

Dr. Kenneth Kidd
LIT 4331 Section 30926
W 9-11 (4:05-7:05pm)
Spring 2022

kbkidd@ufl.edu
Office Hours:
R 6-8 (12:50-3:50)
& by appointment

Children's Literature: Diverse Book Finder

Our syllabus is also posted on kbkidd.org and on our Canvas site.

Texts:

- Renée Watson, *Piecing Me Together* (2017)
- 8 titles chosen from a list of 150 middle-grade and YA books published from 2018 forward (list in Canvas Files). 6 will be from the UF list (in yellow); 2 will be from the Fresno State list (in blue).

You will choose your titles so you will need to purchase them OR you may be able to borrow them from UF. More information on that option soon.

We will also have some critical readings, available via Canvas.

Course Canvas site: <https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/444595>

Course meeting link:

<https://ufl.zoom.us/j/93852166332?pwd=MXBTV0NwMGNqa2Q4RzBIN2NQQUY5QT09>

Sign-up sheet for individual titles:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1hjMZRsT4MHYysBwkShrHWVdmjA0vv6_dOlw2WPG3yM/edit?usp=sharing

Overview and Objectives

This section of LIT 4331, Children's Literature, will support a collaborative expansion of the Diverse BookFinder (DBF) project: <https://diversebookfinder.org/>. DBF began under the direction of Dr. Krista Aronson at Bates College and focused on the representation of BIPOC characters and themes in picturebooks published since 2002. The primary goal of DBF is to enhance the discoverability and visibility of these titles for both specialists and general readers. Our course will work toward the addition of very recently published middle-grade and young adult titles to the DBF database, while also studying the

practical, philosophical, and ethical challenges involved with supporting greater diversity in children's and young adult literature.

This course is experimental in both format and goals. We meet once a week in a three-hour block and online. It is one of two such courses being taught in Spring 2022. The other is being led by Dr. Ashley Foster at Fresno State University, with support from Suzan Alteri, Curator of the Arne Nixon Collection at Fresno State. The course will function like a lab course in a way. We will be doing things a little differently from your usual English classes which revolve largely around shared texts. While we will share reference points and will be working collaboratively, you will also be reading titles individually and reporting on them regularly in class. The great thing about the class is that collectively we will read and talk about a LOT of books; the challenge will be to share and reflect on individual reading experiences.

Our main task in support of the DBF project is to test suggested metadata with the literary sample. What, you ask, is metadata? In this context, metadata are classifying terms and tags used to describe a book's content, to facilitate easier finding of materials. In the case of DBF, it's *who* is in the books (race, ethnicity/nationality; tribal affiliation; book setting), and *how* those characters are represented (the message or story theme (is it a story about culture? oppression and resilience?). Metadata on the currently-configured DBF site are the tags on the left-hand side of the [DBF search page](#) (filters from a user standpoint). You can also read more about the category (*how*) tags (or metadata) [on this page](#). We are helping test and improve the metadata so it can cover or respond to middle-grade and YA material. We will help provide feedback on metadata that's been suggested by the grant's working metadata group. The material for older readers needs additional metadata and we will debate the usefulness and general merits of suggested terms from both a functional (user) perspective and a more critical-ideological perspective.

We'll begin the course with readings on diverse children's literature in cultural context, and with some orientation on the DBF project. We'll meet with the project's founder, Dr. Aronson. We will also be in conversation with the working groups of the DBF expansion grant. There are four total: The Metadata Advisory Group, the Collection Developmental Advisory Group, The Community of Practice Advisory Group, the Editorial Marketing Advisory Group. We'll meet with the first two to get an understanding of their contributions and working process. We'll spend the first few weeks getting a feeling for what's involved in metadata and cataloging as you are also beginning to read the materials you've chosen.

Assignments for the course include written reflections and informal oral reports on the titles read individually, a group digital exhibition project using either Omeka or Scalar, and a final reflection paper on the overall project experience.

Distance Learning, Class Format, and Participation

We will conduct class as a seminar, so participation is vital. Please attend class having read the assigned material and ready to discuss. I recognize that some of you may have audio and/or video or other accessibility challenges. I ask you to keep video on where possible, and to mute audio unless you are speaking, especially if there's background noise. I appreciate your video being on because I'm hearing-impaired and read lips, plus it's helpful to see affect when communicating. I would recommend using gallery view so you can see as many people as possible. Obviously if you need to mute for a while, that's ok, as long as you are participating.

