

English 305
Ideologies of Children's Literature and Childhood
Fall, 2009

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Hall of Languages 314
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Policy Statement

Required Texts

Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*
Lowry, *The Giver*
Yang, *American Born Chinese*
Patrick, *Skeleton Creek*
Curtis, *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963*
Almond, *Skellig*
Kidd, *Monkey Town: The Summer of the Scopes Trial*
Various Folk and Fairy Tales available through eCollege

Americans with Disabilities Act Statement:

Students requesting accommodations for disabilities must go through the Academic Support Committee. For more information, please contact the Director of Disability Resources and Services at 903-886-5835.

Course Description, Goals, Approach and Rationale:

During this course, we will be exploring a number of children's novels and texts through various genres. This includes contemporary, classic, historical, and realistic fiction, fantasy, picture books, and folk and fairy tales. Whew. That's a long list, but ultimately, this course has several goals. You will become familiar with the genres I've listed above, but together, we'll also be exploring various ideas conveyed in the texts, the historical development and context of children's fiction, how novels for young readers have changed and/or stayed the same, and the intersections among language, theory, politics, ideology, and children's fiction. Most important, however, we will be examining the ideologies embedded in the texts as well as the ideologies that guide our culture, particularly in terms of children and the literature they read. We'll also be tackling several questions throughout the semester. What IS children's literature anyway? What is its purpose, how does it function, and why? Is it successful in its function? What are adult expectations of children as set forth in these texts? What might these novels say about our culture? Why study children's literature in the first place?

As far as I know, there aren't any definitive answers to the above questions, but that doesn't mean they aren't worthy of our attention. The fact is, I'm not here to answer the above questions; I'm here to ask them, identify problems, encourage you to ask questions and identify problems, and discuss them with you. Ultimately, I want you, in the time we have, to become as informed as possible regarding children's literature. This will hopefully allow you to come to an informed, aware, and sensitive approach to children's literature, and to understand the various concerns and assumptions surrounding literature for young readers.

I want to emphasize that we will be reading these texts as adults, not as how we think children might receive the texts. This is somewhat problematic in itself, in that with the exception of a few generalizations, to determine what constitutes an adult or child, their likes or dislikes, their actual needs or perceived needs, is nearly impossible. I am working from the premise that there is no "universal child," only our perceptions, which are guided by cultural ideologies. We will approach these texts in a multitude of ways, including cultural and historical perspectives, which further includes approaches such as feminism, Marxism, cultural poetics, and ecocriticism. Ultimately, you will need to demonstrate your ability to read these texts closely, critically, creatively, intellectually, and theoretically.

Additionally, we will be discussing throughout the semester possible strategies and methods regarding how you might teach children's literature as well as various ways you can incorporate those strategies in your classrooms.

Assignments, Tests, and Grading:

Assignment	Points
Quizzes/In-class Writings	Up to 10 points each
Homework & Miscellaneous Assignments	Up to 30 points each
Exam 1	30 points
Exam 2	30 points
Scholarly Article or Deeper Reading Assignment	30 points (Descriptions re Available in Document Sharing of e-College)
Exam 3 (Final Exam)	To calculate points possible, take the number of accumulated points (not counting the final) and multiply that by 30%. For instance, by the end of the semester, if there are 200 accumulated points, multiply $200 \times 30\% = 60$ points. 60 points will be the value of the final.

Quizzes and In-class Writings: Expect a quiz over readings. These may take the form of passage identification, short answers, or objective questions. These cannot be made up.

Homework and Miscellaneous Assignments: I do not anticipate that I will assign homework except the readings. However, in case of canceled classes (due to weather or special circumstances [Swine Flu?]), it is possible that I will assign homework to keep us on schedule. Or, if I perceive that the novels are not being read carefully and closely, I will assign homework to encourage closer and more careful reading.

Exams: There will be four exams, which will likely consist of passage identification, definitions, short essay, and analysis.

