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

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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. You will read some of the following as well as YA works of your own:

*Little Women*, by Louisa May Alcott
*Ragged Dick*, by Horatio Alger
*Sweet Whispers, Brother Rush*, by Virginia Hamilton
*Manuel and the Madman*, by Gerald and Janice Hasham
*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
*Catherine, Called Birdie*, by Karen Cushman
*Annie on My Mind*, by Nancy Garden
*The Habibi*, by Naomi Shihab Nye
*Interpreting Young Adult Literature*, by Moore
*Holes*, by Louis Sachar
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 papers, 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 8-10 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 extend one of their papers to approximately 15 pages. 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 with their prospectus.

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

8  Introduction to course and to young adult history and lit
10 Introduction to race, religion, and masculinity in RC and RD; Read Little Women or Ragged Dick . through January 31
15
17 Response Due
22 Domestic Fiction and ideal femininity;
24 Response Due
26  Talk about the Dime Novel and Female and male didactic Bildungsroman (Little Women) Ragged Dick
31 Group Presentations

February

5 Interpreting YA Lit  Response due
7 LD grade appeals/LD w/draw 50% refund (YA Lit, 1900-1940) Interpreting YA Lit
12 Response due Sweet Whispers, Brother Rush
14 Sweet Whispers, Brother Rush
19 Annie on My Mind  Response due
21 Annie on My Mind
26 The Giver Response due
28 The Giver Group Presentations?

March

5 Necessary Roughness; Group Presentations?
7 Paper I due Necessary Roughness

11-13 Spring Break, No Classes

19 The Watsons go to Birmingham
21 The Watsons go to Birmingham; Response
26 Catherine, Called Birdie
28 Catherine, Called Birdie  Response due

April

2 Manuel and the Madman
4 Manuel and the Madman Response due
9 The Habibi
11 The Habibi Response due
16 A Girl Named Disaster or Holes through 4/23
18
23 Presentations
25 Last Day of Classes; Final Papers Due! Study for Final Exam!

May 4 Final Exam from 2:45-4:45