

LIT 4334: Golden Age of Children's Literature

Spring 2025

Instructor: Maryam Khorasani

Class No.: MAT 0010

Meeting Time: MWF Period 8 (3:00 PM – 3:50 PM)

Office Hours: Wednesdays 4 PM – 6 PM, and by appointment

Office Location: Turlington 4325

Course Website: Canvas

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Course Description

The first “Golden Age” of children’s literature (approximately 1860-1920) marked a transformative period in the publishing world, characterized by the emergence of classic works that shaped children’s fiction. This era witnessed an increasing recognition of children as distinct readers with unique needs and interests, leading to the creation of imaginative, didactic, and sometimes cautionary tales that often addressed their physical, emotional, and psychological well-being. In this course, we will explore the first Golden Age of children’s literature through the theme of health, exploring how physical well-being, mental health, disability, and emotional development were portrayed in classic works of the period. We will examine how these stories engage with Victorian and Edwardian ideas about the body, illness, and the mind—ranging from medical anxieties to natural healing—and how these texts reflect broader societal attitudes toward childhood and health. We will also challenge and expand the boundaries of this literary canon to explore how we might reimagine a “Golden Age” of children’s literature that confronts the limitations and problematic aspects of the traditionally conceived “Golden Age of Children’s Literature.”

Course Objectives

Throughout the semester, we will refine our skills as literary critics by engaging with biographical, historical, and theoretical approaches to textual analysis. Please note that this is an upper-division course requiring active daily participation and the development of a substantial original research

project utilizing materials from the Baldwin Library of Historical Children’s Literature at the University of Florida. By engaging deeply with these texts and resources, students will contribute to scholarly conversations about the canon, interrogate its limitations, and reimagine its boundaries through critical inquiry and innovative scholarship.

For more support to improve your writing, reach out to the University Writing Studio, where you can get one-on-one consultations and participate in workshops.

<https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>

Primary Texts

All of the primary texts for this course may be accessed free online, although you’re welcome to use physical copies. Links to the online versions (usually via archive.org) are posted in the syllabus—see the Course Schedule section for links.

Readings

- Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (1865)
- Lewis Carroll’s *A Strange Wild Song*
- Louisa May Alcott’s *Little Women* (1868)
- Susan Coolidge’s *What Katy Did* (1872)
- Johanna Spyri’s *Heidi* (1881)
- J.M. Barrie’s *Peter and Wendy* (1911)
- Frances Hodgson Burnett’s *The Secret Garden* (1911)

Assignment Overview

Assignment	Points
Attendance and Participation	150
Short Quizzes (3)	25x3=75
Perusall Annotations (4)	50x4=200
Digital Project: Literary Characters on Social Media (1)	125x1=125

Baldwin Collection Project (1)	225x1=225
Workshop Assignment Outline (1)	50
Creative Project (1)	175x1=175
Total	1000 Points

The grading scale is as follows:

A = 4.00 940-1000	B- = 2.67 800-839	D+ = 1.33 670-699
A- = 3.67 900-939	C+ = 2.33 770-799	D = 1.00 640-669
B+ = 3.33 870-899	C = 2.00 740-769	D- = 0.67 600-639
B = 3.00 840-869	C- = 1.67 700-739	E = 0.00 0-599

Important: You must complete all assignments to receive credit for this course.

Late Assignments: If you need an extension for an appropriate reason, please send me an email with the date that you plan to complete the assignment at least two days in advance of the due date. I will most likely give you an extension if you talk to me beforehand. An assignment submitted after the deadline without a valid excuse will result in losing %10 of the assignment's grade, with each day adding %2 to the deducted portion (one day after the deadline %10, two days after the deadline %12, and so on). The same rule applies when you have received an extension but do not submit the assignment on the extended deadline. Please also keep in mind that late assignments without a valid excuse will not receive detailed feedback.

Academic Honesty: Students are required to be honest in their coursework and must properly cite all sources that they have consulted for their projects. Any act of academic dishonesty, including unreferenced use of AI-generated text, will be reported to the Dean of Students and may result in failure of the assignment in question and/or the course.