Scholarly Article Summary/Response/Application or Pedagogy: You have your choice here. If you are an English major and don't anticipate teaching, you'll probably want to do the Scholarly Article Summary/Response/Application (available in eCollege).

If you are an Education major, then you might be more interested in pedagogy. Thus, I will provide an excerpt from Kelly Gallagher's *Deeper Reading*. If you are an education major, you will probably want to do the pedagogy assignment (available in eCollege, *Deeper Reading*).

Your grades are available through eCollege. Nevertheless, keep track and copies of your work! If I mis-recorded something, you'll need to show me my mistake. In order to calculate your grade, take the number of points you have accumulated and divide by the number possible. For instance, if you have accumulated 34 points and 45 points are possible, divide 34 by 45. $34/45=75.555\%$ (a C)

90%-100%=A, 80-89=B, 70-79=C, 60-69=D, Below 60%=F

Late Work:

I seldom accept late work. If you know ahead of time that you will be absent when an assignment is due, it is your responsibility to turn it in before it is due.

Participation, Absences, and Tardiness:

This is a discussion-based class, which is designed to help you discuss children's literature from an intellectual standpoint. If you find our topic uninteresting, then you have a responsibility to help make it interesting. Ask questions; help lead discussion. I don't reward students for participation, for participation is simply part of the class. Not participating in class, however, can affect your grade—if you're borderline at the end of the semester, I won't give the benefit of the doubt.

If for some reason you miss class, it is your responsibility to check the website and contact one of your classmates and find out what you missed. Don't send me an e-mail asking "did I miss anything important?"

I understand that emergencies arise, but if it appears that you'll be missing more than 3 or 4 classes, you should consider taking this course when you can devote the necessary time required by this class. I do keep track of attendance and I don't give "free" absences. Excessive absences

will negatively affect your grade. I define excessive absences as more than 3 absences. If you get into the 4 or 5 area, it will be a challenge to make better than a C. If you have 6 absences or more, expect to fail the class. Additionally, I reserve the right to drop students from the class who accrue 6 or more absences.

Arrive on time. Arriving late is disrespectful and disruptive. If I have taken role before you arrive, I will count it as an absence.

Only under the rarest of circumstances can quizzes and in-class writings be made up.

Computers and the Internet:

You need to have access to and be willing to work with computers and the internet. If you do not have access to a computer or are opposed to using one, you will need to take a section wherein computers are not as critical to the classroom environment. Most of the work I assign will be listed on my website, and some of the readings can only be found through links I provide.

Academic Honesty:

You are responsible for indicating when you have used specific words, sentences, or paragraphs, which belong to other writers. These words, sentences, or paragraphs should be designated via quotation marks and in-text citations. Additionally, identify when you use ideas from other sources. If you use the exact wording of something you've read or if you paraphrase it, provide a specific citation indicating where you found your information. If in question, cite it, and indicate that you've cited it by using quotation marks and in-text citations. Think of it in these terms: knowledge is a commodity, especially in the academic community. If you had a brilliant idea, or a wonderful way with words, would you like it if someone used your idea or words without acknowledging you? **In short, I will fail papers that are copied or that do not acknowledge sources. If you have questions, ask me, and I will help you. If I discover a paper has been plagiarized, I will fail the paper, which will likely result in an F for the class. Further, according to the Texas A&M University-Commerce Code of Student Conduct 5.b[1,2,3], penalties for students guilty of academic dishonesty include disciplinary probation, suspension, and expulsion.**

Classroom Etiquette:

Students are expected to be civil, polite, and accommodating to differences of opinion. University policy provides the means for dismissing students who do not meet these requirements, and I will take politeness very seriously.

