

WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
English Department

ENG 347 (5 credits)
Studies in Young Adult Literature
Spring Term 2009

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Class Time/Location: Monday/Wednesday/Friday – 2:30-3:50 p.m.
Humanities, Room 102

Office Hours: Wed. & Fri., noon-2:00 p.m.; Tues. 1:00-3:30 p.m.; and by appointment

Course Overview:

The world of young adult literature can be fascinating, sometimes risky and contentious, and often challenge our beliefs, personal experiences, and values. It usually includes characters (both real and imagined) who wrestle with the underlying questions, “Who am I? Where do I fit in?” This class will focus on literature that is written and published expressly for adolescents – readers in the 12-18 year old age range. We will consider how these books might re-ignite teenagers’ interest in reading and accompany their search to understand, define, and value themselves in historical, contemporary, and futuristic times.

While YA literature is written in all genres, our brief foray into the field will focus mostly on fiction as we move quickly from “classic” YA literature to more recent publications. Young adult literature is as diverse and exciting as books published for children and adults; it’s my hope to introduce you to a myriad of books and authors you may not have read in middle, junior, or senior high school and to kindle your enthusiasm for reading and response. Because of this, you will find this course reading and response intensive with a selection of both required and personal choice reading and an exploration of various ways to respond to books. You are invited to read with an appreciative eye, an eye toward the development of your own aesthetic criteria, and an eye that examines and negotiates both critical and personal judgments determined by reviewers, award committees, other readers in this class, and teens who have plenty to say about these books. Throughout the course we will explore the interrelationship of taste and quality as we talk about what makes a “good” book for teenage readers.

“Books, novels, stories, are one way we can reach out to one another without losing face, one way of saying: ‘We are not alone, not in our fears, not in our hopes, not in our nightmares, and not in our dreams.’” -- Sandy Asher

Young Adult Literature:

THE CONTENDER (R. Lipsyte) **or** GO ASK ALICE (Anonymous) **or** THE OUTSIDERS (S.E. Hinton)

TWILIGHT (S. Meyer)

THE ABSOLUTELY TRUE DIARY OF A PART TIME INDIAN (S. Alexie) **or** THE BURN JOURNALS (B. Runyan) **or** THE CIRCUIT (F. Jiménez)

SPEAK (L. Halse Anderson) [\$4.00 – purchase through NJJ]

THE BOOK THIEF (M. Zusak)

FEED (M.T. Anderson) **or** HOUSE OF THE SCORPION (N. Farmer) **or** THE HUNGER GAMES (S. Collins) [\$14.00 – purchase through NJJ]

DEADLINE (C. Crutcher) **or** WHALETALK (C. Crutcher)

Plus three books for YA author study project

Course Expectations:

Attendance and Participation--The world of young adult literature will serve as our literary lifeblood for the next ten weeks. As we know from reader response theory (as well as from personal experience), a book without a reader is nothing more than a blueprint on the page. Many of you enter this course as critical readers. I trust you'll leave as thoughtful, appreciative readers who have been (re)introduced to books and authors whose words, ideas, and stories will matter in your life as a reader and writer. I encourage you to put aside previously held beliefs and experiences about literature that *should* be read (or *should* be taught) and allow yourself to discover genres, books, characters, and authors that will take you places as a reader you've never traveled before. Your active involvement is essential in making this a dynamic and productive course. As you know from your own learning, discussions are more lively and insightful when assigned readings/writings/responses are completed by due dates. My goal is to involve you in experiences with young adult literature and reader response activities that you could adapt for your own teaching and/or writing. Your active participation and willingness to discuss, interact, raise questions, and take risks are essential in making these experiences beneficial. Don't cheat yourself or others by not coming to class. [Attendance will be taken at all class sessions – If you miss more than three classes I will advise you to withdraw from the course.]

