English 3320: Literature for the Middle Grades

Spring 2014

MWF: Irby 304, 10 – 10:50 a.m.

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***Instructor*: Dr. Sonya Fritz**

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***Office*: Irby 317 C**

***Office phone*: 450-5127 (email is much more effective)**

***Office Hours*: MWF 1-2 p.m. and 3-4 p.m., T/R 9:30-10:30 a.m. and 3-4 p.m.; and by appointment**

**Course description**

This class will be conducted as a survey of children’s literature that is considered appropriate for grades 5-8, primarily in the English tradition. We will examine various genres of children’s literature, including graphic novels, poetry, historical fiction, science fiction, fantasy, and adventure stories.

Throughout the semester we will read a number of books together and analyze them in class, considering and discussing not only what pedagogical uses and socializing influences these books can have for children, but also analyzing them as rich works of literature. I challenge students to think of each book we read as complex and sophisticated text so that they can learn to notice and understand the often-subtle differences between books that can shape their meanings and the impacts they have on children.

The goals of this course are to:

* improve our grasp of the complexities of literature for children in the middle grades by engaging in literary and cultural criticism as we read and analyze the texts selected
* consider how our chosen texts represent the child and the stage of childhood and how literature for children reflects the social or cultural contexts in which it was written
* study some earlier specimens of literature for children as well as contemporary literature in order to better understand the conventions, values, and anxieties that have shaped children’s literature in the past and continue to inform contemporary texts
* develop critical thinking skills as we analyze the complex situations presented in literature and probe our texts for new meanings, both in class discussions and in writing assignments
* discuss issues of text selection for use in the elementary classroom, focusing primarily on the literature itself and its content rather than pedagogical methods. Students must keep in mind that this course, as an English rather than an Education course, is designed to benefit future teachers of children’s literature by offering training **primarily** in literary analysis.

**Required texts and materials**

-*A Wrinkle in Time*, Madeline L’Engle

- *The Graveyard Book*, Neil Gaiman

-*Treasure Island*, Robert Louis Stevenson

-*The Mysteries of Harris Burdick*, Chris Van Allsburg

- *The Wall*, Peter Sís

- *Drama*, Raina Telgemeier

- *Love that Dog*, Sharon Creech

- *Bud, Not Buddy*, Christopher Paul Curtis

- *Inside Out and Back Again*, Thanhha Lai

-*Before We Were Free*, Julia Alvarez

-*The Birchbark House*, Louise Erdrich

-*Hoot*, Carl Hiaasen

-*When You Reach Me*, Rebecca Stead

Our required reading for the course also includes online texts of which you will not have to purchase hard copies. I will post files of the texts on Blackboard for you to access.

You are also required to have:

* a UCA e-mail account that you check ***daily*** so that I can get in touch with you if necessary
* access to a good dictionary and a handbook with up-to-date information on MLA format to aid you in your writing assignments
* opinions and insights that you develop and voice in class. The success of this course depends in large part on its members’ willingness to seriously and actively engage the material and participate in discussions.

## Policies

Attendance. Daily attendance will be taken in this class. You are allowed **three unexcused absences**. Each subsequent unexcused absence will result in the deduction of **five** percentage points from your final grade. Please use your three absences wisely—they are not intended for those days when you feel like sleeping in, but rather for days when you cannot come to class but your absence is not excused. Nine or more absences, excused or otherwise, provide grounds for the student to be dropped from the course.

You are responsible for providing evidence and/or appropriate documentation to substantiate excused absences. Excused absences can include illness requiring a doctor’s visit, the serious illness of an immediate family member or illness of a dependent, the death of a relative, etc. Please direct any questions concerning what constitutes an excused absence to me. If you know in advance that you will miss a class due to an excused absence, you are responsible for informing me and making any necessary arrangements to make up class work.

Keep in mind that trips out of town for weddings or family vacations and children’s school programs or ceremonies **are not** excused absences. Please also try to avoid scheduling routine medical check-ups, such as dental cleanings or yearly physicals, during class time—I will not excuse these absences.

