

**AML 2410—Issues in American Literature: The American Past in Children’s Literature
Section 1626, Class 10424, Fall 2020**

Instructor Name: Professor Donnelly

Course meeting times & locations: MWF Period 8 (3-3:50 PM, synchronous)

Office Location and Hours: MW 2-3 PM EST and by appointment

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Course Description: Most American students have encountered historical fiction as ‘educational’ material in one form or another. But why is history so central to American education--and why is fiction, which might seem the opposite of the ‘hard facts’ of history, is so often read as history in these contexts? What do these fictions tell us about history, about America, and about our ideas of what children should know? In this course, we will try to answer some of these questions by reading and analyzing historical fiction intended for younger readers--especially texts used in American classrooms. Focusing on supposed ‘great events’ of American history like the Revolutionary War and the Civil Rights movement, we will read children’s/young adult texts and secondary sources to explore how each text’s time and purpose shapes the history it creates.

We will foreground questions still relevant to current debates about American education. Should history be taught to every American child, and how do our changing understandings of children and history shape such teachings? How can authors explain shameful elements of American history, such as slavery and genocide, to young readers? And can (or should) history be fictionalized, especially when used in the classroom?

Upon completing this course, students will be able to:

- Analyze the interaction of context, form, and content in a text*
- Perform close-reading on a given text’s argument and effect*
- Create and support a thesis-driven argument*
- Write and think critically about literature, history, and their uses in education*
- Connect common historical and narrative patterns to their real-world consequences*

COVID Statement: All of us have felt and will continue to feel the impact of COVID-19 and the epidemic’s social and financial fallout. Education is only one of the major life spheres in which we have had to adapt to these changes. I recognize the difficulty of remote learning and hope the choices I have made as an instructor will make this shift as manageable as possible. Namely, I have kept writing projects as streamlined as possible to allow all students to work on their schedules. I have also included more collaborative discussion to attempt to bridge the gaps between our computer screens.

If you have any COVID-related hardships which may obstruct your performance in this class--unexpected work or family obligations, financial struggles, mental or physical health issues, or lack of technological access--please communicate with me as well as making use of all UF resources available to you. We can then assemble a plan to help you complete the class and fulfill all requirements in the way most beneficial for you. (See course policies section for more information)

General Education Objectives:

- This course confers General Education credit for either Composition (C) *or* Humanities (H). This course also fulfills 6,000 of the university’s 24,000-word writing requirement (WR).
- *Composition courses* provide instruction in the methods and conventions of standard written English (grammar, punctuation, usage), as well as the techniques that produce effective texts.

Composition courses are writing intensive. They require multiple drafts submitted to your instructor for feedback before final submission.

- Course content should include multiple forms of effective writing, different writing styles, approaches and formats, and methods to adapt writing to different audiences, purposes and contexts. Students should learn to organize complex arguments in writing using thesis statements, claims and evidence, and to analyze writing for errors in logic.
- The University *Writing Requirement (WR)* ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning. To receive Writing Requirement credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course. This means that written assignments must meet minimum word requirements totaling 6000 words.

General Education Learning Outcomes:

At the end of this course, students will be expected to have achieved the following learning outcomes in content, communication and critical thinking:

- **Content:** Students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, theories and methodologies used within the academic discipline.
- **Communication:** Students communicate knowledge, ideas and reasoning clearly and effectively in written and oral forms appropriate to the discipline. Students will participate in class discussions throughout the semester to reflect on assigned readings.
- **Critical Thinking:** Students analyze information carefully and logically from multiple perspectives, using discipline-specific methods, and develop reasoned solutions to problems.

Required Texts:

M.T Anderson—*The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing: The Pox Party*. ISBN: 978-0763636791

Joseph Bruchac—*The Winter People* (2004) ISBN: 9780142402290

Christopher Paul Curtis—*The Watsons Go to Birmingham, 1963*. (2000) ISBN: 9780440228004

Louise Erdrich—*The Birchbark House* (1999) ISBN: 9780786814541

Bette Greene—*Summer of My German Soldier* (1973) ISBN: 9780440900566

Harold Keith—*Rifles for Watie*. ISBN: 978-0064470308

Elizabeth George Speare—*The Sign of the Beaver* (1983) ISBN: 978-0547577111

One Additional Text Chosen by Majority Student Vote—Realistic vs. Fantastic History
(Text suggestions taken until November 6th, when vote cast and text decided)

Assignments

(see pg.8-9 for Grading Rubric):

Discussion Responses
40 points each (400 Total)
Creative Reflection Paper
150 Points
Final Research Project
250 Points
Engagement, Attendance, and Participation
200 Points
TOTAL: 1000 Points