Oral, Written, and Art-Response Activities and Assignments -- All assignments must be submitted on the dates listed on the course calendar in order to receive maximum credit. *Late papers and projects will only be accepted under unusual circumstances and with approval.*

Learning Activities and Projects:

1) Read! Read! Read! – As I mentioned on page one, this course is reading intensive, but it is also intensely interesting. You will read one or more books a week. Please read all assigned books and related material *prior* to each class session as background information and as preparation for class activities and discussions. (See course calendar for reading assignments.)

“The book without the reader has no life; it is static without the imagination and experience of another mind, the hand eagerly turning the page, the receiving heart.” -- Sue Ellen Bridgers, In Reading Their World, p. 70

2) Reader Response Activities – Throughout the term you will be invited to participate in activities designed to enhance your interaction with the books we've read. This may involve a written or artistic product created in class or prepared outside of class and turned in at a later time. These response projects include:

Read Aloud Response Sketch/Notebook: This term I'll read aloud a novel written for young adults. Your responsibility is twofold -- first to listen and then to respond in your sketch/notebook with ideas, images, language, symbols inspired by the story. Allow yourself to explore your dynamic response in this sketch/notebook as you interact with literature received through your ears. Feel free to bring your choice of art medium to class in order to sketch as you listen. My preference is oil pastels – if you've never tried them, I recommend doing so. They're an easily manipulated medium.

“So what . . . ?” Responses: Following a discussion of each required book, you'll pause and peruse your sticky notes, review ideas and insights brought up during discussion, and prepare a contemplative one page response to the question “So, what . . . ?” [*So, what does this character, story, or theme have to do with my life? With teenagers' lives?* (focus on response) *So, what did the author do especially well?* (focus on literary quality) *So, what do reviewers/literary critics have to say about this book and how does that extend, deepen, even complicate my response?* (focus on criticism)]. You'll receive a full explanation of this assignment on April 3rd. Examples are available on Blackboard. Due dates for “So what . . . ?” entries are listed on the course calendar.

YA Terms and Defining Quotes Worksheet: As a means of discovering how literature defines adolescence and reading with an eye and ear for language that resonates, you'll record terms and a quote/passage from each book in preparation for your culminating discussion of each novel.

In-Class Visual Essence Response Project: In response to SPEAK, you'll create a visual response to one chapter of this novel. You will be expected to do some planning (mostly by re-reading and drafting ideas) outside of class, but the project itself will be completed during class time April 29th. A full explanation of this response project will be explained and demonstrated in class.

"I like writing from the point of view of the outsider. The perspective is the most interesting because it's usually tinged with longing, or confusion, or with a slightly off-kilter sense of humor. To me, that's much more interesting than a mainstream point of view." -- Patricia McCormick (www.pattymccormick.com)

3) Young Adult Author Study – Throughout the term you and two other classmates will become familiar with the work of one noteworthy young adult author by reading at least three of his/her books, as well as biographical information, websites, speeches, interviews, and articles that allow you to know not only his/her writing, but also something about this author. I'll distribute a list of YA authors and their most significant books in class on April 8th -- you'll have a few days to "research" this list before you submit the names of five authors whose writing you'd like to read. I'll then partner you with two other students who are also interested in one of these authors. While you won't necessarily read the same books, you may need to share some materials and resources. The last week of the term, each team will have 15 minutes to introduce us to their featured author; this presentation will be accompanied by a written handout with selected biographic information and an annotated list of recommended books.

4) Take-home final – Focus on character and identity (more to come). These final projects will be presented during finals week. Make sure you do not make other plans for our assigned time on Tuesday, June 10th from 3:30-5:30 p.m.

"Fiction allows us to do something that nothing else quite does. It allows us to enter fully into the lives of other human beings. . . . The fake characters we read about will evaporate like the morning dew, but the real ones, the true ones, will haunt us for the rest of our days." -- Katherine Paterson, *Gates of Excellence*, p. 58-9

Assessment/Evaluation/Grading:

Grading is based on the satisfactory and timely completion of all Learning Activities/Projects, as well as the quality of the work produced. Projects will be read and evaluated on thoroughness, clear thinking, and presentation, timeliness, professional appearance (including grammatical and spelling correctness), and creativity (where appropriate). Punctual attendance and participation are valued and will be calculated into the final grade. More than two absences will affect your grade ~ after your third absence I'll recommend that you re-take the class another term.