It is important for all of us to respect one another’s time and arrive promptly for class. Students who arrive to class after half of the class period (calculated by the duration of the class period in minutes) or more has passed will be counted absent. Students who arrive to class after attendance has been taken are responsible for checking with me after class to make sure their attendance has been recorded. Chronic tardiness will be penalized by counting each third tardy as an unexcused absence. Students should also come to class planning to stay for the duration of the period. If you cannot do so, do not come to class; leaving class early is disruptive and disrespectful. See me if you have questions about this.

If you are absent on the day of an exam, you are responsible for contacting me **as soon as possible** to schedule the make-up exam. If your absence is excusable, you are responsible for providing documentation to substantiate this at the time of the make-up exam. Five late points will be deducted from the exam grade if the absence is not excused (i.e., you overslept). Five late points may also be deducted if you do not contact me in a timely manner to schedule the make-up exam, whether your absence is excused or not. Unless other arrangements have been made with me, any exam that is not made up by the deadline for submitting final grades to the registrar will receive a grade of zero (0).

Students who miss class are responsible for obtaining information regarding missed class notes, material, and assignments. It is my policy to email students information regarding missed class notes **only** for excused absences and **only** when the student has sent a request via email specifying student name, course number and section, and class date(s) missed. I strongly recommend that students also talk with their classmates about what they have missed, as all I can offer students are any Power Point slides and/or handouts used during the class period.

Classroom Behavior. Disruptive classroom behavior is defined as anything that would interfere with an instructor's ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to profit from the instructional program. All individuals and the opinions they express in class are to be treated with respect during class discussions***.*** Students who are asked to leave class for disruptive behavior will be counted absent for that day.

Paper Format.Unless otherwise specified, ***all*** homework and paper assignments should be typed (letter-quality printing required) in 12-point Times New Roman font with one-inch margins and double-spaced on white bond paper, according to MLA guidelines. Documentation must be provided in MLA format.

Late Papers. Papers and other written assignments that are turned in late without an excused absence/absences are subject to a deduction of 5 points per day that they are late.

Appropriate Attribution. Any assignment that fails to include clear and appropriate attribution of sources will receive a grade of zero (“0”). **Do not consult secondary sources for your work unless explicitly instructed to do so. Public-access internet sources such as SparkNotes and Answers.com are not appropriate to use in this course at any time.** Any assignments that reflect unauthorized aid will receive a grade of zero (“0”).

Bringing visitors to class. Students must receive permission from me in advance in order to bring any visitors to class. Unless otherwise specified, students are not allowed to bring children under the age of 12 with them to class. Please see me if you have any questions about this.

E-mail, phone, and fax. I will not discuss grades via e-mail or over the phone and, unless otherwise specified, I will not accept assignments attached to e-mail messages. I am happy to answer via email any student questions—including questions about assignments—that will take me less than 8 minutes to answer. Any questions that require a longer and more involved answer will be deferred to a face-to-face meeting. The English department will not accept papers or excuses for absences faxed to me.

Feedback on student work. I want all students to meet their full potential in this course this semester. I encourage students to ask for clarification if they are confused about an assignment and to feel free to come to me for help on their work. However, I will not pre-grade, edit, or proofread students’ work for them; I will offer feedback, but only when students formulate and articulate specific questions about their work that they want me to address. I do this because I want all students to function as active thinkers and learners throughout the semester; this is not happening if I am doing the work of cataloging every aspect of a paper that a student needs to change or improve. Likewise, students should understand that getting feedback on their work does not guarantee that they will earn a certain grade on the assignment.

Electronic devices. Students who use electronic devices in an inappropriate way during class will be asked to leave and will lose the privilege of using electronic devices in class. Cell phones must remain **off** (not simply on vibrate) and out of sight in one’s pocket or bag for the duration of the class.

Evaluations. Student evaluations of a course and its professor are a crucial element in helping faculty achieve excellence in the classroom and the institution in demonstrating that students are gaining knowledge. Students may evaluate courses they are taking starting on the Monday of the thirteenth week of instruction through the end of finals week by logging in to myUCA and clicking on the Evals button on the top right.

