

## AML 2410: Issues in American Literature and Culture

### Let's Talk about Sex in Children's and Young Adult Literature Class #10509, Fall 2021

---

**Instructor Name:** Corinne Matthews

**E-mail:** [ck.matthews@ufl.edu](mailto:ck.matthews@ufl.edu)

**Course meeting time:** MWF Period 6 (12:50-1:40)

**Course website:** Canvas

**Office:** TBD

**Office Hours:** MW 11:30-12:30

**Location:** Turlington 2350

#### Course Description:

According to the American Library Association, sex is the third most likely reason for a book to be banned (after violence and profanity). Why, then, is so much children's and young adult literature about sex? As children's literature scholar Roberta Seelinger Trites noted almost twenty years ago, "teenage characters in YA novels agonize about every aspect of human sexuality: decisions about whether to have sex, issues of sexual orientation, issues of birth control and responsibility, unwanted pregnancies, masturbation, orgasms, nocturnal emissions, sexually transmitted diseases, pornography, and prostitution." Indeed, since Trites made that claim, sex has only become more commonplace in literature for adolescents. But what, exactly, is the sex in children's and young adult literature telling young people about sex?

In this course, we will trace the development of depictions of sex in contemporary children's and young adult literature over time. We will examine how sex is depicted and discussed across genre, medium, and intended audience. We will consider questions like: how does the depiction of sex and sexuality change, for example, in fiction versus nonfiction, or in realism versus fantasy? What's the difference between reading about sex in a comic instead of in prose? How has queer sexuality been depicted for younger readers over time? You would likely give a twelve-year-old a different book about sex than you would an eighteen-year-old—but why?

In addition to children's and YA texts we will read for this class, we will learn about how these texts circulate in the culture through forms like academic articles, public facing articles, and podcasts. Assignments for this class include critical response papers, a midterm paper, and final project in the form of a podcast or vidcast.

Please note that the readings for this class will include depictions of sex and sexual assault, and as such, we will discuss these topics in class.

#### COVID Statement:

The university requires that I include the following in my syllabus:

In response to COVID-19, the following practices are in place to maintain your learning environment, to enhance the safety of our in-classroom interactions, and to further the health and safety of ourselves, our neighbors, and our loved ones.

- If you are not vaccinated, get vaccinated. Vaccines are readily available at no cost and have been demonstrated to be safe and effective against the COVID-19 virus. Visit this link for details on where to get your shot, including options that do not require an appointment: <https://coronavirus.ufhealth.org/vaccinations/vaccine-availability/>. Students who receive the first dose of the vaccine somewhere off-campus and/or outside of Gainesville can still receive their second dose on campus.
- You are expected to wear approved face coverings at all times during class and within buildings even if you are vaccinated. Please continue to follow healthy habits, including best practices like frequent hand washing. Following these practices is our responsibility as Gators.
  - Sanitizing supplies are available in the classroom if you wish to wipe down your desks prior to sitting down and at the end of the class.
  - Hand sanitizing stations will be located in every classroom.
- If you sick, stay home and self-quarantine. Please visit the UF Health Screen, Test & Protect website about next steps, retake the questionnaire and schedule your test for no sooner than 24 hours after your symptoms began. Please call your primary care provider if you are ill and need immediate care or the UF Student Health Care Center at 352-392-1161 (or email [covid@shcc.ufl.edu](mailto:covid@shcc.ufl.edu)) to be evaluated for testing and to receive further instructions about returning to campus. UF Health Screen, Test & Protect offers guidance when you are sick, have been exposed to someone who has tested positive or have tested positive yourself. Visit the [UF Health Screen, Test & Protect website](#) for more information.
  - Course materials will be provided to you with an excused absence, and you will be given a reasonable amount of time to make up work.
  - If you are withheld from campus by the Department of Health through Screen, Test & Protect you are not permitted to use any on campus facilities. Students attempting to attend campus activities when withheld from campus will be referred to the Dean of Students Office.
- Continue to regularly visit [coronavirus.UFHealth.org](https://coronavirus.UFHealth.org) and [coronavirus.ufl.edu](https://coronavirus.ufl.edu) for up-to-date information about COVID-19 and vaccination.

### Hyflex Statement:

As per university policy, there may be a “hyflex” version of this course.

### 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:

*Fire* by Kristin Cashore

*Forever* by Judy Blume

*The Magic Fish* by Trung Le Nguyen

*Ladybird* (film) directed by Greta Gerwig

*Last Night at the Telegraph Club* by Malinda Lo

*Looking for Alaska* by John Green

*Never Have I Ever* (Netflix show)

*Red, White, and Royal Blue* by Casey McQuiston

*Speak* (graphic novel version) written by Laurie Halse Anderson and illustrated by Emily Carroll

*Tess of the Road* by Rachel Hartman

*Gabi, A Girl in Pieces* by Isabel Quintero

*Weetzie Bat* by Francesca Lia Block

You may use any edition of these texts.

