

Writing About the Gifted Child

ENC 1145-3309

MWF Period 5, MCCA 2196

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Course Description

The gifted child occupies an ambiguous and contentious place in American history and popular consciousness. Some argue that the gifted are invaluable national resources that must be protected and nurtured while others point out racist and classist assumptions inherent in the very definition of giftedness; still others suggest that giftedness is simply not a meaningful category. This course invites students to reexamine a familiar concept—the gifted child—through a critical lens. We will begin with Leslie Margolin’s argument that giftedness is not a concrete characteristic but rather a social construct. We will then look at how popular media have contributed to the construction of our images of the gifted child and ask what these images suggest about American ideologies of childhood and the nation.

Course Materials

Required Texts to Purchase:

Card, Orson Scott. *Ender’s Game*. New York: Starscape, 2002. ISBN: 978-0765342294

Shiras, Wilmar. *Children of the Atom*. Berkeley: Pennyfarthing P, 1953. Print.

Whedon, Joss, writer. Art by John Cassaday. *Gifted*. New York: Marvel, 2006. Vol. 1 of

Astonishing X-Men. ISBN: 978-0785115311

Woodson, Jacqueline. *Maizon at Blue Hill*. New Yrk: Puffin Books, 1992. ISBN: 978-

0698119574

*We will also draw from a selection of secondary scholarship available on Canvas. These texts will help us apply anthropological, literary, and historical perspectives to our understanding of the gifted child.

Course Outcomes:

By the end of the semester, students should be able to unpack the ideologies and anxieties that surround the figure of the gifted child in American literature and culture. Students should be able to make historical, literary, critical or theoretical statements about the texts we’ve read and should be able to support those statements. Students should be able to think critically about

literature and American culture, synthesize literature with relevant scholarship, and construct cohesive, convincing arguments about literature and American culture. Additionally, students should have refined their basic writing skills, including MLA documentation style, drafting, proofreading, editing, and composing a polished final product.

Assignments and Participation:

Rhetorical Analysis (1000 words) 15%

For this formal writing assignment, students will be expected to rhetorically analyze a guide for raising gifted children. Students must identify the rhetorical situation—author, audience, purpose—and evaluate the author’s appeals to emotions, logic, and credibility. The purpose of this paper is to analyze how a text presents the gifted child and discover what strategies the authors employ in order to maintain their image of the gifted.

Synthesis Essay (1000 words) 15%

This formal writing assignment asks students to synthesize Leslie Margolin’s argument about the cultural construction of the gifted child with a fictional text’s depiction of exceptional youth. The essay does not have to address every facet of Margolin’s argument; rather, students will choose to focus on the one or two elements of Margolin’s analysis that work best with the fictional text they choose. This paper should explore how the fictional text reinforces or pushes against the culturally-constructed image of the gifted child that Margolin identifies.

Critical Book Reviews (3x500 words each) 15%

For three out of the four fictional texts we read (*Children of the Atom*, *Ender’s Game*, *X-Men*, *Maizon at Blue Hill*), students will write a 500-word critical book review. These reviews are not simple summary; instead, they should evaluate the plot and character developments in each text while also addressing how each text corresponds to the themes discussed in class.

Individual Book Review and Presentation (500 words) 10%

Leading up to the final report, each student will choose a text, film, or television show that depicts any sort of exceptional children. Students will then write a critical book review for the text of their choosing and post it to the class blog. Additionally, students will prepare a 5-7 minute visual presentation to share their text with the class.

Final Report (2000 words) 25%

The final project in this class asks students to work with the text, film, or show they chose for their individual book reviews and presentations. In the final paper, students will make a case for why their text should be considered a representation of gifted children. Students will then be expected to incorporate scholarly and historical texts from throughout the semester to show how the text of their choosing reflects/critiques/reinforces the themes associated with the gifted child discussed throughout the course. Ultimately, this final project should identify a text that engages with childhood exceptionality and explore how this text contributes to our cultural understanding of the gifted child.

