

# English 4361/5361: Literature for Adolescents

Fall 2014

MWF 10 a.m. Irby 303



**Instructor: Dr. Sonya Fritz**

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**Office Hours: M/F 1-2 p.m. and 3-4 p.m., W 1-3 p.m., T 11 a.m.-12 p.m. and 3-4 p.m.,  
R 9:30-10:30 a.m. and 3-4 p.m., and by appointment**

## Course description

As we read specimens of literature for adolescents and young adults this semester, our goal will be both depth and breadth as we examine a variety of works from various periods and various genres, including memoir, graphic novel, historical fiction, science fiction, film, and short story.

We will hone our skills as practitioners of literary and cultural criticism as we read and discuss the texts selected. We will consider the following questions, among others: What purposes does adolescent/young adult literature serve in our culture and society? How do these texts represent and address the adolescent and the state of adolescence? How do they confront and/or conform to larger socio-cultural constructions of adolescence and the anxieties and expectations that inform these constructions? How does young adult literature reflect and engage the social and cultural contexts in which it was written? How does the literature portray issues of national, cultural, racial, political, and/or sexual/gender identity intersecting with personal identity?

In general, the goals of this course are to:

- Engage in literary and cultural criticism as we read and analyze the texts selected
- Consider the purposes that adolescent/Y.A. literature serves in our culture and society by investigating its implied audience and goals
- Develop our understanding of various theoretical frameworks and critical lenses and hone our uses of these apparatuses in our discussion of the texts selected
- Improve our skills as critical thinkers, researchers, and writers through various writing assignments

Keep in mind that the texts examined in this course may contain language or material that you may find offensive or controversial. I do not expect you personally to view every single text that we read in class this semester as appropriate reading material for adolescents. Our texts were selected for their potential to yield rich analysis and discussion in a college course on adolescent literature, not necessarily as a testimony to their “value” (however one defines it) as literature or usefulness in the high-school classroom. As adults enrolled in an upper-

level course, you are expected to use discretion and engage the assigned readings and participate in class discussions in a manner that is careful, mature, respectful, and objective.

Although many future teachers are enrolled in this class, the course's primary goal as a mode of English studies is to focus on critical analysis of texts' themes, styles, and conventions; it is **not** designed to offer training on methods of teaching.

### Required texts and materials

- The Chocolate War*, Robert Cormier
- The Earth, My Butt, and Other Big Round Things*, Carolyn Mackler
- *Speak*, Laurie Halse Anderson
- *A Step from Heaven*, An Na
- Boxers & Saints* (both novels), Gene Luen Yang
- The Skin I'm In*, Sharon Flake
- Where Things Come Back*, John Corey Whaley
- Will Grayson, Will Grayson*, John Green and David Levithan

Our required reading for the course also includes texts of which you will not have to purchase hard copies. I will post files with these readings on Blackboard for you to access or distribute hard copies in class.

You are also required to have:

- Access to a computer so that you can log on to our Blackboard shell and class blog for the course as necessary
- Access to a good dictionary and writing handbook to aid you in writing your papers for the class
- A UCA email account that you check **daily**
- Opinions and insights that you develop thoughtfully and voice respectfully during class discussions. 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

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.

Title IX disclosure. If a student discloses an act of sexual harassment, discrimination, assault, or other sexual misconduct to a faculty member (as it relates to "student-on-student" or "employee-on-student"), the faculty member cannot maintain complete confidentiality and is required to report the act and may be required to reveal the names of the parties involved. Any allegations made by a student may or may not trigger an investigation. Each situation differs and the obligation to conduct an investigation will depend on those specific set of circumstances. The determination to conduct an investigation will be made by the Title IX Coordinator. For

further information, please visit: <https://uca.edu/titleix>. *\*Disclosure of sexual misconduct by a third party who is not a student and/or employee is also required if the misconduct occurs when the third party is a participant in a university-sponsored program, event, or activity.*

Other University Policies. Please be sure to familiarize yourself with the policies outlined in the UCA Student Handbook.