It is possible that class sessions may be recorded on request. If that happens you will be notified in advance. 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 who un-mute during class and participate orally are agreeing to have their voices recorded. If you do not consent to have your voice recorded during class, you will need to keep your mute button activated and communicate exclusively using the "chat" feature.. The chat will not be recorded or shared. As in all courses, unauthorized recording and unauthorized sharing of recorded materials is prohibited.

The temptation online is to multitask. Resist.

Attendance Policy

Your participation is vital, and attendance is mandatory. You may miss one three-hour class (i.e. one week) without explanation. For each subsequent missed class I reserve the right to reduce your final course grade one-half of a letter grade. I will check attendance at either end of class. Generally I'll open the class session about five minutes before our start time. If you are not present when I take attendance -- usually at the beginning of class, but sometimes at the end -- you will be counted absent. If late, you may be marked absent.

Academic Honesty

All students are required to abide by the Academic Honesty Guidelines which have been accepted by the University. The academic community of students and faculty at the University of Florida strives to develop, sustain and protect an environment of honesty, trust and respect. Students are expected to pursue knowledge with integrity. Exhibiting honesty in academic pursuits and reporting violations of the Academic Honesty Guidelines will encourage others to act with integrity. Violations of the Academic Honesty Guidelines shall result in judicial action and a student being subject to the sanctions in paragraph XIV of the Student Conduct Code. The conduct set forth hereinafter constitutes a violation of the Academic Honesty Guidelines (University of Florida Rule 6C1_4.017). For more information about academic honesty, including

definitions of plagiarism and collusion, see:
<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/academic.php>.

Students with Disabilities

The Disability Resource Center in the Dean of Students Office provides students and faculty with information and support regarding accommodations for students with disabilities in the classroom. Staff at the Disability Resource Center will assist any student who registers as having a disability. Official documentation of a disability is required to determine eligibility for appropriate accommodations. For more information about Student Disability Services, see: <http://www.ufl.edu/disability/>

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. 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 ufl.bluer.com/ufl/.

Assignments and Grading

Reading responses (9)	40%
In-class snapshots (3)	20%
Digital exhibit (1)	30%
Reflection paper (1)	10%

We will use Canvas for the submission and evaluation of reading responses and the reflection paper only. We will not use the Canvas Gradebook function. All grades will be letter grades; there's no point system. Please let me know if you have any questions about evaluation policies or your standing.

Reading responses.

For each of the 8 books you select and read individually, plus *Piecing Me Together*, you will write a reading response of around 3 pages (12 point font, double spaced). Your response should begin with a paragraph summary of the book's plot and then move on to key themes and topics, ideally keyed to the metadata for the project. You may also want to note any interesting literary or rhetorical features (i.e. unusual point of view, design, and so forth). Think of these as reviews with some critical content analysis. You might want to mention genre and intended audience. The responses can be informal and provisional but they should reflect the full reading experience – that is, don't write and submit them until you've finished the book and had a chance to think about it. The responses will be uploaded to Canvas. The responses will be letter-graded, with the grade

based more on engagement than stylistic sophistication. The response on *Piecing Me Together* will be due the day we discuss that novel, but you may begin submitting other responses earlier, if you like. See the due date schedule in Canvas.

In-class title snapshots. From your individual titles you will choose three to present in a 5-10 minute oral or visual talk in class, format your choice. You should give us a sense of the book's plot, themes, and key diversity aspects, and you can make use of any online or visual materials that you find helpful. If you see connections between your book and previous ones feel free to note such. 10 minutes is the limit, and 5 minutes is great. If time permits we will have questions and general discussion at the end of each snapshot session. Snapshots will be letter-graded after delivery, with the grade based on the effectiveness of your assessment and talk. You are not required to give us any documents.