For the University of Florida's honor code, see <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>

Attendance and Participation

Attendance: Attendance is mandatory and will be monitored by class roll or sign-up sheet. Should you miss a class for any reason, you are responsible for informing yourself as to what was covered in class. Acceptable reasons include illness, religious holidays, military obligations, and the twelve-day rule. You are responsible for providing valid documentation for your absences in order for them to be considered excused. Reasons for excused absences must be communicated with me ahead of time, or within three days afterward in case of unexpected events. After three unexcused absences, each subsequent unexcused absence will result in a letter-grade deduction from your final grade (4 absences: 5% off final course grade, 5 absences: 10% off final course grade). Six unexcused absences will result in the automatic failure of the overall course. For the official University policy on absences, please refer to:

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

Participation: You are expected to read the assigned readings before class. Each week will begin with a series of fundamental questions on the contents and the analysis of the assigned readings. The answers you give to these questions, consistent participation in class discussions, and demonstrated knowledge of the assigned readings will contribute to this portion of the final grade. Take notes while reading and bring a prepared sheet of paper containing key points and questions you wish to discuss during the session.

Quizzes

Throughout the course, there will be three multiple-choice quizzes. These quizzes are designed to assess your understanding of the course material. To perform well, it is essential to listen attentively to **the keywords and concepts** we discuss in class. While the quizzes won't be overly challenging, they will require a good grasp of the information presented during our sessions. Stay engaged, take notes, and participate actively to ensure success in these quizzes.

Perusall Annotations (350 words for each article)

In this assignment, you will engage with four articles relevant to our course material on Perusall, a collaborative annotation platform. Please note that you can find the link to the Perusall account for our course on the course navigation bar on Canvas, and you do not need to go directly to the website.

Instructions:

1. Choose your Articles:

- Go to the course's navigation bar and select "Perusall 1.3". The articles are in the "Library" section on the course's Perusall. Select four articles that you would like to annotate and submit the list by January 16th.

2. Read the Article:

- Start by reading the article carefully.

3. Annotate Actively:

- Use Perusall's annotation tools to engage with the text. Highlight key passages, comment on what you find interesting, and note any elements that resonate with you.

Important: Make sure to write in full sentences and support your ideas with solid evidence from the text. Double-check for spelling mistakes and use correct punctuation in your comments. Make sure to stay within the range of the word limit.

4. Respond to Peers:

- Engage in discussions with others. Respond to their annotations, ask questions, and offer additional perspectives.

Important: When you ask questions or respond to peers, try to spark a discussion instead of just looking for a "yes" or "no" answer. Your annotations will be visible alongside those of your classmates in real time, allowing you to engage and respond by "mentioning" a classmate using the @ symbol followed by their name. Aim to (a) annotate comprehensively by addressing multiple parts of the reading rather than just a few sections, and (b) provide thoughtful, well-reasoned insights in your annotations.

You should choose **four articles** for this assignment and submit the list by 11:59 PM on January 16th. Annotations are due by 11:59 PM on the night before each scheduled meeting.

Digital Project: Literary Characters' Social Media

The purpose of this assignment is to create a set of multimedia documents to engage with the literary works we will cover throughout the semester. You will then proceed as follows:

1. **Choose** the literary character you would like to present on. You can choose any character from the readings we will be covering during the semester.
2. **Create** a digital poster or slide with a profile of the character. Ensure the profile has an avatar (image) and other visual elements. This can include video or auditory material. It should also contain short text (consider bullet points) and information reflecting what you believe the personality of the character would be like. What would be their interests, hobbies, fears, and world views if they were living in today's world?
3. **Present** your digital poster/slide to the class on the day we will cover that reading. I will assign the dates for everyone's presentation after you submit your selection on January 16th. Please time your presentation beforehand and ensure it is no more than five minutes.

Baldwin Collection Project: Report on St. Nicholas (1500 words)

On February 26, we will visit [The Baldwin Library of Historical Children's Literature](#) to learn more about the 19th-century children's magazine *St. Nicholas*. Based on what we learn during the visit, you will compare different issues of the magazine and write an analytical essay about a six-month run of the magazine in a given year. Detailed instructions for this assignment can be found [here](#).

