

## LIT 4331-1804: Children's Literature

Turlington 2333

Hours: Monday, periods 9-11 (4.05-7pm)

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Turlington 4362

Office Hours: Mondays and Tuesdays, 2-3 p.m.

### Course Overview

In 1900, the Swedish educational advocate Ellen Key proclaimed the twentieth-century to be the “century of the child.” Indeed, this century marked a number of significant changes in Western children’s culture and experience: it involved, for example, the enforcement of more stringent child labor laws, mandatory education, the development of child psychology and various pedagogical theories, and the expansion of an industrial-material culture that in turn made possible new forms of child-focused products and media. Certainly, the twentieth-century also witnessed the publication of beloved Western children’s books such as *Anne of Green Gables*, *Pippi Longstocking*, *The Little Prince*, and, of course, *Harry Potter*. The purpose of this class, then, is to study these texts in relation to their historical moments of production. How, we will ask, do books for young people represent culturally—and historically—contingent notions of childhood? How, moreover, might they simultaneously reaffirm and challenge cultural notions of class, race, gender, and sexuality that dominated their respective moments of production? Finally, how (and/or why) might we justify the literary value of these texts, as well as their study within a university setting?

### Assigned Texts

**(N.B. – The University of Florida requires that instructors provide at least a partial list of required texts a semester-to-year before the beginning of the course. For this reason, you will be able to find a good portion of the texts listed below in the UF bookstore. Additional texts, however, can be found in the general holdings of the UF Bookstore, the UF Library stacks, the Alachua County Library stacks, and at local booksellers like Books-a-Million and also online booksellers such as Amazon.com. You are also welcome to use e-readers, so long as you abide by the regulations outlined in the “Attendance/Participation” section below).**

### Recommended:

*MLA Handbook of Style* (available at the UF bookstore and at Library West)

### Required:

Exam booklet (e.g., “blue book” or “green book”) for midterm exam. You can find an exam booklet at venues such as the UF bookstore or Target Copy on University Avenue.

Roald Dahl, *Boy* (UK, 1984)

L. Frank Baum, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (USA,1900)

L.M. Montgomery, *Anne of Green Gables* (Canada,1908)

A.A. Milne, *Winnie the Pooh* (UK,1926)

Erich Kastner, *Emil and the Detectives* (Germany,1929)

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince* (France,1943)

Astrid Lindgren, *Pippi Longstocking* (Sweden,1945)

E.B. White, *Stuart Little* (USA,1945)

Louise Fitzhugh, *Harriet the Spy* (USA,1964)

Marlene Nourbese Philip, *Harriet's Daughter* (Canada, West Indies,1989)

Beverly Naidoo, *The Other Side of Truth* (UK, South Africa, 2000)

Salman Rushdie, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (UK, India)

### **Course Requirements**

Attendance/Participation: 15%

Quizzes: 10%

Response Essay: 25%

Midterm: 25%

Final Essay: 25%

### **Attendance/Participation**

Although I will be giving lectures in this class, I will also be posing questions which I expect will generate lively discussion. You will be responsible for responding to my questions and asking critical and thought-provoking questions of your own.

You will also be responsible for attending each class and demonstrating clear attention and preparation. Please keep in mind that each class session is worth an entire week's amount of work. Therefore, I will lower your grade by one letter for each unexcused absence.

Excused absences include documented illnesses (please provide me with a doctor's note), university events (please provide me with a letter from a coach, academic supervisor, etc.), and religious holidays. If you foresee missing class (e.g., for a religious holiday), please let me know in advance, so that we can make arrangements for the work you'll be missing.

**Texting Policy:** *Each instance of texting in class counts as an absence.* When you text in class, your body might be present, but your mind is not. And ultimately, your mindful presence and attendance is what counts in this class.

