

English 4361: Literature for Adolescents

Fall 2015

MWF: 10-10:50 am, Irby 303

Instructor: Dr. Sonya Fritz

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Office Hours: M 1-2 pm and 3-4 pm, T 9:30-10:30 am and 3-4 pm, W 1-2 pm, R 1-2 pm and 3-4 pm, F 1-2 pm and 3-4 pm, and by appointment

What this course is about:

One of the most popular and quickly-growing genres in the twenty-first century is adolescent and young adult literature; across a variety of media, people of all ages are falling in love with stories that feature adolescent protagonists and were originally intended primarily for an adolescent audience. As we read, discuss, and write about various specimens of adolescent and YA literature, we will use the texts selected for this term as a lens through which to explore facets of this literature and to consider how it shapes our definitions and understandings of adolescence. We will consider the following questions, among a variety of 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—what themes and characterizations do we see recurring in literature for young people, and what do they tell us about how adolescents are perceived in our society? How does adolescent/young adult literature reflect and engage the social and cultural contexts in which it was written? How does this literature portray issues of national, cultural, racial, political, and/or sexual/gender identity intersecting with personal identity, as well as with the pressures and priorities that commonly characterize adolescence?

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, critical lenses, and scholarly approaches that can be pertinent to literary analysis 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
- Apply the analytical prowess we develop through class in the real world by partnering with the Children's Advocacy Alliance of North Central Arkansas for a service-learning activity

Important notes, in no particular order:

- This semester, Literature for Adolescents is being conducted as a **service-learning course**; this means that a portion of the final grade for this course is based on an indirect service-learning assignment that

we will complete over the course of the semester. If you have questions or concerns about this, please see me.

- 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 their 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.
- Likewise, there are a variety of other genres and specimens of adolescent literature that we’re not focusing on this semester—there’s no John Green, Suzanne Collins, or J. K. Rowling on the agenda this fall, for example—because there isn’t room in one course to represent but a fraction of the diverse and complex multiplicity of texts that are marketed to and enjoyed by adolescents. There may be other YA books that you like better, but I ask you to join with me this semester in considering how these particular texts represent adolescence and the category of adolescent literature in general in rich, meaningful, and interesting ways.
- Although many future teachers are enrolled in this class, the course’s primary goal as a mode of English studies is **not** to offer training on text selection or methods of teaching; rather, the course is designed to focus on critical analysis of texts’ themes, styles, and conventions.

Required texts and materials:

-*I’ll Give You the Sun*, Jandy Nelson
 -*Speak*, Laurie Halse Anderson
 -*The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, Stephen Chbosky
 -*The Boyfriend List*, E. Lockhart
 -*Skim*, Mariko and Jillian Tamaki
 -*The Skin I’m In*, Sharon Flake
 -*The Spectacular Now*, Tim Tharp
 -*Boxers & Saints*, Gene Luen Yang

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. Because this class meets only once a week, it is vitally important that students do their best to avoid missing meetings. Taking one evening off amounts to skipping an entire week of class! 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 absences wisely—it is not intended for a morning when you feel like sleeping in, but rather for a day when you cannot come to class but your absence is not excused. Six or more absences, excused or otherwise, provide grounds for you 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, while important life events, **are not** excused 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. 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. 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.

Class preparedness. Students need to complete the assigned reading before class and bring assigned reading materials to class in order to better engage in discussion and class-work. Failure to bring the appropriate assigned reading materials to class and/or failure to demonstrate completion of the assigned reading through class activities will result in an unexcused absence for that day's class. Unexcused absences accrued in this way are subject to all the penalties and consequences outlined in the attendance policy.

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. If you have a child-care emergency and need to bring a child with you to class, I am willing to work with you as best I can; however, little ones must be able to be expected to remain reasonably still and quiet for the duration of the 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 5 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 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.

Course Requirements and Grade Determination:

In addition to the required reading, throughout the semester, all students will write two 3-page response papers, participate in a service-learning assignment, 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.

- Blackboard 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** (for a total of 9 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 9 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 90 points.

- **Response papers.** For each of these papers, you will choose one of the discussion questions that you have posted on Blackboard and refine, revise and expand it into a 3½ -4-page (1100-1300 words) paper that develops a response to it. In each of these papers, you will present your question about the text and develop an answer to it through close reading and critical analysis of the text. These papers should not simply be regurgitations of the exact question and responses to it that were posted online; rather, they should reflect your continued thinking about the text itself and the issues on which your question focuses. The goal of these papers is to practice taking a small, briefly-stated idea and further developing it into a more detailed and fully-realized analysis. Your papers should incorporate direct quotations as well as paraphrases from the work of literature you discuss, accompanied by your explication of these passages and paraphrases. Your papers should also follow the general conventions of writing, including a brief introduction that includes your response question and your thesis statement, good paragraph organization, 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). Your thesis statement should be a sentence or two that sums up your answer to your question about the text. *Be sure, also, to think of the length of the paper when developing the **scope** of your questions and your answers—the questions you ask should be able to be addressed thoroughly but not repetitively in a 3½ -4-page 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.**

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.