Workshop 1: Expanding the Canon of the Golden Age

For this assignment, you will engage with a lesser-known work of children's literature from the Golden Age (approximately 1860–1920). Your task is to select a text that isn't part of the traditional canon, reflect on its themes and significance and design a creative project based on it. Before attending the workshop, you will complete a worksheet to help you analyze your chosen text. During the workshop, you will discuss your chosen text and your plans for the creative project in small groups. You will share your findings, explain why you think the work is significant, and exchange ideas with your peers. This discussion is an opportunity to refine your thoughts and gain

new perspectives. After the workshop, you will submit a 250-word outline about the work and your potential plans for the creative project inspired by your work of choice.

Creative Project: Expanding the Canon of the Golden Age

For this assignment, you should choose a lesser-known work of children's literature and express your understanding and its relevance to the course topic through one of the following formats:

- Video Essay/Short Film
- Digital Collage
- Podcast Episode
- Picture Book
- Comic
- Zine
- Song
- Short Story or Play

A video essay or a short film about the reading would involve blending visuals, audio, and commentary to provide a multimedia exploration of the reading's themes, language, and emotional impact. To create a digital collage about a reading, gather relevant images that evoke the themes and emotions of the reading. Use graphic design software or online tools to arrange these images on a digital canvas. If you are making a podcast episode, please note that it should be more than simply recording your voice, as it also needs to contain a proper introduction and conclusion, sound effects, background music, etc. Picture books should combine illustrations and text to convey what you have learned from engaging with the reading. For a comic, you can create an illustrated narrative in a panel format and use dialogues, captions, and information boxes to incorporate your commentary and analysis about the reading. If you decide to do a zine, you can include a mix of illustrations, pictures of the book pages, and text to highlight your observations.

Evaluation Criteria: The assignment will be evaluated based on how well visual and narrative elements connect with the reading's themes as well as the time and effort spent on it.

You should submit the creative project with a 350-word paragraph explaining your work.

Questions to keep in mind when writing the outline:

1. **Choice of the Literary Work:**
 - Why did you choose this work? What elements inspired your creative exploration?
2. **Format Rationale:**
 - Why did you choose this particular format, and how does it enhance your understanding of the literary work?
3. **Narrative Structure (if applicable):**
 - How have you structured storytelling or commentary to convey your analysis effectively?
4. **Incorporation of Commentary:**
 - How are you integrating analysis and commentary within the project?
5. **Technical Details (if applicable):**
 - What tools or software did you use for the project, and how did you handle technical aspects?
6. **Engagement with Course Themes:**
 - How does your project reflect your understanding of children’s literature and the Golden Age in general?

Workshop 2: Peer-Review

At this workshop, you will have the opportunity to share your creative project with your peers and get feedback to refine your work. Each of you will present your project, explaining what inspired it and how it connects to the themes of the lesser-known text you’ve chosen from the Golden Age of children’s literature. This is your chance to showcase your ideas and hear others’ thoughts on how it could be developed further.

As you present, be ready to offer constructive feedback to others, too. Think about what works well in their projects and where they could make improvements. It’s all about having a collaborative conversation that helps everyone enhance their projects. You’ll get fresh perspectives, which could lead you to see your own project in a new light.

After the workshop, you’ll use the feedback from your peers to make any changes or adjustments to your project before submitting the final version.

Schedule

Week	Date	Reading	Perusall Annotations	Assignment Due
1	M (Monday) Jan. 13	Introduction to the Course and Syllabus		
	W (Wednesday) Jan. 15	Lewis Carroll's <i>Alice's Adventures in Wonderland</i> Chapters 1-4 ("Down the Rabbit Hole"- <i>"The Rabbit Sends in a Little Bill"</i>)		
	R (Thursday) Jan. 16	N/A		Perusall Article Selections Due Digital Project Character Selection Due
	F (Friday) Jan. 17	<i>Alice's Adventures in Wonderland</i> Chapters 5-8 ("Advice from a Caterpillar"- <i>"The Queen's Croquet-Ground"</i>)	"The Beguiling Legacy of Alice in Wonderland"	
2	M Jan. 20	No Class		
	W Jan. 22	<i>Alice's Adventures in Wonderland</i> Chapters 9-12 ("The Mock Turtle's Story"- <i>"Alice's Evidence"</i>) Movie: Tim Burton's <i>Alice in Wonderland</i> (2010)	"Adaptation as Compendium: Tim Burton's Alice in Wonderland"	
	F Jan. 24	Lewis Carroll's <i>A Strange Wild Song</i>		
3	M Jan. 27	Louisa May Alcott's <i>Little Women</i> Chapters 1-5 (Part One: <i>"Playing Pilgrims"</i> - <i>"Being Neighborly"</i>)		
	W Jan. 29	<i>Little Women</i> Chapters 6-10 ("Beth Finds the Palace Beautiful"- <i>"The P.C. and P.O."</i>)	"How Little Women Got Big"	
	F Jan. 31	<i>Little Women</i> Chapters 11-15 ("Experiments"- <i>"A Telegram"</i>)		

