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ENG 3405-002: Children's Literature

Carol Stevens
Eastern Illinois University

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Children's Literature

Fall 2001

Dr. Carol Stevens

Contact Information:
Office 3861 Coleman
Hours MW 1:30-3:00, TTH 1:00-1:50 and 3:30-4:00, and by appointment.
Phone and Voice Mail 581-6970
E-mail cfcds@eiu.edu

Course Description
The catalog describes this course as a literature course emphasizing "wide acquaintance with the great bodies of world literature, myth, legend, etc. and with the best poetry for children." What that means is that we'll be reading poetry, fiction, picture books and stories of every imaginable description, both extensively and intensively, and gaining experience with them through reading, discussing, creatively interpreting, and writing about them.

Goals
When you've finished this course, I hope you will have found pleasure and enjoyment in children's literature through careful reading and study of children's books. You will know the elements of fiction as they apply to evaluation and analysis of literature. You'll know the defining characteristics of various genres or types of children's lit. You will learn the elements of illustration and be able to explain how visual elements reinforce and extend the story in a picture book. You'll know some of the major literary awards and their selection criteria, and will have had some practice in applying them to your own evaluation of picture books. You'll also become familiar with major authors and illustrators, read some books deemed "classics" and consider what makes a book a classic. You'll have read some myth and folklore, and have acquired some historical knowledge of the development of children's lit, including multicultural literature. You'll be able to analyze and interpret works of children's literature in discussion and in your writing, and be able to read and apply to your own study research and literary criticism in the field. That's a tall order. so we're in for a full semester starting right now.

A Definition and Some Truisms
"Children's literature is a distinct, vital body of literature that is intended for a child audience (ages 0 to 14) but is written by adults." (Carol Lynch-Brown and Carl M. Tomlinson). It always reflects in some way the values of the culture that produced it and usually serves as an agent for transmitting or teaching those values (including the values we act out but sometimes won't admit to). Sometimes the term "Children's Literature" applies more to what is published and marketed as such than it does to what writers write or what children read.

Textbooks
Dahl, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory.
DePaola, Legend of Old Befana.
Griffith and Frey, Classics of Children's Literature, 4th ed.
Keene, Secret of the Old Clock.
McDermott, Arrow to the Sun.
Sendak, Where the Wild Things Are.
Taylor, Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry.
Tolkien, The Hobbit.
Van Allsburg, Jumanji.
Yolen, The Devil's Arithmetic.
Grades

All assignments will be given point values. Work done in groups, class discussions, and preparations for papers will be reflected in those values. The course is graded A, B, C, D, F. Do the work with some degree of skill and care, and participate, and your grade will most likely be a C. Do it with care, put in extra effort, AND produce good work, and your grade will most likely be a B. Do outstanding work, going above and beyond the requirements for an assignment, show skill, creativity, and/or depth of thought, and you can receive an A. Show up every day and go through the motions, turn in work that reflects lack of care or skill, accumulate absences, or be unprepared for class, and you may earn a D or F. The grade you need for this course is irrelevant. I will do everything I can to help you earn the grade you want, but you are the one who will earn it.

Grade breakdown:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Journals, quizzes, shorter writings</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exams</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papers and individual projects</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group presentation</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figuring your grades:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>901-1000</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>801-900</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>701-800</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>601-700</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>600 or below</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participation

Participation counts for 100 points of your grade. You can't participate if you're not here. If you're absent more than a week (two classes) your grade will most likely suffer, both because you haven't participated, and because you will have less idea of what's going on and will therefore find it more difficult to keep up.

Attendance

I will take attendance at the beginning of the class meeting and will apply deductions as follows:

1-2 classes missed: 20 points each, plus point penalties for work due those days.
2-4 classes missed: 40 points each, as above. (This would lower your final grade by one full letter: A becomes B and so on.)

Tardiness: coming in late is disruptive and distracting. Please be ready to work when class begins. Coming late, unprepared, without the book for the day's reading, not staying on subject, take 10 points off.

Severe illnesses and emergencies will be accommodated according to university policy, as will absence for OFFICIAL University functions such as team participation in an athletic event or band performance. But nothing will change the fact that you have missed the work for that day. Social and service organization participation is voluntary. No instructor can require you to miss class in another course as a condition of doing well in his/her class. If you have observations or other career-related obligations, you are expected to schedule them around your classes.