- CAC Service-learning assignment. In an effort to expand the content of our course beyond the syllabus, to more deeply consider the stakes of adolescent literature, and to more fully apply our intellectual resources as readers and critics through helping our community, we will be partnering with the Children’s Advocacy Alliance of North Central Arkansas to select and donate appropriate works of literature for adolescents to teenaged abuse victims who are using the services of the Children’s Advocacy Center in Conway. UCA’s Outreach and Community Engagement offices is funding the purchase of the books that we choose. This assignment will include four components: 1) a site visit to tour the CAC (which can be substituted with an alternative assignment if absolutely necessary), 2) a formal essay that analyzes the book you’ve chosen and explains your choice, 3) a letter that you write to the future recipient of your book, and 4) a reflective blog post that you submit to our course blog, as well as your commentary on others’ blog posts. More details on this assignment will be provided in an assignment sheet on August 26.
- 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 an 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:

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|---|-----|
| Online discussion questions and responses (9 of each) | 18% |
| Response papers (2) | 24% |
| CAC service-learning assignment | 18% |
| 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. Students must complete all main assignments in order to earn a passing grade in the course.

Schedule of Reading, Assignments, and 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 21: Introduction to course.

Monday, August 24: “Darkness Too Visible” by Meghan Cox Gurdon, “Why the Best Kids Books Are Written in Blood” by Sherman Alexie—files posted on Blackboard (**bring a copy with you**).

Wednesday, August 26: Introduce service-learning assignment, sign up for site visits.

Friday, August 28: *I'll Give You the Sun*, pp. 1-124 (stop at the break in the page).

Monday, August 31: *I'll Give You the Sun*, pp. 124-80 (stop at the break in the page).

Wednesday, September 2: *I'll Give You the Sun*, pp. 180-259 (stop at the break in the page).

Friday, September 4: *I'll Give You the Sun*, pp. 259-end of novel.

Monday, September 7: Labor Day, no class.

Wednesday, September 9: Introduction to *Disturbing the Universe: Power and Repression in Adolescent Literature* by Roberta S. Trites—file posted on Blackboard (**bring a copy with you**).

Friday, September 11: *Speak*, pp. 1-92 (“First Marking Period” and “Second Marking Period”).

Monday, September 14: *Speak*, pp. 93-137 (“Third Marking Period”).

Wednesday, September 16: *Speak*, pp. 138-end of novel (“Fourth Marking Period”).

Thursday, September 17: NOT A CLASS DAY. Site Visit #1 to Children’s Advocacy Alliance, 3 pm.

Friday, September 18: Site Visit #2 to Children’s Advocacy Alliance, 10:15 am.

Monday, September 21: *Speak*, discussion continued.

Wednesday, September 23: *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, pp. 1-73 (stop at page break/end of letter).

Friday, September 25: *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, pp. 73-145 (stop at page break/end of letter).

Monday, September 28: *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, pp. 145-end of novel.

Wednesday, September 30: *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, discussion continued; “Abjection and Adolescent Fiction” by Karen Coats—posted as a file on Blackboard (**bring a copy with you**).

Friday, October 2: *The Boyfriend List*, chs. 1-4; reading from Currie, Kelly, and Pomerantz—posted as a file on Blackboard (**bring a copy with you**). Response Paper #1 due.

Monday, October 5: *The Boyfriend List*, chs. 5- 10.

Wednesday, October 7: *The Boyfriend List*, chs. 11-end of novel.

Friday, October 9: *The Boyfriend List*, discussion continued.

Monday, October 12: Reading on graphic novels and sequential art—post as files on Blackboard (**bring a copy with you**). Book list due to me via email before midnight.

Wednesday, October 14: *Skim*, pp. 1-69.

Friday, October 16: *Skim*, pp. 69-end of the novel.

Monday, October 19: *Skim*, discussion continued. Parts 2 and 3 of CAC service-learning assignment due.

Wednesday, October 21: *The Skin I'm In*, chs. 1-11.

Friday, October 23: Fall break, no class.

Monday, October 26: *The Skin I'm In*, chs. 12-20. Reflective posts Group A due to course blog.

Wednesday, October 28: *The Skin I'm In*, chs. 21-end of novel. Reflective posts Group B due to course blog.

Friday, October 30: *The Skin I'm In*, discussion continued.

Monday, November 2: *The Spectacular Now*, chs. 1-22.

Wednesday, November 4: *The Spectacular Now*, chs. 23-44. Response Paper #2 due.

Friday, November 6: *The Spectacular Now*, chs. 45-end of novel.

Monday, November 9: *The Spectacular Now*, discussion continued; “A Family from a Continent of I Don’t Know What” by Katherine Bell—file posted on Blackboard (**bring a copy with you**). Reflective posts Group C due to course blog.

Wednesday, November 11: *Boxers*, pp. 1-120. Reflective posts Group D due to course blog.

Friday, November 13: *Boxers*, pp. pp. 121-250.

Monday, November 16: *Boxers*, pp. 251-end of novel.

Wednesday, November 18: *Saints*, pp. 1-78. Abstract/bibliography due.

Friday, November 20: *Saints*, pp. 79-end of novel.

Monday, November 23: *Boxers* & *Saints*, discussion continued.

Wednesday, November 25: Thanksgiving break, no class.

Friday, November 27: Thanksgiving break, no class.

Monday, November 30: Paper Workshop: bring **2 copies** of a complete rough draft of your final paper to class.

Wednesday, December 2: Presentation day: share six-word stories, reflect on service-learning assignment and blog posts, enjoy some snacks.

Monday, December 7: Final paper due in my office or mailbox before 4 pm.