Eng 4903-001: The Literature of Adolescence (Young Adult Literature)

Robin Murray
Eastern Illinois University

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English 4903-001
The Literature of Adolescence (Young Adult Literature)

Spring 2000
MW: 3:00-4:15
Office Hours: MWF 9:00-11 and by appointment
E-mail: " or rmurray@g.wrightknc.net

Dr. Robin L. Murray
Office: CH 314F
Phone: x6985

Course Description and Objectives: This course in young adult literature balances an historical approach with concentrated emphasis on current fiction, poetry, and other prose written in the young adult genre.

A. An historical approach to the study of this genre is necessary for various reasons:
1. By studying young adult literature from several periods in American literature, we will gain a sense of the genre's literary history.
2. Looking at origins of the young adult literature genre also allows us to analyze the genre's key elements and highlight expectations readers of young adult literature bring to the text.
3. Elements of the genre that are easily recognized and delineated in texts from earlier periods that are alien to us are not as obvious in current works set in a culture in which we are immersed.

B. According to Donelson and Nilson there are three main reasons to know the history of young adult literature:
1. "[We] ought to know not merely where [we] are but also how [we] got there."
2. "For anyone who cares about the mores and morals of our time reflected in adolescent books, there is a fascination in knowing how they came to be. There is no better way to see what adults wanted young people to accept as good and noble at any point in history than to examine adolescent books of the time."
3. "Third . . . many of the older books are surprisingly fun to read" (413).

To give a sense of this genre, we will study works from the 19th century to the present, with added concentration on works of today. We will discuss earlier works, as well.

*The Lamplighter*, by Maria Susanna Cummins
*Ragged Dick*, by Horatio Alger
*A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, by Betty Smith
*Sweet Whispers, Brother Rush*, by Virginia Hamilton
*The Bumblebee Flies Anyway*, by Robert Cormier
*The Giver*, by Lois Lowry
*Necessary Roughness*, by Marie G. Lee
*A Girl Named Disaster*, by Nancy Farmer
*The Watsons go to Birmingham*, by Christopher Paul Curtis
*Ella Enchanted*, by Gail Carson Levine
*Parrot in the Oven*, by Victor Martinez
*The Habibi*, by Naomi Shihab Nye
Course Policies and Requirements: In order to succeed in this course, you must effectively complete each of the following:

1. Once a week you must write and turn in a two page reading response answering a question, which you had about the text read for that class. More later.

2. Daily you will be expected to be active in class discussion. Make sure you read the material for each class material. In-class writing and quizzes will occur sporadically.

3. You will also write two, one due at midterm and one due by the final class session. The first paper will give you the opportunity to critically analyze one of the texts on the course reading list in 5-7 pages. The second paper will allow you to look beyond books read for class, examine a “sub-genre” of young adult literature of one period in 10-12 pages, and present your findings to the class.

4. In groups you will also give a 15-20 minute presentation in which you take a specific critical approach to a current piece of young adult literature. You will be expected to hand in your presentation in written form along with all other materials used.

5. You will also take a final exam, which will allow you to synthesize information gained from the literature, its genre expectations, and its cultural and historical contexts.

In addition to the above requirements, students enrolled in the course for graduate credit will write a longer paper of approximately 15 pages for the second course paper. This paper focusing on a particular theme, genre, and/or critical issue will incorporate a selection of works not included on the syllabus. These students will be asked to submit a prospectus for the paper, as will all other students, but should also include a bibliography.

Note: No late work will be accepted unless I have approved extensions before the date the work is due.

Grades: Grades for this course will be determined as follows:

- Weekly Responses: 20%
- Paper 1: 15%
- Paper 2 and Presentation: 20%
- Class Participation: 15%
- Group Presentation: 15%
- Final Exam: 15%

Plagiarism Statement: "Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism--the inappropriate imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one's original work”—has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of a grade of 'F' for the course."

If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.
English 4903 Tentative Course Calendar, Subject to Change

January
10  Introduction to course and to young adult history and lit
12  Lamplighter; Introduction to race, religion, and masculinity in RD; LL for Wed
14  LD to ADD Courses
17  Martin Luther King Day—No Class
19  The Lamplighter; Domestic Fiction and ideal femininity; Response due
24  LD to apply for grad and WD w/out W; The Lamplighter
26  Talk about the Dime Novel and Female and male didactic Bildungsroman (Little Women) Ragged Dick Response due
31  Ragged Dick; Group Presentations?

February
2   Ragged Dick The male didactic Bildungsroman; Response due
7   A Tree Grows in Brooklyn; LD grade appeals/LD w/draw 50% refund (YA Lit, 1900-1940)
9   A Tree Grows in Brooklyn; Response due
14  A Tree Grows in Brooklyn; Response due
16  Sweet Whispers, Brother Rush
21  Sweet Whispers, Brother Rush and The Bumblebee Flies Anyway
23  The Bumblebee Flies Anyway Response due
28  The Giver Response due

March
1   The Giver and Necessary Roughness; Group Presentations?
3   Mid-Term
6   Paper I due; Necessary Roughness
8   A Girl Named Disaster; Response
10  LD W/D from course/univ w/W’s; A Girl Named Disaster
13-17 Spring Break—No Classes
20  The Watsons go to Birmingham
22  The Watsons go to Birmingham; Response
27  Ella Enchanted
29  Ella Enchanted, Response due

April

3  Parrot in the Oven
5  Parrot in the Oven; Response due

10  The Habibi
12  The Habibi Response due

17  Presentations
19  Presentations

24  Presentations
26  Last Day of Classes; Final Papers Due! Study for Final Exam!
May 4  Final Exam from 2:45-4:45