Authorized Absences. Students are required to come to class on time and to complete all assignments. Daily attendance will be taken via sign-in sheet. You are responsible for providing evidence and/or appropriate documentation to substantiate “authorized 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, you are responsible for informing me. 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.

Keep in mind that absences due to illnesses that do not necessitate a doctor’s visit (unless chronic, as documented by a doctor) or trips out of town for weddings or family vacations **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 second tardy as an unexcused absence. Students should come to class planning to stay for the duration of the period. Students should also come to class planning to stay for the duration of the period. An early departure from class will be recorded as a tardy and is subject to the same penalties.

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. **Please remember specifically** that you should **turn off** all cell phones before class, and that 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, assignments should be typed (letter-quality printing required) in 12-point Times New Roman font with one-inch margins and double-spaced on white 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.

Other late work. Late Blackboard discussion posts will not be accepted.

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”).

Grades. Grades are not negotiable. Your final course grade will be based on your work in the course. You are responsible for keeping up with your current grade in the course. If you are concerned about a grade or have any questions, see me during office hours or make an appointment to meet with me.

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.

Acknowledging Assistance. All drafts and supporting documents for papers and presentations must be your writing—that is, your own ideas and your own words. If you want to work with a tutor or get feedback on your work from a classmate or friend, all writing and ideas that find their way into your paper must be your own. Any assignment that shows evidence of assistance and fails to acknowledge that assistance will be considered a case of scholastic dishonesty and reported/punished as such.

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.

Office hours. I make myself available to students during the office hours listed above. However, I encourage students to schedule appointments ahead of time if they want to meet with me during office hours in order to guarantee that I will not be meeting with other students at that time.

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. All electronic devices used in class, including laptops and e-readers, must have internet capabilities turned **off**. 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 twelfth week of instruction [November 10] through the end of finals week by logging in to myUCA and clicking on the Evals button on the top right.

## 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](http://www.uca.edu/writingcenter).

## Course Requirements and Grade Determination

In addition to the required reading, throughout the semester, all students will write two 3-page response papers, publish a post on our course blog and comment on others' blog posts, and post discussion questions and responses on assigned readings to the Blackboard discussion board. You will also write an 8-10-page researched paper, which will be preceded by an abstract and annotated bibliography. ***All work must be typed and submitted as a hard copy unless I instruct you otherwise.*** Supporting materials, which will be specified as the semester progresses, may be required with your final paper.

- Online discussion question/response posts. We will be using Blackboard's discussion board to post and respond to discussion questions on assigned readings throughout the semester. **You must post one discussion question per text, including the film *Persepolis*** (for a total of 10 questions). Your question should be one that the text has raised in your mind as you read; it may concern a specific element of the text or the text as a whole, but it should be open-ended, concerning a text-related issue that's actually debatable and open to interpretation of the text. Questions can pertain to what happens in the text, the characters themselves, ambiguities in the text, possible themes, choices the writer made in crafting the text—these should be questions that require critical analysis of the text and other critical thinking to form an answer. They should be questions that turn to the ***text itself*** to develop an answer. Questions that lead to speculation about the author and his/her experiences or what he/she was thinking when writing the text are not appropriate for this assignment, as interpretation of the text alone cannot answer these questions. Students should also avoid regurgitating/rehashing class discussions in their posts. If you have concerns about whether a question is appropriate, please contact me. In order to receive full credit, your questions need to reflect careful thinking and involve close engagement with the text (dead-end questions, or questions that cannot be answered through analyzing the text, will lose points).

In addition, you must **respond to at least one other student's discussion question per text** (for a total of 10 responses). In order to receive full credit, you must respond directly to the question **and** use evidence from the text to support your answer (including paraphrases and/or quotes and page numbers as relevant). Though you may include your personal reaction to the text ("I thought this was stupid" or "I love this book!"), make sure that your response as a whole moves beyond reaction to analysis and

meaningful engagement of both the text and the discussion question. Your response should be at least a paragraph (5-8 sentences) long.

