ENG 3405-001: Children's Literature

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**Course Overview**

The audience for “children’s literature” is usually defined as birth to age twelve. Accordingly, we will start with books for the youngest readers (picture books) and end with novels. At all points we will be looking at the “whole book” – from cover to endpapers – keeping in mind a point made by the author of *Reading Picture Books with Children*: “meaning doesn’t exist in the book or in the reader, but in the space between them.” Since adults often occupy the space between child readers and their books, we will also talk about various ways reading is or can be an interactive experience.

**Final Exam**

*Wednesday* December 14 12:30 – 2:30
Learning Goals

- Awareness and appreciation of the broad range of classic and contemporary works written or published specifically for children

- Awareness of historical developments related to this literature and understanding of the varied cultural contexts in which it has been produced

- Familiarity with characteristics of the genre of children’s literature: fiction and non-fiction, fantasy and realism, and sub-genre (animal fantasy, historical fiction)

- Familiarity with features of the distinctive formats of children’s literature, including picture book, “easy reader” or transition book, graphic narrative, novel or “chapter book,” and informational book

- Understanding of the terminology used to describe, discuss, and evaluate children’s literature in different genre and formats

- Awareness of the role of design (size, shape, layout) and paratextual elements (cover, endpapers, etc.) in books for young people

- Understanding of the interaction of oral, visual, and textual elements in works of children’s literature in different genre and formats

- Attentiveness to the strategies used by authors and illustrators to accommodate the abilities, schema, interests, identities, and desires of their intended audiences

- Development and application of criteria for evaluation of children’s literature that takes into account its literary qualities, reader appeal, ideology, cultural authority, rhetorical purposes, and potential uses (instruction, entertainment)

- Experience analyzing and evaluating children’s literature for a variety of audiences in a variety of written and oral forms

- Productive use of the print and electronic resources available to scholars and professionals who work with youth literature in fields such as English Studies, Education, and Library & Information Science. These include reference books, articles in peer-reviewed journals & books, review journals, blogs, and web-sites

- Exploration of issues and controversies in youth literature from a variety of perspectives: professional, personal, political, practical, philosophical
Tentative Schedule of Readings & Assignments

Week 1 ~ August 22, 24, 26

M  Introductions

*Please post a personal Introduction on D2L before our next class meeting.*

Who are you? How are you? What experiences with child readers and children’s literature do you bring to class? Anything else you’d like to tell us (hobby, fun fact) or advertise (teams or clubs)?

W  Read the picture book *Knuffle Bunny.* Also read “Teaching New Readers to Love Books” by Robin Smith (handout). “Annotate” the essay by highlighting key passages (1-2 per page) and commenting in the margins, labeling stages of Smith’s development as a reader and a teacher, comparing your experiences to hers, responding to her beliefs about child readers and children’s literature.

→ Always bring books + other assigned readings to class for our discussion

F  Read "Children, Children, What Do You See?" by Megan Dowd Lambert (handout), plus the interview with her in *School Library Journal* (available in "Assigned Readings" on D2L).

Re-read *Knuffle Bunny.* Ask yourself the basic VST questions as you move from the front cover to the back. Describe some things this helps you notice about the story and Willems’ storytelling.

D2L: Exploring Picture Books using VTS

Select two passages from Lambert’s essay or one from the essay and one from the interview. Quote her words and then respond to what Lambert says based on your knowledge and experience. In what ways does her approach make sense to you? To what extent does your experience support her ideas? (Provide specific examples if possible.) What questions do you have about this approach? Select one page of *Knuffle Bunny* to explore and discuss in detail.

Week 2 ~ August 29 & 31, September 2

M  Begin reading about “Picture Books” (ch. 5: pp. 81-91) in *Essentials of Children’s Literature* (ECL). Also read *The Lion and the Mouse,* *Last Stop on Market Street,* and *This Is Not My Hat.*

D2L: Words + Pictures

To prepare for our discussion, write about one or two “spreads” in *This Is Not My Hat,* *On Market Street,* OR *The Lion and the Mouse.* You can choose a spread with separate illustrations on facing pages – one on the “verso” (left) and one on the “recto” (right) – OR a “double-page spread” with one illustration that crosses the “gutter” between recto and verso... or some interesting variation on those basic layouts. Talk about what’s going on in the illustrations – and the things you see that contribute to your “reading” of this part of the story. Also talk about the relationship of words and pictures in these spreads. What aspects of the story (characterization, setting, plot/action, theme) are readers told about in the text? Which aspects are they shown? Consider the use of at least one of the visual elements discussed in ECL 5. How does the illustrator’s use of line, shape, color, or texture contribute to the meaning or impact of this page?

W  Meet in the Ballenger Teacher Center at Booth Library ~ Bring your Panther Card!