Cell Phones in the Classroom:

Use some common sense and be smart about this, for I have a real problem with cell phones in the classroom. It's rude, disrespectful, and disruptive to accept or make phone calls, to text message, or play games. Just don't. The only cell phone permitted in this class is a cell phone that is turned off. That means you should not receive, make, or answer calls or text messages. If your phone rings during class or if you are texting, I reserve the right to confiscate the phone until class is over. Alternatively, if there is cell phone incident, I reserve the right to ask you to leave class, which will count as an absence.

A Message from the Writing Center:

The Writing Center (Communication Skills Center) is dedicated to helping writers take advantage of all opportunities for learning inherent in the writing process; to that end, we can assist writers at any stage of the writing process. This is your place for assistance with your reading and writing projects here at TAMU-Commerce. We can help you with your papers and digital texts in any of your classes. We have two locations: (1) on the ground floor of the Hall of Languages (room 103), and (2) beside the circulation desk in Gee Library. Our hours of operation for Fall 2009 are:

Hall of Languages: Monday through Thursday 9:00 A.M until 2:00 P.M.

Gee Library: Sunday through Thursday 6:00 P.M. until 9:00 P.M.

To make an appointment, come to HL 103 or call 903.886.5280.

For online students, the Online Writing Lab can be accessed here:

<http://www.tamu-commerce.edu/litlang/WritingCenter/owl.asp>

**Please note that our hours of operation vary from previous semesters.

TE_xES/ExCET

If you intend to seek teaching certification, you must pass the state's certification examination on the TE_xES/ExCET. Information regarding the process is available at

<http://www.sbec.state.tx.us/SBECOnline/default.asp>

Reading/Assignment Schedule
Subject to Revision

Week 1:

Tues., Sept 1
Introductions

Thurs., Sept 3
Picture Books

Read Fish Stories (eCollege, document sharing); expect a quiz in class

Week 2

Tues., Sept. 8
Picture Books

Read "Hansel & Gretel" (eCollege, document sharing)

Thurs., Sept. 10

Picture Books

Syllabus Quiz (eCollege)

Week 3

Tues., Sept. 15
Picture Books

Folk & Fairy Tales

Thurs., Sept 17

1BlueJackMollie (eCollege, document sharing)

Week 4

Tues., Sept. 22

2DonkeyRedCinder (eCollege, document sharing)

Thurs., Sept. 24

3LittleMermaid (eCollege, document sharing)

Week 5

Tues., Sept. 29

4SnowRapunzel

Thurs., Oct. 1

Exam #1

Week 6

Tues., Oct 6

American Born Chinese (all)

Thurs., Oct. 8
American Born Chinese

Week 7
Tues., Oct. 13
Skeleton Creek (all)

Thurs., Oct. 15
Skeleton Creek

Week 8
Tues., Oct. 20
The Giver (all)

Thurs., Oct. 22
The Giver

Week 9
Tues., Oct. 27
Exam #2

Wed., Oct. 28: If you are doing the article assignment, you need to get approval from me regarding the article and the book you will be using.

Thurs., Oct. 29
View *Blue Eyes/Brown Eyes* in class

Week 10
Tues., Nov. 3
ASSIGNMENT: WATCH REMAINDER OF BLUE EYES/BROWN EYES AT HOME:
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/divided/etc/view.html>
View *Four Little Girls* in class

Thurs., Nov. 5
ASSIGNMENT: Pedagogy assignment or Scholarly article
View *Four Little Girls*

Week 11
Tues., Nov. 10
Watsons (all)

Thurs., Nov. 12
Watsons

Week 12

Tues., Nov. 17

The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe (all)

Thurs., Nov. 19

Lion continued

Week 13

Tues., Nov. 24

Thurs., Nov. 26 Thanksgiving Holiday: Gobble, Gobble

Week 14

Tues., Dec. 1

Monkey Town (all)

Thurs., Dec. 3

Monkey Town

Week 15

Tues., Dec. 8

Skellig (all)

Thurs., Dec. 10

Skellig

Finals Week

Tuesday, December 15, 10:30-12:30, Exam #3