If, however, you have missed no more than two classes, I will refund your attendance points at the end of the semester.

Dates to Remember

Papers or projects due at the beginning of class October 18 and November 16.
Exams in Class, at the regular time on October 4
and on Monday, December 10 from 2:45 to 4:45.
Academic Honesty
The English Department’s statement on plagiarism is as follows: 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 assignment of a grade of F for the assigned work and a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office. I expect you to do your own work, to use only authorized help such as the writing center, conferences with me, and discussion groups in class. I expect you to use sources properly, and with appropriate imbedding into your work, use of appropriate paraphrase, summary, and quotation skills, and careful and painstaking documentation. This applies not only to print sources such as books and journals, but also to media other than print, including web and online sources. If you plagiarize, you will receive an F in the course.

Students with Disabilities
If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodation, please contact the Office of Disability Services at 581-6583 (9th St. Hall).

Presentations/Discussions
Each student will be expected to participate meaningfully in large and small group discussions and to take part in a group project or projects. All students are expected to participate without monopolizing, and to listen with respect when another is speaking. Lively discussion flourishes in a climate of acceptance of differences in background, experience, and culture.

If I’ve left something out or you have questions, please stop by during office hours, call and leave me a message, or e-mail me. I will usually respond by the afternoon of the next weekday.

Please note: while every effort has been made to be thorough and to anticipate all circumstances, sometimes changes to policies or syllabus are necessary. If they are, an announcement in class will be considered sufficient notification.
In general, readings should be completed by the first class day of the week in which they are due. There will usually be preparatory writing, discussion questions, or journal/response writing due for these as well. These will be assigned as needed in class and should be jotted down here and wherever you list your weekly assignments.

Week 1 Aug. 21
*Essentials of Children's Literature* Ch. 1. 2 (for Thurs.) Evaluation, intro to picture books.

Week 2 Aug. 28
Picture Books—discussion of these will continue by genre throughout semester (please note—you are responsible for all books presented in class, including those selected and presented by your classmates.)

Week 3 Sept. 4
*Essentials* Ch. 3 and poem selections—Nursery rhymes from *Classics* and children's poetry anthology. Introduction to and planning for group projects.

Week 4 September 11
*Essentials* Ch. 4 and more detailed work on picture book selections. Bring the picture books on the reading list to these classes.

Week 5 September 18
*Essentials* Ch. 5 and Perrault and Grimm from *Classics*

Week 6 September 25
*Essentials* Ch. 6 Fantasy Classics and picture book fantasy; we will continue fiction reading in the fantasy genre throughout the semester/

Paper 1—annotated bibliography of picture books or research paper on illustrator due between now and October 18, Group work on selections for fantasy, select work for classic fiction. If you would like me to read your draft, sign up for a conference now.. Discuss “Beauty and the Beast” from *Classics*

Week 7 October 2
*Essentials* Ch. 6 Fantasy: Modern, and review for mid-term. Read *The Devil's Arithmetic* for next week. Exam is October 4.

Week 8 October 9
Discuss *The Devil's Arithmetic*. For next week, read *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. Group presentations begin today and continue throughout the semester.

Week 9 October 16
Discuss *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. *Essentials* Ch. 7 Realistic Fiction, and group selection work for realistic fiction. Paper #1 due no later than Thursday.

Week 10 October 23
Continue *Essentials* Chapter 7 and group selections on realistic novel
Week 11 October 30
Continue classic realistic fiction and read *Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. Thursday, come as your favorite character from Children’s Lit.. Paper or project 2 on a self-selected work of classic or modern fantasy due between now and Nov.

Week 12 November 6
Continue realistic fiction with *Secret of the Old Clock*, discuss series books and sequels. Read and bring self-selected series book to class Thursday.

Week 13 November 13
*Essentials* Ch. 8 Historical Fiction and *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*

November 20, 22 THANKSGIVING BREAK. Read *The Hobbit*.

Week 14 November 27
Discuss *The Hobbit*. For next week, read *Essentials* Ch. 10 Multicultural and International Literature, picture books *Legend of Old Befana* and *Arrow to the Sun* and self-selected books.

Week 15 December 5
Conclude *The Hobbit*. Continue reading and discussion of self-selected books, tie things together, and prepare for final exam.

Final Examination December 10 from 2:45 to 4:45 p.m.