

Spring 1-15-2015

ENG 4903-001: Young Adult Literature

Jamila Smith
Eastern Illinois University

Follow this and additional works at: http://thekeep.eiu.edu/english_syllabi_spring2015



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Smith, Jamila, "ENG 4903-001: Young Adult Literature" (2015). *Spring 2015*. 79.
http://thekeep.eiu.edu/english_syllabi_spring2015/79

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the 2015 at The Keep. It has been accepted for inclusion in Spring 2015 by an authorized administrator of The Keep. For more information, please contact tabruns@eiu.edu.

Dr. Jamila D. Smith
ENG 4903
Young Adult Literature
Spring 2015
Office: Coleman Hall 3775
Office Hours: MWF 11:00-12:00
Mondays 1:00-2:00pm & by appointment
Email: jdsmith9@eiu.edu

**Please don't contact me via D2L, as I often don't receive those emails.

Course Description:

This course is designed to introduce you to a range of literature for young adults (ages 12-18) as well as provide you with a variety of critical tools for reading, discussing, and writing about the literature. Through the readings, lectures, films, and discussions (both in small and large groups) we will examine the intricacies of multiculturalism in young adult literature; we will explore the role of multiple literacies as pedagogical and theoretical sights of learning; we will write and perform thoughtful, insightful prose; and, finally, yet fundamentally, we will examine the literature from a critical lens.

In this course, special attention will be given to the role of the "other" in young adult literature. As defined by Clarke (2004), "Othering is a process that identifies those that are thought to be different from oneself or the mainstream, and it can reinforce and reproduce positions of domination and subordination" (p.1). As such, we will examine how the other gets taken up in young adult literature and its cultural implications for readers on micro and macro levels.

Learning Goals:

- Awareness of and excitement for a wide variety of young adult literature and elements of story.
- Awareness of historical developments related to this literature and understanding of the varied social contexts in which it has been produced.
- Experience with literature-related activities that may be used with young adults.
- Exploration of cultural relevancy in pedagogy along with multiculturalism and social justice, to include such topics as intersections of race, place, gender, class, age, and (dis)ability in multiple contexts.
- Exploration of The Ballenger Teacher Resource Center's selection of YA lit.
- Experience with self-selecting literature grounded in theme, cultural relevancy, and contemporary occurrences in the lives of today's adolescents.

Required Texts:

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian (Alexie)
Thirteen Reasons Why (Asher)
Young Adult Literature: From Romance to Realism (Cart)
Staying Fat for Sarah Byrnes (Crutcher)

Mockingbird (Erskine)
The First Part Last (Johnson)
The Giver (Lowry)
Wonder (Palacio)
The Complete Persepolis (Satrapi)
Unwind (Shusterman)

*You will also be required to read self-selected texts from the library.

**Additionally, handouts will be distributed throughout the semester

Special Needs:

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

Cell Phones:

Please put your cell phone on silent or vibrate during class time.

Plagiarism:

Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism—"The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one's original work" (Random House Dictionary of the English Language)—has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignments of a grade of F for the assigned essay and a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office. Respect for the work of others should encompass all formats, including print, electronic, and oral sources.

The Student Success Center:

Students who are having difficulty achieving their academic goals are encouraged to contact the Student Success Center (www.eiu.edu/~success) for assistance with time management, test taking, note taking, avoiding procrastination, setting goals, and other skills to support academic achievement. The Student Success Center provides individualized consultations. To make an appointment, call 217-581-6696, or go to 9th Street Hall, Room 1302.

The Writing Center:

I encourage you to use EIU's Writing Center located at 3110 Coleman Hall. This free service provides one-to-one conferences with writing center consultants who can help you with brainstorming, organizing, developing support, and documenting your papers.

The writing center is open to help any student from any major at any stage of his or her writing process, and its system of one-to-one conferences demonstrates value and respect for individual writers, all of whom can benefit from feedback about their works in progress.

To schedule an appointment, you can drop by the center (3110 Coleman Hall) or you can call 581-5929. The writing center is open Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., and 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. On Friday hours of operation are 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Course Guidelines and Expectations:

1. As this is an interactive course, participation is required. 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. Participation is worth **40 points** of your grade and includes self-directed discussion, questions posed during class, ability to answer questions indicative of close textual reading, and being alert during class sessions (i.e., no cell phone activity, sleeping, disruptive conversations, or use of laptops/Ipads/tablets, etc for anything other than work for my class). Points will be deducted for behaviors indicative of anything other than full participation. This is a collaborative learning experience, so constructive criticism and open discussion is encouraged. Attendance is obviously a prerequisite for participation, so if you have more than three (3) un-excused absences, you will lose 5 points per class session you miss.
2. Absences will only be excused when the following conditions are met: a) Circumstances that can be documented on paper (illness, police accident report, university events, etc) b) I receive notification PRIOR to the class that you will be unable to attend. If there is an assignment due the day you will be absent, please email it to me Prior to the start of class. In the same manner, I expect each student to be on time to class. If you happen to be tardy, please do not disrupt the class. If you are over 10 minutes late to class with no prior notification, you will be marked absent.
3. You are expected to have ALL assignments prepared to turn in on the due date. All assignments should be typed, double-spaced, Times New Roman 12 pt. font. Please proofread and edit all papers. **NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS ACCEPTED OR MAKE-UP WORK PROVIDED** unless you are in compliance with the extreme circumstances section above. Do not put extra space between paragraphs. Student information (name, class title, assignment) is single-spaced, in the top left-hand corner of your paper. Additionally, you are expected to bring the proper supplies with you to class each session, including the text we're reading.

Caveat:

In the event that class participation begins to fade, I reserve the right to distribute a pop quiz over the readings and/or class lectures. The quiz will be worth 10 points and will be taken from the final project.

Assignments:

1. **Critical Commentary (10 points a piece/20 points total)** For this assignment, you will use the writing prompts below to develop typed, two-page, double-spaced critical arguments.

#1 Contemporary realistic fiction is a highly controversial genre in adolescent literature, full of banned and censored books. In this commentary, I'd like for you to write a critical review of *Thirteen Reasons Why* and *Staying Fat for Sarah Byrnes* that analyses their usefulness (or lack thereof) in being taught in a classroom, possible connections you think young people could make with the books, your thoughts on the controversial elements of the texts, and finally, a letter grade that you would give each text and why. **DUE February 9th**

#2 After reading the novels, *Mockingbird* and *Wonder*, discuss your initial reaction(s) to the texts. Describe your experience (if any) with special needs students and how these texts measure up. What are potential take-a-ways for readers? What may be lost in translation? Describe an assignment you would provide students to move them from awareness to activism. **DUE April 16th**

2. Book Club (10 points)

For this assignment, you will self-select a novel from the category, "Book Awards" and present your takeaways from the text in relation to the award it received. You will present these findings in any creative format of your choosing. The idea is to get your classmates so eager to read the text that they would want to be in your book club. You are NOT allowed to choose any of the required novels we're covering this semester. Your presentation should address elements of multiculturalism and diversity that readers and current/future teachers may find useful. Each student will have 3-4 minutes to present. We will discuss this in further detail during the semester.

Book Awards- Select a book that has received one of the following awards:

Pura Belpre Award: Presented to a Latino/a writer/illustrator whose work best portrays, affirms, and celebrates the Latino cultural experience in an outstanding work of literature for children and youth.

Michael L. Printz: Awarded to a book that exemplifies literary excellence in young adult literature.

Odyssey Award: Presented to the producer of the best audiobook produced for children and/or young adults, available in English in the United States

Coretta Scott King Award: Recognizes outstanding books for young adults and children by African American authors and illustrators that reflect the African American experience.

National Book Award: Annual U.S. literary awards for exemplary writing in the fields of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and young people's literature. **DUE February 18th**

3. Book Pairing and Paper: (30 points)

Though we will cover multiple book pairings throughout the semester, for this assignment, you will read *Unwind* and *The Giver* and write a 5-7 page essay on the topic,

“Cultural relevance in the dystopian novel?” Are these culturally relevant texts? How do you know? What aspects of culture are being explored and/or omitted? If cultural relevancy is present, would students understand the elements of multiculturalism and diversity in these texts, or would it get lost in the thrill of the plots? If not, why do you think culturally relevancy is absent, and what’s at stake for the reader without it? What would middle and high school readers take away from these texts? What are the authors asking of them in terms of their thinking surrounding the idea of living in a world outside of their own? Frame your argument within existing articles on the novels and topic. You must include 3-4 academic sources. You must also include if you would use these books in your own teaching and/or make recommendations for teachers to use them. Why/Why not? If you are not interested in the field of education, you must make recommendations for readers of young adult literature.

Please do **NOT** summarize the texts. We all know what the novels are about. **Present your argument within the first paragraph and develop it throughout. DUE March 25th**

4. YA Lit and Multiple Literacies (45 points)

Gee’s (1989) conception of Discourse v. discourse is rooted in the social construction of literacy. Discourses are “ways of being in the world” while discourses are the “connected stretches of language that make sense.” (p.6). Thus, discourses are always part of Discourses. Gee argues that literacy is “the mastery of or fluent control over secondary Discourses. Therefore, literacy is always plural: literacies (there are many of them, since there are many secondary Discourses)” (p. 9). The notion of multiple literacies “implies that meaning making occurs in multimodal settings where written information is part of spatial, audio, and visual patterns of meaning.” (Rhodes & Robnolt, 2009, p. 156).