Digital exhibit. Working in groups of 3, you will create an exhibition showcasing your group's literary titles and in relation to the metadata that seems most pertinent and useful. You'll work with your colleagues to brainstorm themes, questions, metadata tags and categories. The exhibit can be organized in any way but should find a way to showcase individual titles while also emphasizing the issues they share. The exhibit should include the following elements: 1) a "curatorial statement" of about 500 words that guides us through the exhibit; 2) descriptions/considerations of individual titles as appropriate and useful, drawn from your individual readings and in-class snapshots if that's helpful. You don't have to feature all of the titles; rather, you can group titles thematically or by issue/problem; 3) select images (with captions) and hyperlinks as appropriate and useful; 4) 3-5 critical references for contextualization and additional study (these might be scholarly or trade books or peer-reviewed articles); and 5) reflection on the metadata tags/categories and their relevance or limitations in relation to your literary sample. Remember that the big deliverable for the grant is feedback on the metadata. Are there terms that were especially useful or relevant? Was there a need for additional or better terms, based on what you've encountered, and if so, what might you suggest?

The exhibit will be hosted on Omeka or Scalar and we will spend some time in class discussing planning and design. You will be credited for the work and will retain rights to any material produced that isn't otherwise copyrighted. Exhibits will be assigned a group grade and will be evaluated on content, design, and labor involved. We will spend some class time at the semester's end reviewing the exhibits together.

Reflection paper. This is an open-ended reflection on the experience of working with DBF and the contemporary materials we've been examining. I'm happy to hear about challenges or problems, things you liked or found interesting, questions that remain or that have developed in the process. 4-5 pp. double-spaced, 12 point font.

Grade Scale. A projects use an original and spirited argument to illuminate complexities of language and theme. B projects are well-organized, well-developed, relatively error-free essays with sparks of originality or daring, and B-'s are competent projects needing more complex development and/or clearer focus. Lower grades mean greater problems with development, structure, and grammar. Recurrent grammatical errors lower the

grade; occasional spelling errors and typos don't. Proof your essays. The best projects sustain complex audacious arguments; a good B essay capably summarizes and compares themes.

For information on UF grading policies, see

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

Schedule

January

- 5 Introductions to class and each other. Review DBF website, explain course objectives and outcomes. <https://www.sunjournal.com/2017/10/22/face-time-krista-aronson-finder-of-diverse-picture-books/>
<https://communications.uflib.ufl.edu/2021/12/08/uf-among-libraries-among-those-to-aid-discoverability-of-middle-grade-and-young-adult-books/>
- 12 **#WeNeedDiverseBooks and the DBF project.** Read: metadata whitepaper; Thomas, “Stories *Still* Matter”; Dahlen, “We Need Diverse Books: Diversity, Activism, and Children’s Literature” (in op de Beeck); Aronson, Callahan, and Sibley, “Messages Matter: Investigating the Thematic Content of Picture Books Portraying Underrepresented Racial and Cultural Groups” (Canvas Files). Meet with DBF founder and P.I., Dr. Krista Aronson.
- 19 **The Politics of Cataloging and Metadata.** Adler, “A Book is Being Catalogued”; Clarke and Schoonmaker, “Metadata for Diversity”; Higgins, “Totally Invisible: Asian American Representation in the Dewey Decimal Classification, 1876-1996”; Hobart, “Ethical Cataloging and Racism in Special Collections” (Canvas Files). Meet with Collection Development Group.
- 26 Colbert, “How Librarians Can Mitigate That ‘Power to Name’”; Gilton, Introduction and Ch. 2 of Multicultural and Ethnic Children’s Literature (Canvas Files). Coding workshop with Dr. Aronson.

February

- 2 Group case study: *Piecing Me Together*. RR due. Meet with Metadata Advisory Group.

- 9 Snapshots and workshop. Giddens, “Distant Reading and Children’s Literature”; Nel, “”Childhoods ‘Outside the Boundaries of Imagination’: Genre is the New Jim Crow” (Canvas Files)
RR1 due.
- 16 Snapshots and workshop.
RR2 due.
- 23 Snapshots and workshop.
RR3 due.

March

- 2 Snapshots and workshop.
RR4 due.
- 16 Exhibits working session.
RR5 due.
- 23 Snapshots and workshop.
RR6 due.
- 30 Exhibits working session.
RR7 due.

April

- 6 Snapshots and workshop.
RR8 due.
- 13 Exhibits due. Discuss exhibits.
- 20 Reflection paper due. Meeting with Metadata Group.