

ENC1145: Writing About LGBT Young Adult Literature
Spring 2015 | Section 7411
MWF 7 | Matherly 114

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Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday period 6, or by appointment

Course Description:

The past year has seen the rise of media campaigns such as #WeNeedDiverseBooks that seek to bring attention to the lack of diversity within young adult (YA) literature. The numbers tell the tale: from 2003-2013, major commercial publishers released, on average, 15 YA books each year that could be classified as LGBT novels – that is, novels with lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender themes or main characters (Lo). These statistics – combined with similarly dismal numbers for other forms of diversity – serve as a reminder that YA literature remains largely beholden to straight, white protagonists. In this class, then, we will examine LGBT representation in YA literature – what little of it there is – in the twenty-first century. Although our reading focus will largely be on novels from the past five years, we will also spend class time discussing the history of LGBT YA literature and context in which these more recent books are emerging.

As this is a course primarily about writing, however, our attention will never stray far from the act and process of producing written work. Students should expect to write regularly, as the best way to improve one’s writing skills is, quite simply, to write.

Course Objectives:

By the end of the semester, I hope you will come away with/be able to do the following:

- Produce writing that possesses a focused thesis, a sustained analysis throughout the essay, and coherence between paragraphs and ideas and within the essay as a whole
- Display a command of grammar, mechanics, punctuation, spelling, and accurate Modern Language Association (MLA) citation and documentation of research
- Work collaboratively in an academic writing community, learning from and contributing to the writing of your classmates in addition to engaging in critical verbal discourse
- Understand and employ various technological resources in your critical reading, writing, and thinking practices, including the use of word processing to develop essays, e-mail to communicate professionally, and the Internet and library database resources to develop research skills
- Have a nuanced understanding of the history of LGBT representation in YA literature
- Engage critically with the various forms of representation possible within YA literature
- Develop an effective vocabulary and theoretical basis for addressing LGBT themes through your writing

Required Texts:

Texts appear in order of class use. You may purchase any version – hardcover, paperback, or electronic – so long as it is complete. Additional readings will be provided via Sakai or Course Reserves.

Everything Leads to You by Nina LaCour (2014)

Beautiful Music for Ugly Children by Kristin Cronn-Mills (2012)

Season One of MTV's *Faking It* (2014)*

Far from You by Tess Sharpe (2014)

Inheritance by Malinda Lo (2013)

If You Could Be Mine by Sara Farizan (2013)

Two Boys Kissing by David Levithan (2013)

*Available to stream on MTV's website, Amazon, and other sites.

Course Assignments:

Group Presentation: Together with one to two other students, you will create a presentation on a landmark LGBT YA novel from a pre-approved list of texts. In the presentation, you will provide an outline of the book, as well as place it into its historical context and discuss its importance in the overall scope of YA literature. Your presentation must be polished, well-rehearsed, and engaging. You will also each submit an individual paper in which you provide a written version of your argument. (Paper: 900-1200 words, 150 points; Presentation: 10-15 minutes, 100 points)

Close Reading: In this essay, you will choose a passage from one of the novels we have read and craft a thoughtful and detailed argument about its relevance to the text as a whole. This argument should be both specific and original, and should be grounded in specific examples from your chosen passage. (900-1200 words, 150 points)

Response Papers: You will write four response papers throughout the semester. These responses will be on topics related to our readings, will be used to facilitate in-class discussion, and will allow you to explore ideas and themes related to your larger assignments. As such, they should be thoughtful, detailed, and professional. (600-900 words each, 50 points each)

Research Paper: Your final paper for the course will be a research paper related to one or more of the themes and texts that we will discuss throughout the semester. Your paper must make a nuanced and detailed contribution to the subject you choose; you will be required to incorporate a number of critical and academic sources into your paper to support your thesis. (Paper: 1800-2100 words, 300 points)

Participation: The participation grade accounts for in-class discussion, workshops, quizzes, in-class work and other related activities. A rubric for participation will be posted on Sakai for your reference throughout the semester. (100 points)

Total Points Possible: 1000

Course Grades:**Grading Scale:**

A	4.0	93-100	930-1000	C	2.0	73-76	730-769
A-	3.67	90-92	900-929	C-	1.67	70-72	700-729
B+	3.33	87-89	870-899	D+	1.33	67-69	670-699
B	3.0	83-86	830-869	D	1.0	63-66	630-669
B-	2.67	80-82	800-829	D-	0.67	60-62	600-629
C+	2.33	77-79	770-799	E	0.00	0-59	0-599

Grading Rubric:

A brief overview of how I arrive at the grades for all major assignments is below. We will discuss each assignment in more detail as they arrive.