Scholastic Dishonesty Academic Integrity and Scholastic Dishonesty. The University of Central Arkansas affirms its commitment to academic integrity and expects all members of the university community to accept shared responsibility for maintaining academic integrity. Students in this course are subject to the provisions of the university's Academic Integrity Policy, approved by the Board of Trustees as Board Policy No. 709 on February 10, 2010, and published in the Student Handbook. Penalties for academic misconduct in this course may include a failing grade on an assignment, a failing grade in the course, or any other course-related sanction the instructor determines to be appropriate. Continued enrollment in this course affirms a student's acceptance of this university policy.

Other University Policies. Please be sure to familiarize yourself with the policies outlined in the UCA Student Handbook, particularly those pertaining to sexual harassment and academics.

**Students needing support service**

The University of Central Arkansas adheres to the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you need an accommodation under this Act due to a disability, please contact the UCA Office of Disability Services, 450-3613.

**Building Emergency Plan**

An Emergency Procedures Summary (EPS) for the building in which this class is held will be discussed during the first week of this course. EPS documents for most buildings on campus are available at http://uca.edu/mysafety/bep/. Every student should be familiar with emergency procedures for any campus building in which he/she spends time for classes or other purposes.

**The University Writing Center**

The UCA Writing Center, located in Thompson 109, offers students one-on-one tutoring and online assistance with their writing. For more information, see the web site: www.uca.edu/writingcenter.

**Statements of the Professional Education Unit**

Conceptual Framework. Faculty members involved in the preparation of professional educators, as well as professional education candidates, public school representatives, and members of the community share a vision for the Professional Education Unit at the University of Central Arkansas (UCA). This vision is one of Enhancing Educator Efficacy through Reflective Decision-Making. The vision encompasses the development of candidates’ abilities to examine problems, formulate options, consider decisions, and evaluate outcomes while embracing an awareness of and sensitivity to human diversity. The vision is achieved by candidates’ acquisition of reflective decision-making skills through self-understanding, course work, and field and internship experiences.

Use of Technology. Candidates will demonstrate the basic academic skills of computer applications through the use of Microsoft Office and through accessing the Internet and email through class assignments.

Diversity. The entire course focuses on meeting the cognitive, social, and emotional needs of diverse learners. In addition to examining the influence of societal factors on learning, candidates will investigate elements of effective multicultural education and practices appropriate for students with varying learning styles, English language learners, and students with exceptionalities. (See course objectives)

Professional and Ethical Conduct Policy. Because the standards of the education profession exceed those addressed in other university or college polices, the COE Professional Education Unit has adopted a Professional and Ethical Conduct Policy to address those professional and ethical behaviors. In essence, this policy states that students must adhere to the prescribed professional and ethical standards of the profession for which they are preparing. The policy document provides a definition of professional and ethical misconduct, guidelines for reporting misconduct, and an appeal process. It is located on the “policies” link of the College of Education website.

**Course Requirements and Grade Determination:**

No extra credit will be offered in the class. Grades—including final averages—**will not** be rounded up.

Final grade values:

A 90-100 B 80-89

C 70-79 D 60-69

F 59 and below

Mere completion of a written assignment will not earn students an A on that assignment. Work is evaluated based on its quality and demonstrated effort. Here is a basic description of grade evaluation for written assignments:

A **Outstanding**—excels in every way

B **Superior**—meets expectations for the assignment and reflects strong effort, significant

thoughtfulness, and sufficient development, but is not as polished in its ideas or as well-written as an A paper

C **Adequate**—meets all basic requirements but in a shallow way: does not sufficiently develop ideas, lacks careful and thoughtful engagement with the assignment, or does not demonstrate strong effort

D **Inadequate**—does not meet all basic requirements for the assignment

F **Failing**— entirely unsuccessful in fulfilling the assignment’s expectations

More detailed rubrics for assignments will be provided.

Throughout the semester, you will give one formal in-class presentation, complete two response papers and a final paper, and take two exams. ***All papers must be typed and submitted as a hard copy unless I instruct you otherwise.*** More detailed descriptions of the papers and the presentation will be given in class as the semester progresses. The exams will be objective, covering the material that we have discussed in class. They will include multiple choice, passage identification/explication, and paragraph-answer questions.