**Laptop Policy:** Unless you have documentation for a learning disability or you are using an e-reader, I would prefer you do not use a laptop in class. Since this is a discussion-based course, laptops really aren't necessary; if you'd like to take notes (and you should) you can always do so in a notebook. If you do use a laptop, I expect you to sit in the front row of the classroom.

## Quizzes

During each class period, I will give a quiz that tests your reading of the day's assigned text as well as your reception of previously discussed material. These quizzes will allow me to gauge your critical comprehension of the assigned texts; moreover, they will often include questions that lead into and/or frame the following lecture and discussion.

## Response Essay

Over the course of the semester, each of you will write one (1) essay on the topic of one of the assigned texts. Your essay will involve a review and critical response to one (1) scholarly essay or book chapter that immediately addresses the novel you've been assigned. I will grade your essay based on your effective and convincing argumentation and your use of MLA standards of academic prose.

On Monday, 1 September, I will send you an email notifying you of the assigned text to which you will respond. (*If you would like to write on one specific text, you may email me at any point before 5pm on Friday, 29 August in order to request your preference. I'll do my best to honor your request.*)

Essay responses will cover material beginning with L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (15 September) and concluding with Isabel Allende's *The City of the Beasts* (8 December).

You are required to *email* your paper to me by 5pm on the Friday before the discussion of your assigned text. (For example, if you have been assigned to write an essay on L.M. Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables*, you must email me your paper *no later than* 5pm on 19 September – that is, the Friday before our class discussion of this novel on 22 September). I will read your paper over the weekend and draw on it to organize that day's lecture and discussion.

Your paper must be *at least* five (5) pages long, and it must be (a) written according to the standards of MLA formatting, and (b) include a list of works cited at its conclusion. (The list of works cited must include all of the sources you've consulted, including the primary text about which you are writing. It is also additional to the five-page requirement).

The requirements for the response essay are as follows:

- Once you have been assigned a text, you should read it far in advance.
- After you've read and thought about the text, search for scholarly articles written about that novel on the UF database. Find as many articles as you can and scan them over; then select one that especially interests you.
  - Helpful resources on the UF database include MLA, Project MUSE, and JSTOR.
  - Start by typing in an obvious keyword, such as the title of your assigned text.
    - For some of you, a title keyword will offer you plenty of essays that you can either read online or find in the library stacks. For example, if you're assigned to write on A.A. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh*, you should immediately find accessible essays

written about that novel. All you'll have to do is to select one article/book chapter that especially interests you.

- For others of you, the search may be more difficult. For example, little is published (in English) on *Emil and the Detectives* or *City of the Beasts*. This means you need to be creative.
  - For example, if you have trouble finding articles on *Emil and the Detectives*, you might want to broaden your search terms to, say, “children’s detective fiction.” Or, if you’re having trouble finding articles on *City of the Beasts*, you might want to broaden your search to “Isabel Allende” or “children’s/YA fantasy literature.”
  - The article you select might not directly bear on the specific novel you’ve been assigned, but it should have some basic connection to it. For example, if you’re writing on Allende’s *City of the Beasts*, you might find an interesting article on one of Allende’s other novels (there are many!) that allows you to think about *City of the Beasts* in new and refreshing ways. Or, if you’re assigned to write on Beverly Naidoo’s *The Other Side of Truth*, you might find an essay on the topic of “African children’s literature” that might not directly mention Naidoo’s novel, but that might nevertheless address key themes and concerns in that novel (e.g., children’s migration patterns, international immigration policy, African themes in children’s literature, etc).
- Once you’ve found a scholarly article that either directly or indirectly corresponds to the novel you’ve been assigned, think about the following questions:
  - What is the thesis of this scholarly article?
  - How does the author support this thesis with the arguments s/he makes throughout the essay?
  - To what extent is the article’s thesis/supporting arguments convincing? How so, exactly?
  - Are there any moments at which you might challenge the thesis/supporting arguments? How so, exactly?
  - How might you make a critical connection between the author’s argument and your own reading of the text to which you’ve been assigned?
    - For example, if you agree with the author’s reading, then how does it make a substantial contribution to the scholarly field of children’s literature – and how might you, as a scholar in your own right, build upon this argument to make a contribution of your own?
    - If you find this reading lacking, then what moves might you make – based on your reading of the assigned text – to fill in this lack?

