-227) + Paper #3 assigned	
Friday, Apr. 19	SPRING RECESS	
Friday, Apr. 26	SPRING RECESS	
Friday, May 3	<i>Speak</i> , Laurie Halse Anderson, 1999 (pp. 3-198)	
<i>Tuesday, May 7</i>	---	Paper #3 Draft
Friday, May 10	<i>Diary of a Young Girl / The Diary of Anne Frank</i> (selections) + Peer review	
Friday, May 17	<i>Violent Ends</i> , Shaun David Hutchinson and Neal Shusterman, 2016 (selections)	Paper #3