Exam #1 20%

Exam #2 20%

Response papers (two 4-page papers) 25%

Final paper (6-8 page researched paper) 20%

In-class presentation 15%

**Schedule of Reading, Assignments, and Paper Due Dates**

*This schedule is subject to change at the professor’s discretion.* The readings and assignments listed under each date are those that you will be expected to have completed ***by that date***.

**Friday, January 9:** Introduction to the course.

**Monday, January 13:** *A Wrinkle in Time*, chs. 1-4.

**Wednesday, January 15:** *A Wrinkle in Time*, chs. 5-8. **(Discuss presentation assignment; sign up for authors)**

**Friday, January 17:** *A Wrinkle in Time*, chs. 9-end of novel.

**Monday, January 20:** Martin Luther King Day, no class.

**Wednesday, January 22:** *The Graveyard Book*, chapters 1-3.

**Friday, January 24:** *The Graveyard Book*, chapters 4-6.

**Monday, January 27:** *The Graveyard Book*, chapter 7-end of novel.

**Wednesday, January 29:** *Treasure Island*, chs. 1-9.

**Friday, January 31:** *Treasure Island*, chs. 10-17.

**Monday, February 3:** *Treasure Island*, chs. 18-26. Begin presentations.

**Wednesday, February 5:** *Treasure Island* , chs. 27-end of novel. Discuss upcoming exam (see above in the syllabus for info on exam format).

**Friday, February 7:** *The Mysteries of Harris Burdick*.

**Monday, February 10:** *The Wall*.

**Wednesday, February 12:** Introduction to graphic novels and sequential art. Read the two articles posted on Blackboard.

**Friday, February 14:** *Drama*, first half of novel (page numbers TBA—approx. pp. 1-115).

**Monday, February 17:** Response paper #1 due. *Drama*, second half of novel (page numbers TBA—appox. Pp 116-end of novel).

**Wednesday, February 19:** *Love That Dog*, pp. 1-34.

**Friday, February 21:** *Love That Dog*, pp. 35-67.

**Monday, February 24:** *Love That Dog,* pp. 68-end of novel (read “Some of the poems used by Miss Stretchberry” as well).

**Wednesday, February 26:** Exam #1.

**Friday, February 28:** Introduction to multiculturalism and historical fiction in children’s literature. Read files posted on Blackboard.

**Monday, March 3:** *Bud, Not Buddy*, chs. 1-8.

**Wednesday, March 5:** *Bud, Not Buddy*, chs. 9-13.

**Friday, March 7:** *Bud, Not Buddy*, chs. 14-end of novel. Be sure to read the “Afterward”.

**Monday, March 10:** *Inside Out and Back Again*, pp. 1-88.

**Wednesday, March 12:** *Inside Out and Back Again*, pp. 89-176.

**Friday, March 14:** *Inside Out and Back Again*, pp. 177-end of novel. Be sure to read the author’s note.

**Monday, March 17:** *Before We Were Free*, chs. 1-4.

**Wednesday, March 19:** *Before We Were Free*, chs. 5-the beginning of “Anita’s Diary” in the middle of ch. 9.

**Friday, March 21:** *Before We Were Free*, “Anita’s Diary” in ch. 9-end of novel.

**Monday, March 24:** Spring Break, no class.

**Wednesday, March 26:** Spring Break, no class.

**Friday, March 28:** Spring Break, no class.

**Monday, March 31:** Response paper #2 due. *The Birchbark House*, chs. 1-5.

**Wednesday, April 2:** *The Birchbark House*, chs. 6-10.

**Friday, April 4:** *The Birchbark House*, chs. 11-end of novel.

**Monday, April 7:** *The Birchbark House*, discussion continued.

**Wednesday, April 9:** *Hoot*, chs. 1-8.

**Friday, April 11:** *Hoot*, chs. 9-15.

**Monday, April 14:** *Hoot*, chs. 16-end of novel.

**Wednesday, April 16:** *When You Reach Me*, first one-third of novel (page numbers TBA).

**Friday, April 18:** Final paper workshop—bring two copies of your complete rough draft to class.

**Monday, April 21:** *When You Reach Me*, second one-third of novel (page numbers TBA).

**Wednesday, April 23:** *When You Reach Me*, final one-third of novel (page numbers TBA). Final paper due.

**Monday, April 28, 8-10 a.m.:** final exam