You must post your discussion question for a text by 5 p.m. the evening before the last class period during which that text will be discussed, and your response to another question by 11:59 p.m. that same night. Late discussion questions and responses will not be accepted. Each discussion question will be worth 5 points, as will each response, for a total of 100 points.

- Response papers. For each of these papers, you will choose one of the topics listed on the response paper assignment sheet and write a 3-4-page (1000-1200 words) paper that develops a response to it. Your response papers should include a clear thesis that sums up your answers to the response questions; you should also incorporate direct quotations as well as paraphrases from the works of literature you discuss, accompanied by your explication of these passages and paraphrases in order to develop your arguments. Your papers should follow the general conventions of writing, including a brief introduction that includes your thesis statement, good paragraph organization with fully-developed paragraphs, and a brief conclusion. Make sure that your introduction, conclusion, and body paragraphs are well-balanced (i.e., that your intro doesn't take up nearly half of the paper). **You may find it helpful to look over your class notes as your work on your papers, but please try to avoid simply repeating/rehashing class discussions as much as possible!** Likewise, I ask that you refrain from discussing the same novel(s) in both papers.

Response papers will be graded the clarity and effectiveness of your response to the questions you select, the coherence and critical nature of your analysis, the development of your ideas, the use of textual evidence to support the analysis, and the quality of the writing and essay organization. Each of these papers will be worth 50 points for a total of 100 points. The prompt sheet for the response papers can be found on the course's Blackboard shell.

- Blog post. In an effort to expand the content of our course beyond the syllabus and to enhance our sense of community as writers, we will be maintaining a course blog this semester. Our blog will focus specifically on adolescent and young adult literature that has been banned, censored, or challenged in some form in the United States. For your blog post, you will select and read a work of adolescent literature that we're not reading this semester that's been banned or challenged and then write an analysis of it, exploring the issues surrounding adolescence that the text addresses as well the aspects of it that have been viewed as controversial and what the controversy says about socio-cultural constructs of and expectations for adolescence. Deadlines for posts will be assigned throughout the semester, and the assignment will require you to comment on other students' blog posts as well. An assignment sheet with more details on this assignment will be distributed within the following weeks.
- Abstract/bibliography. In preparation for writing your final paper, you will develop and submit a preliminary proposal for the paper. This assignment will include two components: a 350-500-word abstract of the paper you plan to write and an annotated bibliography including three (3) scholarly secondary sources that you think could be useful in your paper. More information on this assignment will be provided in a writing prompt later in the semester.
- Final paper. The capstone assignment for the semester will be a 8-10-page paper that develops a researched, original argument. For this paper, you will select a particular theoretical framework/critical approach and use it to analyze adolescent literature. More information on this assignment will be presented throughout the semester.

A word to the wise. With the exception of the Blackboard discussion posts, I consider all of the assignments outlined above to be **formal writing assignments**, and they should be treated by students as such. I expect formal writing assignments to reflect careful thought and refinement in terms of scope of topic, presentation and development of a coherent argument, paragraph and general essay organization, language, syntax, and punctuation, as well as attention to the paper formatting rules stipulated in the syllabus and the guidelines provided for each particular assignment. It's likely that you'll need to engage in some kind of revision or proofreading process before you turn your work in to me in order for it to reflect this discipline; whatever you do, however, you need to be sure to bear these expectations in mind when writing papers for this class.

The final grade for the course will be determined in the following manner:

Online discussion questions and responses (10 of each)	20%
Response papers (2)	25%
Blog post	15%
Abstract/bibliography	15%
Final paper	25%

#### **Final grade values:**

A	90-100	B	80-89
C	70-79	D	60-69
F	59 and below		

No extra credit will be offered in the class. Grades—including final averages—**will not** be rounded up, except in the case of 59.5/ 69.5/ 79.5/ 89.5.