4	M Feb. 3	<i>Little Women</i> Chapters 16-20 ("Letters"- "Confidential")		First Quiz
	W Feb. 5	<i>Little Women</i> Chapters 21-25 ("Laurie Makes Mischief"-Part Two: "The First Wedding")	"Dismembering the Text: The Horror of Louisa May Alcott's <i>Little Women</i>"	
	F Feb. 7	<i>Little Women</i> Chapters 26-30 ("Artistic Attempts"- "Consequences")		
5	M Feb. 10	<i>Little Women</i> Chapters 31-36 ("Our Foreign Correspondent"- "Beth's Secret")	"Anything to Suit Customers: Antislavery and <i>Little Women</i>"	
	W Feb. 12	<i>Little Women</i> Chapters 37-41 ("New Impressions"- "Learning to Forget")		
	F Feb. 14	<i>Little Women</i> 42-47 ("All Alone"- "Harvest Time") Movie: Greta Gerwig's <i>Little Women</i> (2019)	"The Comprises of Greta Gerwig's '<i>Little Women</i>'"	
6	M Feb. 17	Susan Coolidge's What Katy Did Chapters 1-3 ("The Little Carrs"- "The Day of Scrapes")		
	W Feb. 19	<i>What Katy Did</i> 4-6 ("Kikeri"- "Intimate Friends")		
	F Feb. 21	<i>What Katy Did</i> 7-9 ("Cousin Helen's Visit"- "Dismal Days")	"Disciplining Normalcy: <i>What Katy Did</i> and Nineteenth-Century Female Bodies"	
7	M Feb. 24	<i>What Katy Did</i> 10-13 (St. Nicholas and St. Valentine"- "At Last")		
	W Feb. 26	Visit to the Baldwin Collection		
	F Feb. 28	Johanna Spyri's Heidi Chapters 1-4 "Up the Mountain to Alm-Uncle"- "A Visit to Grandmother"		

8	M Mar. 3	<i>Heidi</i> Chapters 5-8 “Two Visits”-“There is Great Commotion”		
	W Mar. 5	<i>Heidi</i> Chapters 9-12 “Herr Sesemann Hears”-“A Ghost”	“I Gave My Son the Books I Loved. He Chose Heidi Instead.”	
	F Mar. 7	<i>Heidi</i> 13-16 “A Summer”-“A Visitor”		
9	M Mar. 10	<i>Heidi</i> 17-20 “A Compensation”-“News”	“Heidi’s Homesickness”	
	W Mar. 12	<i>Heidi</i> 21-23 “How Life”-“Good Bye” Movie: Alain Gsponer’s <i>Heidi</i> (2015)		Second Quiz
	F Mar. 14	No Class		
10	Mar. 15-23	Spring Break		
11	M Mar. 24	J.M. Barrie’s Peter and Wendy Chapters 1-8 “Peter Breaks Through”-“The Mermaids’ Lagoon”	“Why J.M. Barry Created Peter Pan”	
	W Mar. 26	<i>Peter and Wendy</i> Chapters 9-12 “The Never Bird”-“The Children Are Carried Off”		
	F Mar. 28	<i>Peter and Wendy</i> Chapters 13-15 “Do You Believe In”-“Hook or Me”	“The Case of Peter Pan: The Impossibility of Children’s Fiction”	St. Nicholas Report Due
12	M Mar. 31	<i>Peter and Wendy</i> Chapters 16-17 “The Return Home”-“When Wendy Grew Up” Movie: Marc Forster’s <i>Finding Neverland</i>	“Peter Pan: Indefinition Defined”	