- Discussion Responses (10, 200+ words each, 2000 total): To facilitate discussion and preparation for each class session, you will prepare a written response to class material at least ten times per semester. Each discussion board will feature suggested questions/response topics, but I encourage students to explore any topic they find compelling or confusing. *Additionally*, you must respond at least 5 times per semester to a post from a peer—agreeing with, challenging, or adding to a fellow student’s response.
- Creative Reflection Paper (1500 words): Using insights from our readings, discussions, and your own reflections on class materials, address your personal relationship to historical fiction for children and young adults. Reflect upon the ways such texts were or were not part of your education, what they taught you, and how they shaped your relationship with both literature and history. Thesis-based argumentation is appreciated, but this assignment may also be more creatively structured—as memoir, autobiographical fiction, poetry, a short play, etc.
- Final Research Project (2500 words): Using three to four secondary sources and at least one of the class primary texts, engage with a question or argument about a text you find interesting. Think about what compels you, angers you, or confuses you about the text; how it proves or disproves the theories found in our secondary sources; or how it connects to larger issues from your personal experience or the world around you. Then assemble a thesis-based argument using your research and close-reading of the primary fictional text. Finally, create a short visual, spoken, or multi-media presentation on your paper topic to be presented to the class.

WRITTEN WORK TOTAL: 6000 WORDS

- Participation, Attendance, and Engagement: Since literature courses are all about coming together to speak, interact, and collaborate, your attendance and participation is essential. This will look different for different students depending on personality, culture/race/gender/disability, academic experience, and access (or lack thereof) to resources/technology. I understand this and will take such differences into account by providing various ways to interact with class materials and with your peers. However, some basic strategies for engaging with this class include:
 - Regular class attendance and clear communication with me when you cannot attend
 - Reading/viewing/listening to as much of the day’s assigned resources as possible
 - Coming to class with at least one talking point, question, or concern about daily materials
 - Making a good faith effort to engage in discussion with peers in small groups; bringing input to whole class roughly once per week

Course Policies:

1. You must **complete all assignments** to receive credit for this course.
2. **Attendance:** Though this is an online course, attendance is essential to getting the most out of it. Your effort to “attend” to the material presented in this course will be reflected in your class performance and grade. This means reading all required materials, interacting in a timely manner with discussion posts, and attending our synchronous sessions.*¹ To this end, you will not be permitted to take other UF courses during the same time slot as this one. Additionally, if you will be absent from a synchronous session, you must notify me (preferably a day in advance). Absences without notification will be considered unexcused. Two unexcused absences are permitted per semester; three or more will result in a reduction of one letter grade from your final grade.
3. **Tardiness:** Punctuality is essential for this course, as it shows respect for me, for yourself, and for your peers. If you are late to a synchronous session by more than five minutes, you will receive a partial absence unless and until you contact me after class to confirm your attendance. (Two partial absences count for one unexcused absence.)
4. **Classroom Behavior:** Students should conduct themselves maturely, be respectful of their peers, and avoid infringing on fellow students’ right to learn, just as in face-to-face meetings. Disrespectful behavior will result in lower participation grades or a meeting with the instructor to address the behavior.
5. **Online Privacy Statement:** Our class sessions may be audio visually recorded for students in the class to refer to and for enrolled students unable to attend live. Students who participate with their camera engaged or utilize a profile image are agreeing to have their video or image recorded. If you are unwilling to consent to have your profile or video image recorded, be sure to keep your camera off and do not use a profile image. Likewise, students participating orally are agreeing to have their voices recorded. If you are not willing to consent to have your voice recorded during class, you will need to keep your mute button activated and communicate exclusively using the "chat" feature, which allows students to type questions and comments live. The chat will not be recorded or shared. As in all courses, unauthorized recording and unauthorized sharing of recorded materials is prohibited.
6. **Inclusivity:** This classroom affirms diversity, including but not limited to race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, and the intersections thereof. However, it is never a requirement to share relevant life experiences with me or the class for the sake of class enrichment. It is certainly an option if or when you wish to contribute this way, but it is never a requirement. Students are expected to approach each other and course materials with open minds. Some of the works we study will cover painful histories and difficult topics; where possible, content warnings will be provided so students can prepare to engage appropriately with material.
7. **Accessibility:** Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/), which will provide appropriate documentation to give to me. However, accommodations are not just for students who identify as or are ‘officially’ disabled. Since accessibility benefits everyone and can be applicable to everyone, please feel encouraged to contact me with any accessibility requests regardless of diagnosis or documentation—whether early in the semester or as it occurs to you, since the state of the world may create unforeseen accessibility challenges for all of us.
8. **Students who are in distress** or who are in need of counseling or urgent help: please contact umatter@ufl.edu or 352-392-1575 so that a team member can reach out to you. UF’s Counseling and Wellness Center offers additional support: 352-392-1575, or contact them online:

*¹ If COVID, monetary, or disability-related challenges make this policy an undue burden, please contact me so we can assemble a plan of action for your participation.