- If the article you've selected does not directly bear on the text you've been assigned – e.g., if it addresses themes in Salman Rushdie's "adult" novel *The Satanic Verses* even though you've been assigned Rushdie's "children's" novel, *Haroun* – then what critical connections do you perceive that might illuminate our class's appreciation of the assigned text?
- After you've thought about the questions above, compose a 5-10 page paper in which you give an account of your assigned text based on your reading and critical review of the scholarly article.
- **PLEASE DO NOT HESITATE TO DISCUSS YOUR PAPER WITH ME AT ANY POINT OF ITS CONSTRUCTION.** I am available in person during office hours (Mondays and Tuesdays, 2-3pm) and also via email ([aulanow@ufl.edu](mailto:aulanow@ufl.edu)).

### **Midterm**

On Monday, 20 October, you will complete a *handwritten* in-class midterm exam. Please bring an exam booklet (a "blue book" or "green book" – available at venues such as the UF Bookstore or Target Copy) with you to the exam. The first part of the exam will involve basic objective questions (e.g., definitions, short answers, true & false questions, quote matching, etc) that test your comprehension of the overall themes of the course. The second part of the exam will involve an essay question that tests your critical thinking about the overall themes of the course.

You will have the entire three-hour period of the session to complete this exam. You *cannot* use outside sources during this exam.

### **Final Essay**

Toward the end of the semester, I will give you a set of broad essay questions that address key themes we have discussed over the course of the term. You will select one of them and compose a 5-10 page essay in response to one of these questions. This essay, like your independent response paper, should be formatted according to MLA standards and should include a list of works cited (even if the only work you cite is the primary text). Since this is an "open book" final assignment, it should also draw on close readings of quoted textual sources.

You must either email me ([aulanow@ufl.edu](mailto:aulanow@ufl.edu)) an electronic copy of your paper or deliver a hard copy to my office (Turlington 4362) no later than 5pm on 15 December. I will send you an email acknowledgement within 24 hours of receipt of your paper.

### **Disabilities**

If you have a disability, please provide me with proper documentation within the first three weeks of the semester. In turn, I will accommodate your concerns.

### **Tentative Schedule:**

**25 August:** Course Introduction

**1 September:** No class: Happy Labor Day!

*(I will be emailing response essay assignments on this day. If you would like to request a particular novel on which to write your essay, you must do so no later than 5pm on Friday, 29 August).*

**8 September:** Roald Dahl, *Boy*

**15 September:** L. Frank Baum, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*

*(The essay response cycle begins today. Each student is responsible for sending me a copy of her/his response essay on the Friday preceding the date on which her/his assigned novel is scheduled for discussion. For example, students assigned to write a response to The Wonderful Wizard of Oz must email me their papers no later than 5pm on Friday, 12 September).*

**22 September:** L.M. Montgomery, *Anne of Green Gables*

**29 September:** A.A. Milne, *Winnie the Pooh*

**6 October:** Erich Kastner, *Emil and the Detectives*

**13 October:** Antoine de Sainte-Exupéry, *The Little Prince*

**20 October:** Midterm Exam

**27 October:** Astrid Lindgren, *Pippi Longstocking*

**3 November:** E.B. White, *Stuart Little*

**10 November:** Louise Fitzhugh, *Harriet the Spy*

**17 November:** Marlene Nourbese Philip, *Harriet's Daughter*

**24 November:** Conferences: Discuss final papers

**1 December:** Beverly Naidoo, *The Other Side of Truth*

**8 December:** Salman Rushdie, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*

**Final papers due in my office and/or inbox no later than 5pm on Monday, 15 December!!!**