### Grade Distribution:

6 Critical Response Papers (3000 words)	30%
Midterm Paper (1250 words)	20%
Annotated Bibliography (500 words)	10%
Final Podcast/Vidcast (1250 words)	30%
Attendance and Participation	10%

**Assignments** (see below for Grading Rubric):

### **Critical Response Papers (500 words each)**

You will write *six* response papers in response to our readings—that is, on six of the twelve texts we are discussing over the course of the semester. Response papers are designed to ready you for class discussion and to explore ideas you could develop further in your longer paper. While the first response paper will have a set due date, you can choose which texts you'd like to write response papers on for the remainder of the semester. However, you may only write one response paper per text. It's up to you to make sure that you write response papers in a timely manner. Whatever day you turn it in, a response paper *must always address the reading for that day*. In your response paper, you should not repeat previous class discussions or provide a summary of the reading. Instead, your response should begin to analyze the reading assigned for that class session, selecting an issue or theme or question you feel to be significant and analyzing how it functions in the text. Use close reading to support the analysis you do in your response. Because these papers are relatively short, you won't be able to look at the *entire* text, and your focus should be relatively narrow. I recommend that you select a word, phrase, image, two-page spread (if a comic), or short quotation from the reading to initiate your response. If you would like help narrowing down appropriate topics for a response paper, feel free to come to my office hours or send me an e-mail running an idea by me. **I do not accept late response papers.**

### **Midterm Paper (1250 words)**

For this paper, you will write a short analysis of any work of adolescent/YA literature as it relates to the themes of the course. You may develop the essay any way you like, as long as you have an argument and draw from supporting evidence. Part of the challenge is to identify a suitable subject and approach. No biographical criticism, although you may use some biographical data. You may write on one of the books we're reading in class. If you do, you must expand on what we discussed or take a different line of interpretation than the ones we followed in class. While you may use outside sources for this paper, doing so is not required.

### **Annotated Bibliography (500 words minimum)**

In this assignment, you will explore **AT LEAST** five sources that will be useful in establishing context for your final project. You will both summarize the source and also, more importantly, critically examine the strengths and weaknesses of the text and explicate the ways the source will support your overall argument. Each annotation will be at least 100 words **NOT INCLUDING** an MLA-formatted citation.

### **Final Project: Podcast or Vidcast for a Public Audience (1250 words)**

For this assignment you will write, record, edit, and produce a short audio(visual) essay about the way sex is at play in a children's or young adult text or piece of pop culture. The recording must be at least five (5) minutes long, but no more than ten (10) minutes long. Your audio essay should

focus on one thesis/research question for the entirety of the recording. While you may choose whether to use an audiovisual or strictly audio format, you should take into account how each format would benefit your final project. For example, if you are discussing a film, your argument may benefit from the inclusion of images.

While this is an audio(visual)-essay assignment, there are a multitude of methods and styles you can use to create your essay. Feel welcome to play/experiment with tone and genre. Plus, think about how to best convey your topic to a wider audience, who may be unfamiliar with your ideas/argument/etc.

In addition to exploring a text we did not discuss in this class, one of the major focuses of this assignment is looking at the ways the linguistic and aural modes of communication work *together* to convey meaning. You will need to consider how each aspect of your project alters the meaning of your work and the understanding of your audience. What do they already know about sex in children's and YA literature and/or the text you are discussing, and what do you want them to come away knowing that they didn't before?

Though you'll have a lot of flexibility with this assignment, there are a few specific guidelines you'll need to include in your project:

- 1250 words minimum
- An introduction to you, as speaker, and your topic.
- A transcript of your video essay or podcast, uploaded with the main file.
- A comprehensive Works Cited page.
- At least three (3) critical/scholarly sources, but no more than five (5)

Although not required, you also have the option to work with a partner on this assignment—after all, podcasting with a friend can be much more fun! Should you decide to do so, you'll need to tell me ahead of time (by e-mail is fine) and write an additional 100-200 words account of/reflection on your process of collaboration. Both partners will receive the same grade on the assignment.