In each paper, I will evaluate:

- 1) content, including argument, development, and support
- 2) organization, including paragraph structure, overall flow of ideas, transitions
- 3) mechanics, including grammar and style.

You should strive to excel in all three areas; more specific grade breakdowns are as follows:

The A-range essay has strong content, strong organization, AND strong mechanics.

The B-range essay has one key area (content, organization, mechanics) notably in need of revision.

The C-range essay has two key areas (content, organization, mechanics) notably in need of significant revision.

A D-range essay has two or more key areas in need of substantial revision.

An “E” is usually reserved for students who do not do the assignment or fail to attend class. However, an “E” may also be given if an essay blatantly ignores all three areas of evaluation.

Course Policies:

Attendance: This is a participation-oriented, skills-based writing course, which means that you will build your skills incrementally and systematically in each class throughout the semester. Much of the learning that takes place is spontaneous and difficult to reproduce outside of class.

Consequently, if you miss more than **three** classes during the semester, your grade will drop considerably. Each absence beyond three will lower your overall grade by 25 points.

However, if you miss more than six classes, you will fail the course. Exempt from this policy are only university-approved absences, such as those for athletics and band and religious holidays. Absences for illness or family emergencies are, with few exceptions, not excused and will count toward your three allowed absences. I advise that you save your absences for when they are truly necessary. If you anticipate having a prolonged absence for any reason, please speak with me in advance to make appropriate arrangements.

If you are absent, it is still your responsibility to make yourself aware of all class discussions and activities as well as any new developments, such as assignments and due dates. You are still responsible for turning assignments in on time. You will not, however, be able to make up any in-class assignments. I will not approach you regarding absences and missing or late assignments; it is your responsibility to keep track of your own attendance and assignments.

Late Arrival: Our class is discussion-based, which means late arrival is both rude and disruptive. Class starts sharply at 1:55 PM, and anyone not in the room by that time will be counted as tardy. You are allowed two tardies without penalty; any tardy past two will lower your overall grade by 10 points.

Class Discussion and Preparation: You are expected to add constructively to the conversation we have each day. You will treat the instructor and your fellow classmates with respect at all times, especially when you disagree with them. Anyone who breaks that rule will be asked to leave the classroom.

You are also expected to arrive prepared to actively participate in our class discussions and activities. This means you should come with your homework done, articles/books read and easily accessible, and paper and writing utensils at hand.

Paper Submissions: In order to receive credit for an assignment, you must follow all guidelines set out for paper submission. All assignments should be done on a computer and have a professional appearance. (No stains, wrinkles, etc.) This includes proper MLA formatting, ranging from font and font size to the heading and margins. Any multi-page assignment turned in via hard copy that is not stapled together will lose one letter grade. Any digital papers should be submitted as .doc, .docx, or PDF. Please include your last name in the document title for electronic submissions.

Papers due via hard copy will be turned in at the start of the class period on the due date. Papers due electronically should be turned in via Sakai by the time that class begins on the due date. No late assignments will be accepted, unless prior arrangements have been made with the instructor. Failure of technology (hard drive crashes, printer out of ink, etc.) is not an excuse. It is your responsibility to keep copies of all graded assignments, even after they have been returned to you.

Email Correspondence: This is an English class, so I expect your emails to me to be professional and follow rules of grammar and etiquette. Please include proper salutations and a signature that includes your name.

Final Grade Appeals: Concerns about grading on individual assignments should be addressed to the instructor. A student who is sure his or her final grade is inaccurate or undeserved may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, Program Assistant. Grade appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower grade; the decision is final.

Statement of Composition (C) and Humanities (H) credit: This course can satisfy the UF General Education requirement for Composition or Humanities. For more information, see:
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/general-education-requirement.aspx>

Statement of Writing requirement (WR): 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/gordon.aspx>

Statement of student disability services: 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/>

Statement on 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/scsr/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/scsr/honorcodes/honorcode.php>

Course Schedule:

This schedule is tentative and subject to change throughout the semester. All assignments and readings are due on the day they are listed. We will be discussing each of the assigned novels in its entirety, so be sure to follow the syllabus guidelines for when to begin reading so that you do not fall behind. Check your email and Sakai daily for announcements and updates.