D2L: Exploring Horn Book magazine

Starting with the front cover and ending with the back cover, browse through your July/August issue of *Horn Book* with the goal of finding the parts that interest you and figuring out how it might be useful to you right now or in the future, personally or professionally. In your post, describe and discuss specific features of the magazine (articles, ads, illustrations, etc.) that look interesting or useful to you—and explain why. Read “Last Stop, First Steps” (p. 11) by Roger Sutton, the editor of *Horn Book* OR “The Year in Pictures” by Julie Danielson (p. 16) and at least two more articles, columns, or features. Let us know why you chose these articles and what you got out of them. Finally, browse the book review section at the back, reading all (or most) of the reviews for picture
books; feel free to browse the other review sections. Comment on the style and content of these reviews. Quote two lines from a review made a particular book interesting to you.

F Read both books you checked out from the Ballenger Teacher Center picture book collection. Read them silently and then again out loud. In a D2L post, briefly summarize and describe each book so anyone reading your post knows what the book is about (its focus) and what its like (appeal factors, artistic and textual style). Then point out some of the features of this book that might make it a good picture book read aloud for one or more readers. Finally, point out and explain potential problems or challenges or opportunities. Bring both books to class.

Week 3 ~ September [5], 7, 9

[M] **Labor Day** ~ no classes
*Extra Credit (up to 10 points): Evaluate a Review Journal ~ Due before class on Friday

W Read ECL 2: pp. 20-30 only. Bookmark a passage you have something to say about; Read and annotate "Have Book Bag Will Travel," identifying interesting or useful points. While you're at it, review previously assigned readings about picture books and read alouds, looking for inspiration and quotations you might be able to use in your essay. Bring self-selected read aloud to class.

F **Meet in the Ballenger Teacher Center (BTC)**
On D2L, post an updated list of the features of your book that seem most significant, and spell out any questions you have about it. During class time in the BTC, you will be introduced to electronic resources used by librarians, teachers, critics and scholars who work with children’s literature. You will leave with a selection of reviews so you can see what experienced professionals had to say about your book. You will also have time to look for other types of web resources.

Week 4 ~ September 12, 14, 16

M Annotate and respond to reviews of your book from NovelList or the Children’s Literature Comprehensive Database. (See D2L prompt.) Review and finish ECL 5: “Picture Books” (pp. 81-101). Bring book and reviews to class, along with any questions you have about them.

W Read “Modern Fantasy” (ECL 7: 130-140); Read (or re-read) Where the Wild Things Are, This Is Not My Hat, The Lion and the Mouse, and We Are in a Book!; In your D2L post, identify and discuss “fantastic” elements in the illustrations and text of your book. How do fantasy elements contribute to the meaning or impact of the story – overall and at particular points in the story (on particular pages)? If your book does not have any elements of fantasy, write about one of the other books we will be talking about today. (If it’s difficult to decide whether or not there are fantasy elements in your book, use specific examples to explain why this a hard call.)

F Book Talk Outline Due; Read “Realistic Fiction” (ECL 8: 147-158); Read or re-read Knuffle Bunny, Sam's Cookie, Last Stop on Market Street; In a D2L post, identify and discuss “realistic” features of your book; then compare its approach to “realism”— and its version of reality – to the realism/reality of one of the books in this group.

1st D2L Score (up to 100 points) will cover posts up to this point.
**Reflective D2L post DUE** on-line by Wednesday

Week 5 ~ September 19, 21, 23

*We will discuss a draft of your Review Essay at a Conference Appointment this week*

M Begin Picture Book Book Talks (6)

W Continue Book Talks (6)
F Continue Book Talks (5)

Week 6 ~ September 26, 28, 30 (Banned Books Week)

Read Aloud Review Essay DUE this week (one week after your conference appointment)

M Read and annotate the chapter on “Easy Readers” from Kathleen Hornig’s From Cover to Cover (handout). Read Frog & Toad Together and We Are in a Book! No D2L post

W Read ECL 1: 12-14 only. Make a list of all nine picture books and easy readers, plus your read aloud, putting them in (approximate) age level order, starting with the one targeted at the youngest readers. For each book, make notes about specific features that make it work for child readers at a particular stage of their development as readers; also note features that might make this book suitable for readers at different stages. (I will collect these lists.)

F Read “Censorship” (ECL 12: 271-275 only); Peruse the American Library Association’s list of Frequently Challenged Books; Read and annotate “Reading under the Midnight Sun: Implications of Worldview” (handout)

Week 7 ~ October 3, 5, 7

M Re-read Last Stop on Market Street; Read “Becoming ‘A Better Witness for What’s Beautiful’” plus self-selected reading on diversity in children’s literature (see web links on D2L); D2L Post.

W Read “Literature for a Diverse Society” (ECL 11: 213-232) and mark passages to discuss; Read introduction and statistics related to “Books by and about People of Color” (web link).