#### **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**. Additional secondary-source readings may be announced and provided as necessary.

**Friday, August 22:** Introduction to the course.

**Monday, August 25:** excerpt from *Disturbing the Universe: Power and Repression in Adolescent Literature* by Roberta S. Trites—file posted on Blackboard.

**Wednesday, August 27:** *The Chocolate War*, chs. 1-13

**Friday, August 29:** *The Chocolate War*, chs. 14-25

**Monday, September 1:** Labor Day, no class.

**Wednesday, September 3:** *The Chocolate War*, chs. 26-end of novel. Discuss course blog assignment and sign up for dates.

**Friday, September 5:** *The Chocolate War*, discussion continued.

**Monday, September 8:** *The Earth, My Butt, and Other Big Round Things*, chs. 1-9.

**Wednesday, September 10:** *The Earth, My Butt, and Other Big Round Things*, chs. 10-20.

**Friday, September 12:** *The Earth, My Butt, and Other Big Round Things*, chs. 21-end of novel.

**Monday, September 15:** *The Earth, My Butt, and Other Big Round Things*, discussion continued.

**Wednesday, September 17:** *Speak*, pp. 1-92 (“First Marking Period” and “Second Marking Period”).

**Friday, September 19:** *Speak*, pp. 93-137 (“Third Marking Period”).

**Monday, September 22:** *Speak*, pp. 138-end of novel (“Fourth Marking Period”).

**Wednesday, September 24:** *Speak*, discussion continued.

**Friday, September 26:** *A Step from Heaven*, pp. 1-53.

**Monday, September 29:** *A Step from Heaven*, pp. 54-104. **Response Paper 1 due.**

**Wednesday, October 1:** *A Step from Heaven*, pp. 105-end of novel.

**Friday, October 3:** *A Step from Heaven*, discussion continued.

**Monday, October 6:** Introduction to serial art/graphic novels—reading posted on Blackboard.

**Wednesday, October 8:** *Boxers*, pp. 1-120.

**Friday, October 10:** *Boxers*, pp. pp. 121-250.

**Monday, October 13:** *Boxers*, pp. 251-end of novel.

**Wednesday, October 15:** *Saints*, pp. 1-78.

**Friday, October 17:** Fall break, no class.

**Monday, October 20:** *Saints*, pp. 79-end of novel.

**Wednesday, October 22:** *Boxers & Saints*, discussion continued.

**Friday, October 24:** *The Skin I’m In*, chs. 1-11.

**Monday, October 27:** *The Skin I’m In*, chs. 12-20.

**Wednesday, October 29:** *The Skin I’m In*, chs. 21-end of novel.

**Friday, October 31:** *Where Things Come Back*, chs. 1-7.

**Monday, November 3:** *Where Things Come Back*, chs. 8-15.



**Wednesday, November 5:** *Where Things Come Back*, chs. 16-end of novel.

**Friday, November 7:** *Where Things Come Back*, discussion continued.

**Monday, November 10:** *Will Grayson, Will Grayson*, chs. 1-7. **Response Paper 2 due.**

**Wednesday, November 12:** *Will Grayson, Will Grayson*, chs. 8-14.

**Friday, November 14:** *Will Grayson, Will Grayson*, chs. 5-end of novel.

**Monday, November 17:** *Will Grayson, Will Grayson*, discussion continued.

**Wednesday, November 19:** *Persepolis*—view film in class. **Abstract/bibliography due.**

**Friday, November 21:** Continue *Persepolis* film in class.

**Monday, November 24:** Continue *Persepolis* film in class.

**Wednesday, November 26:** Thanksgiving break, no class.

**Friday, November 28:** Thanksgiving break, no class.

**Monday, December 1:** Paper Workshop: bring **2 copies** of a complete rough draft of your final paper to class.

**Wednesday, December 3:** Presentation day: share six-word stories, enjoy some snacks.

**Thursday, December 4:** *Not a class day.* **Final paper due.**