

LIT 6855: Reading the YA Romance

Mondays, Periods 6-8 (12.50 – 3.50p.m.)

Graduate Seminar Room

Dr. Anastasia Ulanowicz

aulanow@ufl.edu

Office: Turlington 4362

Office Hours: 1-3pm Tuesdays, and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course, we will study the structure, content, history, and ideological significance of the YA romance novel, paying particularly close attention to its indebtedness to such earlier forms as nineteenth-century sensational fiction, Gothic fiction, the magazine novel, and the nineteenth-century problem novel. Drawing on Walter Benjamin's contention that works of children's literature and culture are culled from aesthetic objects and forms that have been cast off by previous generations, we will consider how the YA romance repurposes older forms toward both conservative and radical ends. In doing so, we will analyze the political and ideological implications of the contemporary YA romance, taking into account how this form addresses sexual liberation, desire, constructions of race and class, and adult-adolescent power dynamics. Finally, we will consider the literary and cultural standards according to which works of YA romance fiction have been judged.

REQUIRED TEXTS (in the order in which we will read them)

Books

Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey*

William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*

Louisa May Alcott, *A Long and Fatal Love Chase*

Pamela Regis, *A Natural History of the Romance Novel*

Janice Radway, *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature*

Sarah S.G. Frantz and Eric Murphy Selinger, eds. *New Approaches to Popular*

Romance Fiction

Catherine Belsey, *Desire: Love Stories in Western Culture*

Patricia Meyers Spacks, *The Adolescent Idea*

Michael Cart, *Young Adult Literature: From Romance to Realism*

Roberta Seelinger-Trites, *Disturbing the Universe: Power and Repression in Adolescent Literature*

Articles, Chapters, and Books on Reserve

Northrop Frye, "The Mythos of Summer: Romance" from *Anatomy of Criticism*

Frederic Jameson, "Magical Narratives: Romance as Genre"

Michael Davitt Bell, introduction to *The Development of American Romance*

Cat Yambell, "Judging a Book By Its Cover: Publishing Trends in Young Adult Literature"

Walter Benjamin, "A Cultural History of Toys"

Amy Pattee, *Reading the Adolescent Romance: Sweet Valley High and the Popular Young Adult Romance Novel*

Naomi R. Johnson, "Consuming Desires: Consumption, Romance, and Sexuality in Best-Selling Teen Romance Novels"

Leisha Jones, "Contemporary Bildungsromans and the Prosumer Girl"

Amy Pattee, "Considering Popular Fiction and Library Practices of Recommendation: The Literary Status of *The Clique* and Its Historical Progenitors"

Catherine Tosenberger, "Homosexuality at the Online Hogwarts: Harry Potter Slash Fiction"

Helpful Links

A Guide to YA Novels with LGBTQ Characters

<http://www.yalsa.ala.org/thehub/2013/08/06/a-guide-to-ya-novels-with-lgbtq-characters/>

The Popular Romance Project <http://popularromanceproject.org/>

Romance Novels for Feminists <http://romancenovelsforfeminists.blogspot.com/>

Smart Bitches, Trashy Books <http://smartbitchestrashybooks.com/>

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance/Participation: 15%

Weekly Response Papers: 35%

Final Seminar Paper: 30%

Seminar Paper Proposal: 10%

Seminar Paper Presentation: 10%

Attendance/Participation

Although I will occasionally deliver brief lectures, the majority of this course will involve our group discussion of the assigned texts. Therefore, it is necessary that you attend and actively contribute to each class.

If you need to miss a class for an excused reason – e.g., a religious holiday, a family emergency, or an academic conference – please contact me and we can make necessary arrangements.

Weekly Response Papers

Each week, before our class meets, you will email me a brief (3-5 page) paper that reflects on at least one of the topics covered in that week's assigned reading.

Your paper can take any form – and it can be as informal or formal as you'd like it to be – as long as it demonstrates your critical, informed reading of the assigned material. For example, you might choose to perform a close reading of one significant passage in one of the assigned texts. Or, you might choose to critique an argument advanced in one of the assigned texts, or place aspects of two of the assigned texts into dialogue with one another. Or, you might want to place an argument in one of the assigned texts into dialogue with a YA novel of your choice. (This final suggestion might be especially productive, since most of our readings are critical/theoretical pieces rather than literary works).