As such, your assignment is to engage multimodalities with young adult literature in a creative format. Essentially, you will take your understanding of the literature beyond the texts to create new ways for YA lit to come alive. Specific guidelines for this assignment will be provided throughout the semester. **DUE April 1st**

5. Final Project (55 points)

In lieu of a final exam, you will produce a final project. Specific details of this assignment will be distributed during the semester. **DUE May 1st**

Tentative Schedule of Readings and Assignments:

January 2014: Introduction to YA Lit/Multiculturalism/Contemporary Realistic Fiction/Historical Fiction

12th (M) First Class: Introduction to course and one another.

14th (W) Movie

16th (F) Finish Movie

Assignment: Read Chapter One (Cart)/Begin reading *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*

- 19th (M) **NO SCHOOL-Observance of MLK**/Continue novel
 21st (W) Discussion of film and Chapter One/Watch “Danger of a Single Story”
Assignment: Complete Alexie novel.
 23rd (F) Discussion of Alexie novel in small and large groups/Make connections to
 “Single Story.”
Assignment: Begin reading *The First Part Last*
 26th (M) Discussion of contemporary realistic fiction/Multicultural literature for young
 adults
Assignment: Complete novel
 28th (W) Discussion of *The First Part Last*
 30th (F) Continued discussion
Assignment: Complete handout on culturally relevant pedagogy.

**February 2014: Cont./Multiculturalism/Contemporary Realistic Fiction/Banned and
 Censored Books/History and Awards/Begin Graphic Novel**

- 2nd (M) Discussion of handout/small group activity
Assignment: Complete *Thirteen Reasons Why* and *Staying Fat for Sarah Byrnes*
 4th (W) Complete in-class handouts and discuss
 6th (F) **NO CLASS-I WILL BE AT A CONFERENCE**
 9th (M) **NO CLASS-I WILL BE AT A CONFERENCE/**UPLOAD CRITICAL
 COMMENTARY #1 TO D2L**
****Assignment:** Read pages 67-70 and 75-80 (Cart)/
 11th (W) Discussion of Awards and examples of books/Visit Library to choose text for
 Book Club
 13th (F) **NO SCHOOL-Observance of Lincoln**
Assignment: Read chosen book
 16th (M) Discussion of novel chosen for Book Club and ideas for presentation
 18th (W) Book Club presentations **DUE**
 20th (F) Cont. book club presentations
 23rd (M) Final round of presentations
Assignment: Begin part one of *Persepolis*
 25th (W) Discussion of historical fiction/graphic novels
 27th (F) Discussion of part one of *Persepolis*
Assignment: Complete novel

March 2014: Historical Fiction, cont./Dystopian Lit

- 2nd (M) Discussion of part two of *Persepolis*
Assignment: Bring in connections adolescents may make between *Persepolis*
 and current day.
 4th (W) Final discussion/Begin movie
Assignment: Begin *Unwind* and *The Giver*
 6th (F) Continue movie
 9th (M) Introduction of Multiple Literacies Project
Assignment: Complete novels
 11th (W) Discussion of *Unwind*
 13th (F) Discussion of *The Giver*/Discussion of book pairing paper

16th-20th **SPRING BREAK**

- Assignment:** Work on paper
23rd (M) Final discussion of texts and paper
25th (W) Book pairing paper **DUE**/Discussion of multiple literacies project
27th (F) Multiple literacies project discussion, cont.
30th (M) In class work day/Introduction of Final Project

April 2014: Return to Contemporary Realistic Fiction

- 1st (W) Multiple Literacies Project **DUE**
3rd (F) Multiple Literacies presentations, cont.
6th (M) Final day for presentations
Assignment: Complete *Mockingbird and Wonder*
8th (W) Discussion of texts
10th (F) **English Studies Conference**
13th (M) Cont. discussion of texts and critical commentary
16th (W) Critical Commentary #2 **DUE**/ Discussion of final project
17th (F) Discussion of final project, cont.
20th-24th Group/individual conferences with Dr. Smith
27th (M) No class/work on final projects
29th (W) Final class discussion/closing remarks/questions

May 2014

- 1st (F) **FINAL PROJECT DUE**

Evaluation:

Participation	40 points
Book Club	10 points
Book Pairings and Paper	30 points
Critical Commentary	20 points (total)
YA Lit and Multiple Literacies	45 points
Final Project	55 points
Total	200 points

Grading:

180-200=A 179-160=B 159-140=C 139-120=D 119 or below=F

****Dr. Smith's Advice****

If at any point throughout the semester you are confused or unclear about the expectations of the course, course material, a grade you've received, or any other matters, I strongly encourage you to come talk with me during office hours. It is my goal that all students succeed in this course, but I can only help if I'm aware of a problem.