F Meet in the Ballenger Teacher Center
Read Gene Yang’s “Reading Without Walls” (link on D2L); Browse ECL Appendix “Awards” (pp. 309-332) + Web Links to recent award winners

Week 8 ~ October 10, 12, [14]


W Read two works of non-fiction, one about a person or history/social science + one on a science topic; Post an evaluation of one of them on D2L. Bring your book to class.

F Fall Break ~ no classes

Week 9 ~ October 17, 19, 21

M Meet in the Ballenger Teacher Center (Bring Library Card) Read the section on Poetry from “Poetry and Plays” (ECL 4: 55-74 only)

W Read two books of poetry, one anthology + one specialized collection; D2L Post Evaluate one

F Outline of 6-minute Book Talk (Poetry or Information Book) DUE; Begin Locomotion
Week 10 ~ October 24, 26, 28
M  Begin Book Talks; Continue Locomotion; **D2L post M or W**
W  Continue Book Talks; Finish Locomotion
F  Continue Book Talks

Week 11 ~ October 31; November 2, 4
M  Finish Book Talks; Begin *Charlotte’s Web* (chapters 1-3)
W  Read ECL 3: “Learning about Literature” (pp. 33-50); (Re-)Read chapters 1 – 5 in *Charlotte’s Web* + **D2L post**: analysis of one passage from assigned chapter
F  Continue *Charlotte’s Web*; **D2L Post** today or Monday

Week 12 ~ November 7, 9, 11
M  Finish *Charlotte’s Web*
W  Read and annotate “Raising a Reader” by the Comic Book Defense League; Begin *El Deafo*
F  Continue *El Deafo* (**D2L post** today or Monday)

Week 13 ~ November 14, 16, 18
M  Finish *El Deafo*
   
   **Meet in the Ballenger Teacher Center** (Bring Library Card)
W  Read “Historical Fiction” (ECL 9: pp. 166-181)
F  Begin self-selected historical fiction, non-fiction, or graphic narrative; **D2L post**

Thanksgiving Break

Week 14 ~ November 28, 30; December 2
M  Continue self-selected historical fiction, non-fiction, or graphic narrative; **D2L post**
W  Finish self-selected historical fiction, non-fiction, or graphic narrative; **D2L post**
F  Bring annotated reviews to class; Book Talk Outline DUE
   
   *Your second D2L score (up to 150 points) will include all posts since the end of Week 4*

Week 15 ~ December 5, 7, 9
M  **D2L Post** Final Quest Topic; Begin Book Talks
W  Book Talks
F  Book Talks

Final Exam  
   **Wednesday** December 14, 12:30 – 2:30
Brief Descriptions of Major Assignments

**Review Essay** ~ A multi-faceted evaluation (~1000 words) of a picture book (see assignment sheet)

*Note:* You can revise the Review Essay for a new grade.
It can also be submitted to the **Electronic Writing Portfolio (EWP)**.

You might also submit this essay to the **Louise Murray Award** for writing about children’s literature as well as literature written for children by undergraduate English or Education majors & minors.
Submissions of creative and critical writing are solicited each Spring.

**D2L Posts** ~ Scores for D2L posts will reflect their quality and usefulness as demonstrated by these qualities:
- analysis of features of specific pages or passages in the context of the whole book
- attention to specific visual, textual, and oral features of “discourse” (how a story is told or conveyed) that contribute to readers’ understanding of “story” (character, setting, plot, theme) and other content
- development of ideas-in-progress spelled out as fully as possible and explored thoughtfully
- willingness to practice applying terms and concepts introduced in lectures and assigned readings
- “recursiveness” – evidence that you are making connections between texts and concepts and reconsidering or refining ideas about children’s literature as you accumulate experience and information
- completeness *late* posts will be penalized significantly if they are significantly late, but deductions for missing posts will have a devastating effect on your score, so on time is best but “better late than never”

**Book Talks** ~ Over the course of the semester, you will give three short (~6 minute) informative presentations:
one about a self-selected picture book; one about picture book information book or poetry; and one on a novel-length historical fiction or graphic narrative using the document camera and/or slideware.

**Final Exam** ~ This will consist of an essay written in class during the final exam period in which you discuss three works of children’s literature that you read this semester in relation to a particular theme or issue.

**Participation** ~ This includes your honest and informed contributions to class discussion and the productive effort you put into group work. In both cases, our goal is to create an atmosphere in which people are comfortable saying what they think and, in collaboration with classmates, thinking about what they have just said. You help create this atmosphere by making an effort to answer and ask questions during class discussion and group work, and by responding thoughtfully to other people’s comments and responses. This is a collaborative learning experience, so it is not impolite to disagree. By voicing your questions and concerns you make it possible for each of us to complicate and clarify our own ideas about children’s literature, which is what we are here for. You can also contribute to a collegial atmosphere in non-verbal ways. Attendance is obviously a prerequisite for participation, so if you have more than three (3) un-excused absences, you will lose up to 50 of these points (half a letter grade). If you need to miss a class meeting due to illness, a university event or other reason, please let me know as soon as possible.