Week One:

January 7: Course Introduction

Begin reading Everything Leads to You

January 9: Defining LGBT

Read: “Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity 101” and other article TBA

Week Two:

January 12: Defining YA Literature

Read: “A Brief History of Young Adult Literature” by Ashley Strickland

January 14: Tips for Brainstorming; Overview of LGBT YA Lit

Read: “I Have Numbers! Stats on LGBT Young Adult Books Published in the U.S.” and “LGBT Young Adult Books 2003-2013: A Decade of Slow But Steady Change” by Malinda Lo

January 16: MLA Format and Citation

Week Three:

January 19: No Class

January 21: Discuss *Everything Leads to You*

Due: Response Papers, Groups A and B

Begin reading Beautiful Music for Ugly Children

January 23: Discuss *Everything Leads to You*

Read: “Q&A with Nina LaCour” by Donna Freitas

Week Four:

January 26: LGBT YA Lit in Context

Due: Group One Presentation: *I’ll Get There. It Better Be Worth the Trip.* by John Donovan

Read: “Give Us Faces” by Michael Cart and Christine Jenkins

January 28: How to Perform a Close Reading

Read: “‘Unshelter Me’: The Emerging Fictional Adolescent Lesbian” by Vanessa Wayne Lee

January 30: How to Craft a Thesis Statement

Week Five:

February 2: Writing Introductions

February 4: Discuss *Beautiful Music for Ugly Children*

Due: Response Paper, Group A

Begin reading Far from You

February 6: Discuss *Beautiful Music for Ugly Children*

Read: “YA Pride: Am I Allowed to Write This?” by Kristin Cronn-Mills;

“Interview with Kristin Cronn-Mills” by Victoria

Week Six:

February 9: Writing Conclusions

Due: Group Two Presentation: *Happy Endings are All Alike* by Sandra Scoppettone

February 11: Close Reading Practice

February 13: Discuss *Faking It*, Season One

Due: Response Paper, Group B

Week Seven:

February 16: Paper Workshop

Due: Group Three Presentation: *Annie on My Mind* by Nancy Garden

February 18: Conferences

February 20: Conferences

Due: Close Reading

Week Eight:

February 23: Discuss *Far from You*

Due: Response Paper, Group A

Begin reading Inheritance

February 25: Discuss *Far from You*

Read: “Tess Sharpe: I believe in the life-saving power...” by Tess Sharpe;

“Interview with Tess Sharpe” by Victoria; “Interview with Tess Sharpe, Author of

Far From You” by Sarah

February 27: Discuss *Far from You*

Read: “On Bisexual Characters and YA Literature” by Malinda Lo

Week Nine:

March 2: Spring Break!

March 4: Spring Break!

March 6: Spring Break!

Week Ten:

March 9: Generating Paper Topics

March 11: Discuss *Inheritance*

Due: Response Paper, Group B

Begin reading If You Could Be Mine

March 13: Discuss *Inheritance*

Read: “Chatting with YA Author Malinda Lo About Her Latest, *Inheritance*” by

S.E. Smith; “*Inheritance*: Malinda Lo on (Bisexual) Love Triangles” by Ana;

“Race, Sexuality, and the Mainstream” by Malinda Lo

Week Eleven:

March 16: Effective Research: Finding Sources

Due: Group Four Presentation: *Weetzie Bat* by Francesca Lia Block

March 18: Effective Research: Library Day!

March 20: Effective Research: Evaluating Sources

Week Twelve:

March 23:

Due: Group Five Presentation: *The House You Pass Along the Way* by Jacqueline Woodson

March 25: Big and Little Structure

March 27: Outlining

Week Thirteen:

March 30: Tips for Revision

April 1: Discuss *If You Could Be Mine*

Due: Response Paper, Group A

Begin reading Two Boys Kissing

April 3: Discuss *If You Could Be Mine*

Read: “On Community Spaces and Being a Trans Muslim” by Mahdia Lynn

Week Fourteen:

April 6: Discuss *If You Could Be Mine*

Read: “Sara Farizan on Writing *If You Could Be Mine*”; “This Author’s Juicy YA Novels Would be Banned in Her Parents’ Homeland” by Maddie Oatman

April 8: Incorporating Sources

April 10: Paper Topic Conferences

Due: Group Six Presentation: *Boy Meets Boy* by David Levithan

Week Fifteen:

April 13: Discuss *Two Boys Kissing*

Due: Response Paper, Group B

April 15: Discuss *Two Boys Kissing*

Read: “See the Cover of David Levithan’s...” by Tara Fowler

April 17: Further Tips for Revision; How to Peer Review

Week Sixteen:

April 20: Paper Workshop

April 22: Wrapping Up

Due: Final Papers