<https://counseling.ufl.edu/>. In addition, feel encouraged to reach out to me if you encounter difficulties—while I am not a counselor and cannot offer treatment or guidance, I can assist in formulating a plan to help you complete this course or point you toward more resources that can help.

9. ***UF's policy on Sexual Harassment:*** The University of Florida is committed to providing a safe educational, working, and residential environment that is free from sexual harassment or misconduct directed towards any and all members of the community: <https://titleix.ufl.edu/policy-statement/>
10. ***Paper Format & Submission:*** All papers will be submitted electronically, via Canvas. Each submitted paper must be in .doc, .docx, or .rtf format.
11. ***Late Papers/Assignments:*** Assignments are due by the deadline indicated on Canvas. If you require an extension, please contact me *before* the deadline to arrange a new submission time. I accept late work for all reasons covered under official UF policies; again, contact me if these circumstances arise.
12. ***Paper Maintenance Responsibilities:*** Keep duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course. Save all returned, graded work until the semester is over.
13. ***Academic Honesty and Definition of Plagiarism:*** UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge: “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: ‘On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.’”

Plagiarism includes but is not limited to:

 - a. *Stealing, misquoting, insufficiently paraphrasing, or patch-writing.*
 - b. *Self-plagiarism, which is the reuse of the Student's own submitted work, or the simultaneous submission of the Student's own work, without the full and clear acknowledgment and permission of the Faculty to whom it is submitted.*
 - c. *Submitting materials from any source without proper attribution.*
 - d. *Submitting a document, assignment, or material that, in whole or in part, is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment the Student did not author.*
14. For information on UF Grading policies, see:
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>
15. ***Grade Appeals.*** In 1000- and 2000-level courses, students may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, Program Assistant, in the Department office (4008 TUR). Please contact Ms. Blount at cblount@ufl.edu Grade appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade.
16. ***Course Evaluations.*** Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations. Toward the end of the semester, you will receive email messages requesting that you do this online: <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/evals/Default.aspx>

TENTATIVE WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Week	Date	Read/View for Class	DUE
1	08/31	Introductions	
	09/02	Excerpts on Defining Childhood and Children's Literature (Canvas)	
	09/04	Excerpts on history and America as a nation (Canvas)	
2	09/07	HOLIDAY—NO CLASS	
	09/09	<i>The Sign of the Beaver</i> Ch. 1-12	
	09/11	<i>The Sign of the Beaver</i> Ch. 13-18	Discussion 1 (Required)
3	09/14	<i>The Sign of the Beaver</i> Ch. 19-End and Excerpts from Schwebel/Bradford (Canvas)	
	09/16	<i>The Winter People</i> Ch. 1-9	
	09/18	<i>The Winter People</i> Ch. 10-21	
4	09/21	<i>The Winter People</i> Ch. 22-Author's Note and Supplements of Choice (Canvas)	
	09/23	<i>Johnny Tremain</i> (Ch. 1-4)	
	09/25	<i>Johnny Tremain</i> (Ch. 5-9)	
5	09/28	<i>Johnny Tremain</i> (Ch. 10-12) and Supplement of Choice	
	09/30	<i>Octavian Nothing</i> to pg. 53 (ending "If one massy eye...")	
	10/02	HOMECOMING—NO CLASS	
6	10/5	<i>Octavian Nothing</i> pg. 54-109 (ending <i>This became a feature of my evenings</i>)	
	10/7	<i>Octavian Nothing</i> pg. 110-213 (ending "If you do, I overhear you...")	
	10/9	<i>Octavian Nothing</i> pg. 214-273 (author's note) + Supplement of Choice (Canvas)	
7	10/12	<i>The Birchbark House</i> Intro-Ch. 5	
	10/14	<i>The Birchbark House</i> Ch. 6-10	
	10/16	<i>The Birchbark House</i> 11-End and Supplement of Choice (Canvas)	
8	10/19	<i>Rifles for Watie</i> Ch. 1-7	
	10/21	<i>Rifles for Watie</i> Ch. 8-13	
	10/23	<i>Rifles for Watie</i> Ch. 14-17	Discussion 5 (Recommended)
9	10/26	<i>Rifles for Watie</i> Ch. 18-22	
	10/28	<i>Rifles for Watie</i> Ch. 23-end and Supplement of Choice	
	10/30	<i>Summer of My German Soldier</i> Ch. 1-10 and "On Gaslighting"	
10	11/2	<i>Summer of My German Soldier</i> Ch. 11-18	
	11/4	<i>Summer of My German Soldier</i> Ch. 19-end and Supplement of Choice (Canvas)	
	11/6	Where Are We Going, Where Have We Been—Reflecting and Choosing Final Text	Student Choice text determined