**GRADES** (I will adjust these point values if I add, cancel, or significantly revise any assignments)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Review Essay</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D2L Posts</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Talks</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Bottom Line...
Your final grade will reflect the percentage you earn of the 1000 points possible

A = 91% (910+ points); B = 81 – 90% (810+); C = 71 – 80% (710+); D = 61 – 70% (610+); F = below 609
RESPONSIBILITIES, POLICIES, RESOURCES

1.) Keep in touch! Late work may be penalized if we do not come to an understanding before the due date. If you are experiencing temporary difficulties, contact me as soon as possible. No late work or extra credit will be accepted during the last week of classes. Reminder: if you have more than three (3) un-excused absences, you lose the 50 points for participation.

2.) You may use either MLA or APA style for the layout of your paper and the format of documentation on your Works Cited (MLA) or References (APA) page and the in-text citations that refer readers to this list. Be sure you are using the latest versions of the MLA Handbook (the new 8th edition) and the Publication Manual (6th ed.) or a reliable print or electronic guide.

3.) Plagiarism is a serious academic offense and a serious breach of professional ethics. You are plagiarizing if you take all or part of someone else’s wording, ideas, or visuals and use them in your own written or oral research presentations without identifying and giving credit to the source. You will have multiple opportunities to practice using proper citation methods as you add your voice to a lively on-going conversation about youth literature.

Because the devil is in the details, I will not assign a grade for a specific assignment (or this class) until you have corrected any improperly formatted citations and reworked unsuccessful paraphrases. For serious problems related to missing or misleading documentation of ideas, visuals or wording, you could receive a failing grade for the assignment and/or this course, and other penalties imposed by the Office of Student Standards. I report all cases of plagiarism.

If you want help with documentation, a Writing Center consultant would be happy to help you figure out how to quote, paraphrase, summarize, integrate and cite primary and secondary sources. Or you might just like to talk to someone about your writing-in-progress. Either way, you can drop by the Writing Center (Coleman Hall 3110) or call for an appointment (581.5929) at any point in the process, from brainstorming, planning and drafting, revision, to final editing. (Advice: Bring the assignment sheet and your sources as well as your paper-in-progress.)

Writing Center Hours: Monday - Thursday 9 am – 3 pm + 6 pm – 9 pm
Fridays 9 am – 1 pm

4.) Students with documented disabilities should contact the Office of Disability Services (581.6583) as soon as possible so we can work out appropriate accommodations.

5.) You must complete all major assignments in order to pass this course.

6.) English majors seeking Teacher Certification in English Language Arts should provide each of their English professors with the yellow form: “Application for English Department Approval to Student Teach.” These are available in a rack outside the office of Dr. Donna Binns (CH 3851).

7.) Free on-line support for D2L is available 24/7. Use email or chat on your “My Home” page on D2L (where you will also find a D2L Orientation course). Or call 1.877.325.7778.

Note: For problems with software, hardware, networking, NetID/password, or Panthermail, call the ITS Helpdesk (217.581.4357) or submit a help ticket: https://techsupport.eiu.edu/
Adjusted Schedule

Week 13 ~ November 14, 16, 18
M Continue El Deafo (ch. 6-11); D2L Post today or Wednesday
W Finish El Deafo (ch. 12-21)

optional class meeting* ~ Meet in the Ballenger Teacher Center
F Read “Historical Fiction” (ECL 9: pp. 166-181); D2L Post on self-selected book*

*D2L post counts as attendance

Thanksgiving Break

Week 14 ~ November 28, 30; December 2
M Begin self-selected historical fiction, non-fiction, or graphic narrative; D2L post
W Continue self-selected historical fiction, non-fiction, or graphic narrative; D2L Post Final Quest Topic
F Finish self-selected historical fiction, non-fiction, or graphic narrative; Bring Annotated Reviews to Class; D2L Post

D2L Part II (up to 150 points) will cover posts since the end of Week 4

Week 15 ~ December 5, 7, 9
M Book Talks: Oral Presentations (6)
W Book Talks: Oral Presentations + Media (6)
F Book Talks: Oral Presentations + Media (5); Outline for Final Exam Essay DUE

Final Exam Wednesday December 14, 12:30 – 2:30
(see other side)

Final Book Talk: Oral or Media Presentation
This book talk on a novel-length work of historical fiction, non-fiction, or graphic narrative can be presented orally using the document camera to share images (as usual) or posted on D2L as a stand-alone slideware presentation (Power point or Prezi), video book talk, or book trailer. Other options (comic strip?) might also work.
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