Participation 20%

This class depends on lively and informed class discussions, which means that students are expected to come to class having read the texts and prepared to contribute talking points or raise questions in the discussion. Students will also take turns being responsible for leading class discussions. If I ever notice a lull in class participation that suggests

students are not prepared to discuss the readings, then I will begin assigning pop quizzes over the reading.

Grades:

Grading Scale							
A	93-100%	B	83-86.9%	C	73-76.9%	D	63-66.9%
A-	90-92.9%	B-	80-82.9%	C-	70-72.9%	D-	60-62.9%
B+	87-89.9%	C+	77-79.9%	D+	67-69.9%	E	0-59.9%

General Assessment Rubric

A	Insightful: You did what the assignment asked for at a high quality level, with care and precision, and your work shows originality and creativity. Work in this range shows all the qualities listed below for a “B,” but it also demonstrates that you took extra steps to be original or creative in developing content and style. Work in the “A” range is not only convincing and intriguing, but also illuminating. Since careful editing and proofreading are essential in writing, papers in the A range must be free of typos and grammatical or mechanical errors.
B	Proficient: You did what the assignment asked of you at a high quality level. Work in this range is competent, thoughtful, and considered, but it needs revision. To be in the “B” range, an essay must be complete in content, be well organized, and show special attention to style.
C	Satisfactory: You did what the assignment asked of you and demonstrated that you have a generalized comprehension of the ideas/films/essays you’re working with. Work in this range needs significant revision, but it is complete in content and the organization is logical. Diction may be imprecise or unclear. The style is straightforward but unremarkable.
D	Poor: You did what the assignment asked of you at a poor quality level. Work in this range needs significant revision. The content is often incomplete and/or the organization is hard to discern. Support is irrelevant, overgeneralized, lacks validity, and/or is absent. Ideas/texts are oversimplified. Work in this range may have no thesis statement, or may stray significantly from the thesis throughout the essay. Attention to style is often nonexistent or uneven.
E	An E is usually reserved for people who don't do the work, or don't come to class, or those who have plagiarized. However, if your work shows little understanding of the needs of the assignment or demonstrates that you put little effort in completing it, you will receive a failing grade.

*You must pass this course with a “C” or better to satisfy the CLAS requirement for Composition (C) and to receive the 6,000-word University Writing Requirement credit (E6). You must turn in all papers totaling 6,000 words to receive credit for writing 6,000 words. NOTE ALSO: a grade of “C-” will not confer credit for the University Writing Requirement or the CLAS Composition (C) requirement.

Course Policies

Participation and Attendance

Regular attendance and active participation are crucial. Class participation includes contributing to class discussions; coming to class on time, prepared with books and homework; preparing for in-class activities; providing adequate drafts for group work; collaborating and participating in group activities; and overall working and paying close attention to the lectures and activities of the classroom. In general, students are expected to contribute constructively to each class session. **Because this class depends on student-led discussion, you must bring the texts to each class and be prepared with notes and questions to contribute to the class.**

In this course we will follow a strict attendance policy that is consistent with UF’s policies on excused and unexcused absences. **If you miss more than three periods during the term, you will receive a 3% deduction from your final grade for each absence after the third. If you miss more than 6 classes, you will fail the entire course.** The university exempts from this policy **only** those absences involving university-sponsored events, such as athletics and band, and religious holidays. Absences related to university-sponsored events must be discussed with me prior to the date that will be missed.

Please Note: If you are absent, it is your responsibility to make yourself aware of all due dates. If absent due to a scheduled event, you are still responsible for turning assignments in on time. **Tardiness:** Tardiness creates a problem for the entire class since it can disrupt work in progress. Tardiness will be reflected in lost points.

Classroom Conduct

Please treat your classmates and myself with respect. Keep in mind that students come from diverse cultural, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. Some of the texts we will discuss and write about engage controversial topics and opinions. Diversified student backgrounds combined with provocative texts require that you demonstrate respect for ideas that may differ from your own. Disrespectful behavior will result in dismissal, and accordingly absence, from the class. Any use of electronic devices not related to classroom learning: phones, personal data assistants, iPods, etc. are disruptive and will not be tolerated. Please turn them on silent and keep them out of sight.