11	11/9	<i>Code Talker</i> Intro-Ch. 9	Creative Reflection Paper
	11/11	HOLIDAY—NO CLASS	
	11/13	<i>Code Talker</i> Ch.10-18	
12	11/16	<i>Code Talker</i> Ch. 19-Author’s Note and Supplement of Choice (Canvas)	
	11/18	<i>The Watsons Go to Birmingham</i> Ch. 1-5	
	11/20	<i>The Watsons Go to Birmingham</i> Ch. 6-11	
13	11/23	<i>The Watsons Go to Birmingham</i> Ch. 12-end and Supplement of Choice (Canvas)	
	11/25	THANKSGIVING	
	11/27	THANKSGIVING	
14	11/30	Student Choice: Realism vs. Fantastic	
	12/2	Student Choice	
	12/4	Student Choice and Supplement of Choice	Discussion Posts Completed
15	12/7	‘Does Knowing History Help?’ from the New Yorker	Final Project Presentations
	12/9	N/A	Final Project Presentations
	12/12	READING DAY—NO CLASS	Research Paper Due Monday 12/15 @ 11:59 PM

General Assignment Rubric

	SATISFACTORY (Y)	UNSATISFACTORY (N)
CONTENT	Papers exhibit evidence of ideas that respond to the topic with complexity, critically evaluating and synthesizing sources, and provide an adequate discussion with basic understanding of sources.	Papers either include a central idea(s) that is unclear or off- topic or provide only minimal or inadequate discussion of ideas. Papers may also lack sufficient or appropriate sources.
ORGANIZATION AND COHERENCE	Documents and paragraphs exhibit identifiable structure for topics, including a clear thesis statement and topic sentences.	Documents and paragraphs lack clearly identifiable organization, may lack any coherent sense of logic in associating and organizing ideas, and may also lack transitions and coherence to guide the reader.
ARGUMENT AND SUPPORT	Documents use persuasive and confident presentation of ideas, strongly supported with evidence. At the weak end of the satisfactory range, documents may provide only generalized discussion of ideas or may provide adequate discussion but rely on weak support for arguments.	Documents make only weak generalizations, providing little or no support, as in summaries or narratives that fail to provide critical analysis.
STYLE	Documents use a writing style with word choice appropriate to the context, genre, and discipline. Sentences should display complexity and logical structure.	Documents rely on word usage that is inappropriate for the context, genre, or discipline. Sentences may be overly long or short with awkward construction. Documents may also use words incorrectly.
MECHANICS	Papers will feature correct or error-free presentation of ideas. Papers may contain a few spelling, punctuation, or grammatical errors that remain unobtrusive and do not obscure the paper’s argument or points.	Papers contain so many mechanical or grammatical errors that they impede the reader’s understanding or severely undermine the writer’s credibility.

A ASSIGNMENTS: Engage with the topic thoughtfully and thoroughly, using reliable sources and working within the context of audience, purpose, and assignment format/medium. Show care and attention to formatting and transitions to enable reader comprehension. Tone and language are clear and communicate complex thought. Have few or no grammar and punctuation mistakes.

B ASSIGNMENTS: Engage thoroughly with the topic, using reliable sources. Acknowledge the context of audience, purpose, and assignment format/medium, though may stumble over one or more elements. Show attention to transitions and formatting; may be basic, but still clear and streamlined. Tone and language are clear. Have some grammar or punctuation mistakes.

C ASSIGNMENTS: Make good faith effort to engage with the topic, but source use or complex synthesis not as well-integrated as A or B assignments. Some acknowledgement of audience, purpose, and assignment format/medium, but neglect one of these areas more than others. Show some thought in formatting and transitions, but not streamlined/tailored to the document's purpose. Tone and language are respectful but overly simplistic or overly complex. Have noticeable grammar and punctuation mistakes.

D-F ASSIGNMENTS: Have unclear topic or do not engage with the listed assignment requirements; little to no synthesis and incorrect or negligible source use. Little or no acknowledgement of audience, purpose, or assignment format/medium. Incorrect or unclear use of formatting and transitions. Tone and language unprofessional and/or unclear. Have disruptive grammar and punctuation errors.