### Course Policies:

1. You must complete all *assignments* to receive credit for this course.
2. *Attendance*: Attendance is mandatory and will be taken daily. You may miss up to three classes without penalty. After three unexcused absences, you will lose 3% off your final grade for each additional unexcused absence. **If you miss two full weeks of class (6 unexcused absences), you will automatically fail the course.** Arriving late to class three times will count as one absence. Absences will be excused only in accordance with UF policy. Acceptable reasons include illness, religious holidays, military obligation, and those absences covered by UF's twelve-day rule (<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>). Should you miss a class for any reason, you are responsible for informing yourself as to what was covered in class and for making up all assignments. Students are responsible for all work covered in class, all announcements, and all changes to the syllabus made in class.
3. *Tardiness*: Latecomers receive partial absences and must see me after class so I know you attended.

4. *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/about/title-ix-rights/>
5. *Paper Format & Submission:* All papers should be formatted per MLA standards (Times New Roman 12, double-spaced, one-inch margins, MLA header, and MLA citations) and submitted to the assignment on Canvas as a .doc or .docx file. Please note that failure of technology is not an excuse, so plan your time accordingly.  
**Note: You must complete all assignments to receive credit for this course.**
6. *Late Papers/Assignments:* Papers that are submitted late will lose ten percent off their final grade for each day that they are late. After three days, I will not accept late papers. Brief Responses will not be accepted late.
7. *Paper Maintenance Responsibilities.* Keep duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course. Save all returned, graded work until the semester is over.
8. *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.'" The Honor Code (<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions.  
A Student must not represent as the Student's own work all or any portion of the work of another. 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.
9. Students with *disabilities* who are requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, <https://disability.ufl.edu/>), which will provide appropriate documentation to give your instructor early in the semester.
10. *Students who are in distress* or who are in need of counseling or urgent help: please contact [umatter@ufl.edu](mailto: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: <https://counseling.ufl.edu/>
11. For information on UF Grading policies, see:  
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>
12. *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](mailto:cblount@ufl.edu) Grade appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade.
13. *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://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>
14. *Policy on environmental sustainability.* Whenever possible, I will use paper-sparing electronic media to distribute our course materials. Consider purchasing electronic editions of assigned

texts when they are available, or used copies of print texts. If you do not elect to keep your print books, consider sharing them with others after the semester ends. (For example, you could donate them to the Alachua County [Friends of the Library](#) annual book sale.)



## Course Schedule:

Please note that this schedule is a guide and may change. *Always check Canvas!*

Wk	Date	In Class	Due
1	M 8/23	Course Intro	
	W 8/25	Selections from the introduction to Lydia Kokkola's <i>Fictions of Adolescent Carnality: Sexy Sinners and Delinquent Deviants</i> , pg. 1-14 (Available on Canvas)	
	F 8/27	<i>Forever</i> —Ch. 1-8	
2	M 8/30	<i>Forever</i> —Ch. 9-16	
	W 9/1	<i>Forever</i> —Ch. 17-end Paragraph Workshop	Paragraph Draft for Workshop
	F 9/3	Sara K. Day, "Reimagining Forever...: The Marriage Plot in Recent Young Adult Literature" (Available on Canvas)	Response 1
3	M 9/6	<b>Labor Day—No Class</b>	
	W 9/8	<i>Weetzie Bat</i> —"Weetzie and Dirk"- <i>"Jah-Love"</i>	
	F 9/10	<i>Weetzie Bat</i> —"Weetzie Wants a Babie"- <i>"Love is a Dangerous Angel"</i>	
4	M 9/13	<i>Looking for Alaska</i> —Beginning - "fifty-eight days before"	
	W 9/15	<i>Looking for Alaska</i> —"fifty-two-days before" - "thirteen days after"	
	F 9/17	<i>Looking for Alaska</i> —"fourteen days after" - end Listen: <i>Girls Like Us</i> Podcast discussion on <i>Looking for Alaska</i> —Available <a href="#">here</a>	
5	M 9/20	Baldwin Visit—Sex education texts	
	W 9/22	Baldwin Visit—Sex education texts	
	F 9/24	<i>Gabi, A Girl in Pieces</i> —Beginning - "November 28"	
6	M 9/27	<i>Gabi, A Girl in Pieces</i> —"November 29" - "April 3"	
	W 9/29	<i>Gabi, A Girl in Pieces</i> —"April 5" - end	
	F 10/1	<i>Fire</i> —Ch. 1-11	
7	M 10/4	<i>Fire</i> —Ch. 12-21	
	W 10/6	<i>Fire</i> —Ch. 22-end	
	F 10/8	<b>Homecoming—No Class</b>	
8	M 10/11	<i>Never Have I Ever</i> (Season 1, Ep. 1-5)	
	W 10/13	<i>Never Have I Ever</i> (Season 1, Ep. 6-10) Listen: <i>Pop Culture Happy Hour</i> podcast episode on <i>Never Have I Ever</i> —Available <a href="#">here</a>	
	F 10/15	Midterm Peer Review Workshop	Draft of Midterm Paper for Workshop
9	M 10/18	<i>The Magic Fish</i> —pg. 1-79 ("What do you think?"/"Ma...") and Newgarden and Karasik, "How to Read Nancy" (Available on Canvas)	Midterm Paper