Assignment Maintenance Responsibilities

You are responsible for maintaining copies of all work submitted in this course and retaining all returned, marked work until the semester is over. Should the need arise for a resubmission of papers or a review of marked papers, it is your responsibility to have and to make available this material.

Late Work Policy and Mode of Submission

I do not accept late work. All papers will be submitted as MS Word (.doc) or Rich Text Format (.rtf) documents to E-learning. I may consider extenuating circumstances, but you must contact me at least twenty-four hours before the assignment is due. All drafts should be polished and presented in a professional manner. All papers must be in 12-point Times New Roman font, double-spaced with 1-inch margins and numbered pages.

Final Grade Appeals

Students may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, Program Assistant in Department of English. Grade appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade.

University Policies

General Education

This is a General Education course providing student learning outcomes listed in the Undergraduate Catalog. For more information, see <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/general-education-requirement.aspx>

Statement of Composition (C) Credit

This course can satisfy the UF General Education requirement for Composition. For more information, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/general-education-requirement.aspx>

Statement of Writing Requirement

This course can provide 6000 words toward fulfillment of the UF requirement for writing. For more information, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/writing-and-math-requirement.aspx>

Students with Disabilities

The University of Florida complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act. The Disability Resource Center in the Dean of Students Office provides information and support regarding accommodations for students with disabilities. For more information, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>. The office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation.

Statement of Harassment

UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment for its students, staff, and faculty. For more about UF policies regarding harassment, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/sexual/>

Statement on Academic Honesty

All students must abide by the Student Honor Code. For more information about academic honesty, including definitions of plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php>

Tentative Class Schedule

	Monday	Wednesday	Friday
Discovering the Gifted Child			
Week One (8/24-8/28)	Course Intro	Defining Gifted	Origins of Giftedness Roblyn Rawlins
Week Two (8/31-9/4)	Terman and Hollingworth	Standardized Testing- identifying the gifted	Leslie Margolin- Introduction
Week Three (9/7-9/11)	No Class	<i>Children of the Atom</i>	<i>Children of the Atom</i>
Week Four (9/14-9/18)	<i>Children of the Atom</i>	<i>Children of the Atom</i>	<i>Children of the Atom</i> - book review due
Raising the Gifted Child			
Week Five (9/21-9/25)	Peter Stearns, Ann Hulbert- parenting	Margolin-Parenting the Gifted	Writing Lesson-Rhetoric
Week Six (9/28-10/2)	Peer Review	Rhetorical Analysis Due	<i>Ender's Game</i>
Week Seven (10/5-10/9)	<i>Ender's Game</i>	<i>Ender's Game</i>	<i>Ender's Game</i>
Using the Gifted Child			
Week Eight (10/12-10/16)	<i>Ender's Game</i>	<i>Ender's Game</i>	<i>Ender's Game</i> - book review due
Week Nine (10/19-10/23)	Sevan Terzian-Gifted as national resource	<i>X-Men: Gifted</i>	<i>X-Men Gifted</i>
Week Ten (10/26-10/30)	<i>X-Men: Gifted</i> - book review due	Writing Lesson-Synthesis	Peer Review
Week Eleven (11/2-11/6)	Synthesis Essay Due	Final Project Discussion	No Class-Homecoming
Deconstructing the Gifted Child			
Week Twelve (11/9-11/13)	Margolin-Racism and Classism of Gifted Education	No Class	<i>Maizon at Blue Hill</i>
Week Thirteen (11/16-11/20)	<i>Maizon at Blue Hill</i>	<i>Maizon at Blue Hill</i> - Book Review Due	Should we abolish gifted education?
Week Fourteen (11/23-11/27)	Student-Teacher conferences	No Class	No Class
Week Fifteen (11/30-12/4)	Presentations	Presentations	Presentations
Week Sixteen (12/7-12/9)	Course Review	Course Conclusion	No Class-Reading Days

*Final paper due Monday 12/14 by midnight