You should email your paper to me (at aulanow@ufl.edu) no later than 6pm on Sunday evening – the day before our class meets – although you are more than welcome to submit papers earlier than that deadline. I will read your essays before we meet and use them to structure our class discussion. In turn, I will expect you to speak to draw on the ideas you elaborated in your essays in order to contribute to class discussion.

Final Seminar Paper

In order to complete this course, you will write a final seminar paper of approximately 15-20 pages on a topic that is **(a)** sufficiently related to the course material and our discussion of it and **(b)** significantly related to your own research area(s). Ideally, this research paper should allow you the opportunity to develop a project outside the immediate context of this class (e.g., a conference paper, an article submission, or a future masters thesis or dissertation chapter).

There are three (3) critical deadlines for the final seminar paper.

1. On 21 October, you will submit a paper proposal of no longer than 500 words that provides a concise overview of your topic, your argument, and the major texts you plan to examine in your paper. In turn, I will write you a response that suggests additional research material and strategies of framing your paper.
2. At the end of the semester, you will give a 20-minute presentation on your research and in turn field questions from the rest of the class about your project.
 - a. Ideally, this exercise will give you additional guidance in framing the scope and content of your paper.
 - b. Please know that your presentation grade will depend not only on the talk that you give but also on the responses you offer to your classmates' presentations.
3. You should email me your completed paper no later than noon on Monday, 9 December. Of course, you may submit your paper to me earlier, if you wish.

Please know that I will be very happy to discuss your project ideas and progress at *any* time(s) over the course of the semester. Just email me or speak with me after class and we can make arrangements to meet.

Paper ideas might include – *but are certainly not limited to* – the following topics:

1. The influence of earlier literary forms (e.g., the Gothic novel, the sensational novel) on the contemporary YA romance novel.
2. The relationship between the YA novel and the romance novel.
3. Questions of race, class, gender, sexuality, postcoloniality, and/or religion in a specific YA romance novel or in a representative body of works.
4. The relationship between the YA romance novel and issues in new media and transmedia, including the formation of reading communities.
5. Material analysis of YA romance novels (e.g., production methods, paratext and/or cover art, circulation, etc).
6. The significance of childhood and/or adolescence in the (YA) romance novel.
7. The study of major authors or major literary trends.
8. A detailed critique of one of the assigned readings we discussed in class – or of an outside critical/theoretical reading that bears on major topics we discussed in class.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Part One: The Romance

26 August: Course Introduction

Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey*

2 September: No class, Labor Day

9 September: The Romance as Genre and Archetype

Northrop Frye, "The Mythos of Summer: Romance" from *Anatomy of Criticism*

Frederic Jameson, "Magical Narratives: Romance as Genre"

Michael Davitt Bell, from *The Development of American Romance*

William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*

16 September: The Romance Novel as a Specific Literary Form

Louisa May Alcott, *A Long Fatal Love Chase*

Pamela Regis, *A Natural History of the Romance Novel*

Cat Yambell, "Judging a Book By Its Cover: Publishing Trends in Young Adult Literature"

23 September: Reading the Romance, Part I

Janice Radway, *Reading the Romance*

30 September: Reading the Romance, Part II

Sarah S.G. Frantz and Eric Murphy Selinger, eds. *New Approaches to Popular Romance Fiction*

7 October: Desire

Catherine Belsey, *Desire*

Part Two: The Adolescent Romance

14 October: The Adolescent

Patricia Myers Spacks, *The Adolescent Idea*

21 October: The Adolescent Novel

Michael Cart, *Young Adult Literature: From Romance to Realism*

Walter Benjamin, "A Cultural History of Toys"

*** *Seminar Paper Proposal Due*

28 October: Desire and Repression in the Adolescent Novel

Roberta Seelinger Trites, *Disturbing the Universe: Power and Repression in Adolescent Literature*

4 November: The Teen Romance Novel

Amy Pattee, *Reading the Adolescent Romance*

11 November: No Class, Veteran's Day

18 November: Sexualities, Textualities, Consumption, and Community

Naomi R. Johnson, "Consuming Desires: Consumption, Romance, and Sexuality in Best-Selling Teen Romance Novels"

Leisha Jones, "Contemporary Bildungsromans and the Prosumer Girl"

Amy Pattee, "Considering Popular Fiction and Library Practices of Recommendation: The Literary Status of *The Clique* and Its Historical Progenitors"

Tosenberger, "Homosexuality at the Online Hogwarts: Harry Potter Slash Fiction"

25 November: Presentations

2 December: Presentations

Final Paper Due by noon on 9 December, 2013