	W 10/20	<i>The Magic Fish</i> —pg. 80-147 (“Probably. They’re only stories. They’ll change when they need to.”)	
	F 10/22	<i>The Magic Fish</i> —pg. 148-end	
10	M 10/25	<i>Last Night at the Telegraph Club</i> —Ch. 1-18	
	W 10/27	<i>Last Night at the Telegraph Club</i> —Ch. 19-34	
	F 10/29	<i>Last Night at the Telegraph Club</i> —Ch. 35-end Listen: NPR’s Code Switch Podcast episode “They Don’t Say Our Names Enough”—Available <a href="#">here</a>	
11	M 11/1	<i>Speak</i> —“First Marking Period” - “Second Marking Period”	
	W 11/3	<i>Speak</i> —“Third Marking Period”	
	F 11/5	<i>Speak</i> —“Fourth Marking Period” and Roxanne Harde, “No Accident, No Mistake: Acquaintance Rape in Recent YA Novels” (Available on Canvas)	
12	M 11/8	<i>Tess of the Road</i> —Ch. 1-8	
	W 11/10	<i>Tess of the Road</i> —Ch. 9-19	
	F 11/12	<i>Tess of the Road</i> —Ch. 20-end	
13	M 11/15	<i>Red, White, and Royal Blue</i> —Ch. 1-4	
	W 11/17	<i>Red, White, and Royal Blue</i> —Ch. 5-7	
	F 11/19	<i>Red, White, and Royal Blue</i> —Ch. 8-12	Annotated Bibliography
14	M 11/22	<i>Red, White, and Royal Blue</i> —Ch. 13-end Listen: NPR’s Life Kit Podcast Episode, “Looking for Summer Reading Ideas? Fall in Love with Romance”—Available <a href="#">here</a>	
	W 11/24	<b>Thanksgiving Break—No Class</b>	
	F 11/26	<b>Thanksgiving Break—No Class</b>	
15	M 11/29	Final Project Workshop	Script Concept/Outline for Workshop
	W 12/1	<i>Ladybird</i> (whole film)	
	F 12/3	<i>Ladybird</i> Discussion cont.	
16	M 12/6	Final Project Presentations	
	W 12/8	Course Conclusion	Final Project Due (Recording and Script)
	F 12/10	<b>Reading Day—No Class</b>	

### 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

**Note:** A grade of C- is not a qualifying grade for major, minor, Gen Ed, or College Basic distribution credit. For further information on UF's Grading Policy, see:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

<http://www.isis.ufl.edu/minusgrades.html>

**A:** You have fulfilled all requirements and excellently met the purpose of the assignment with original and creative thought. You demonstrate complex, critical thinking skills and a willingness to engage analytically with the subject matter. Your writing uses specific examples to fully develop an argument and is organized in such a way that invites the reader to follow along. The prose is clear and interesting, and there are no errors in formatting, grammar, syntax, or spelling.

**B:** You have fulfilled all requirements and met the purpose of the assignment with fairly creative thought. You demonstrate critical thinking skills and some analytical engagement with the subject matter. Your writing uses examples to develop a mostly persuasive argument and is organized in such a way that is easy to follow. The prose is clear, and there are few errors in formatting, grammar, syntax, or spelling.

**C:** You have fulfilled most requirements and attempted to meet the purpose of the assignment, although some revision is needed to fully accomplish those goals. You demonstrate some critical thinking skills and attempt to engage analytically with the subject matter. Your writing uses some examples to develop an argument and generally follows an organizational structure, although it needs some major revisions to fully clarify and support the thesis. The prose is generally clear, but there are some errors in formatting, grammar, syntax, or spelling that may impede comprehension.

**D:** You have fulfilled some requirements, although your paper needs serious revision to fully meet the purpose of the assignment. You may attempt to engage analytically with the subject matter, but the paper includes a lot of summary or surface-level ideas. Your writing uses few or no examples, and the argument is unclear and/or unpersuasive. The organization is difficult to follow. The prose is unclear, and there are major errors in formatting, grammar, syntax, or spelling that impede comprehension.

**E:** You have not fulfilled the requirements of the assignment or met its purpose. You do not engage analytically with the subject matter or develop an argument. There is no support or organizational structure, and the prose is unclear or even unreadable, with major errors in formatting, grammar, syntax, or spelling that impede comprehension.

Or, you may have committed any one of the following failing errors: failure to meet the word count, plagiarism, or failure to address the prompt.