	W Apr. 2	Workshop: Expanding the Canon of the Golden Age		Workshop Assignment Outline Due
	F Apr. 4	Frances Hodgson Burnett's <i>The Secret Garden</i> Chapters 1-4 "There is No One"- "Martha"		
13	M Apr. 7	<i>The Secret Garden</i> Chapters 5-8 "The Cry"- "The Robin"	"Quarantine Reads: <i>The Secret Garden</i>"	
	W Apr. 9	No Class		
	F Apr. 11	No Class		
14	M Apr. 14	<i>The Secret Garden</i> Chapters 9-20 "The Strangest House"- "I Shall Live Forever"		Third Quiz
	W Apr. 16	<i>The Secret Garden</i> Chapters 21-24 "Ben Weatherstaff"- "Let Them Laugh"	Frances Hodgson Burnett's <i>The Secret Garden: Engendering Abjection's Sublime</i>	
	F Apr. 18	Chapters 25-27 "The Curtain"- "In The Garden"		
15	M Apr. 21	Peer Review Workshop		
	W Apr. 23	Final Thoughts		
	F Apr. 25	N/A		Creative Project Due

Important: I reserve the right to adjust the schedule/assignments as needed to accommodate course goals and to better meet student needs.

Classroom Policies

Cellphones: Cellphone checking during meetings is **not permitted**. Doing so will result in being marked "absent" from the class. Emergencies are exceptions.

Headphones/Earbuds: Using headphones or earbuds during class is not permitted and will result in being marked "absent" from the class.

Personal Computers: Using computers for any reason other than engaging with the course material will result in being marked "absent" from the class.

Late Policy: Class roll will be called at the beginning of class. Frequent lateness distracts other students and the instructor and will affect the student's final participation grade. Three lates constitute one absence.

Classroom Behavior: Please keep in mind that students come from diverse cultural, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. Many of the texts we discuss and write about engage controversial topics and opinions. Diversified student backgrounds combined with controversial texts require that you demonstrate respect for ideas that may differ from your own. Disrespectful behavior will result in dismissal and, accordingly, being marked "absent" from the class.

UF's Policy on 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 toward all members of the community:

<https://titleix.ufl.edu/about/title-ix-rights/>

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student, who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Contact the Disability Resources Center (<https://disability.ufl.edu/>) for information about available resources for students with disabilities.

Counseling and Mental Health Resources: Students facing difficulties completing the course or who are in need of counseling or urgent help should call the on-campus Counseling and Wellness Center (352 392-1575; <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/>).

Course Evaluation

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at:

<https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>

Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via

<https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

Grading Policies

Grading Method: The writing assignments in this course will be graded holistically, and the instructor will provide feedback for each paper with respect to grammar, punctuation, clarity, coherence, and organization. You must complete all assignments to receive credit for this course.

A general rubric for course assessments is included below:

Letter Grade	Assessment
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● course content and skills applied in the essay are well-developed ● the argument is persuasive, with detailed reasoning and thorough evidence ● organization includes an identifiable thesis statement, topic and concluding sentences, and easy-to-follow paragraphs ● writing style is coherent, clear, and appropriate for the assignment ● little to no mechanical errors
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● course content or skills applied in the essay need development ● the argument is persuasive, but further reasoning or evidence is needed ● the organization is missing an identifiable thesis statement, topic and concluding sentences, or easy-to-follow paragraphs ● the writing style is coherent overall but unclear or inappropriate at times ● few mechanical errors
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● course content or skills applied in the essay need significant development ● additional reasoning and evidence are needed to improve persuasiveness ● the organization is missing an identifiable thesis statement or topic and concluding sentences, and easy to follow paragraphs ● the writing style is coherent overall but unclear and inappropriate at times ● some mechanical errors
D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● course content and skills applied in the essay need significant development ● the argument is not persuasive; reasoning and evidence are lacking ● the organization is missing an identifiable thesis statement, topic and concluding sentences, and easy-to-follow paragraphs ● writing style struggles with logic, clarity, and appropriateness ● frequent mechanical errors

E	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● course content and skills are not applied in the paper● reasoning for the argument is unclear, and evidence is missing● lack of organization causes difficulty following the argument● writing style is incoherent and inappropriate for the assignment● mechanical errors limit the ability to read the paper
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