<i>Points and Grade Equivalents:</i>			
Attendance/Participation	25	132-140	= A
"So What . . . ?" Responses	60	123-131	= A-
Visual Essence Response Project	10	114-122	= B+
YA Terms & Defining Quotes Worksheet	10	105-113	= B
Young Adult Author Study	25	97-104	= B-
<u>Final Project--Focus on Character</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>90-96</u>	<u>= C+</u>
TOTAL Points Possible	140	83-89	= C

Dear Judy,
 I don't know where I stand in the world. I don't know who I am.
 That's why I read, to find myself.
 Elizabeth, age 13
 From Judy Blume's website (www.judyblume.com)

General Course Calendar and Assignments
(Working calendar -- Subject to change with notice)

Week	Date	Topics, Readings & Assignments
1	April 1st April 3rd	Introductions -- Course Overview Young Adult Literature's Beginnings – “Classics” in YA Lit Read your choice of: <i>The Contender</i> – read to end of Ch. 7 <i>Go Ask Alice</i> – read to end of diary entry for Nov. 16 th <i>The Outsiders</i> – read to end of Ch. 6 Come prepared w/2-3 sticky notes marking text passages, personal connections, and/or emotional reactions Read: “Loving the Young Adult Reader Even When You Want to Strangle Him (or Her)!” Explanation: “So, what . . . ?” response
2	April 6th April 8th April 10th	“Classics” in YA Literature (continued) Read to end of <i>The Contender</i> , <i>Go Ask Alice</i> , or <i>The Outsiders</i> 2-3 sticky notes & YA Terms/Quotes worksheet Read “How to Recognize a Well-Written Book” [available on Blackboard] Read: <i>Twilight</i> -- read to end of Ch. 5 Due: “So, what . . . ?” response for “Classic” YA book 2-3 sticky notes marking text passages, personal connections, emotional reactions Explanation: Young Adult Author Study Project Read: <i>Twilight</i> -- read to end of Ch. 12 2-3 sticky notes marking text passages, personal connections, emotional reactions
3	April 13th April 15th April 17th	Read: <i>Twilight</i> – read to end of book 2-3 sticky notes & YA Terms/Quotes worksheet Due: “So, what . . . ?” response for <i>Twilight</i> Due: names of 5 YA authors you'd like to study Guest speaker: Aubri Keleman, teen librarian WCLS Focus on Memoir Read your choice of: <i>Absolutely True Diary . . .</i> – read to end of “Halloween” <i>Burn Journals</i> – read to p. 136 (ending with “I know. I know”) <i>The Circuit</i> – read to end of “Miracle in Tent City” 2-3 sticky notes marking text passages, personal connections, emotional reactions

Week	Date	Topics, Readings & Assignments
4	April 20th	Read: <i>Absolutely True Diary . . .</i> – read to end of “Red Versus White” <i>Burn Journals</i> – read to beginning of Sept. 13, 1991 <i>The Circuit</i> – read to end of book 2-3 sticky notes marking text passages, personal connections, emotional reactions
	April 22nd	Read: to end of <i>Absolutely True Diary</i> and <i>Burn Journals</i> <i>The Circuit</i> – read: 2-3 sticky notes & YA Terms/Quotes worksheet Criss/Cross Dialogue Due: “So, what . . . ?” response for YA memoir YA
	April 24th	Young Adult Literature: Focus on Contemporary Realistic Fiction Read: <i>Speak</i> to beginning of “Giving Thanks” (abt. pg. 57) 2-3 sticky notes marking text passages, personal connections, emotional reactions
5	April 27th	Young Adult Literature: Focus on Contemporary Realistic Fiction (cont.) Read: <i>Speak</i> to end of book 2-3 sticky notes & YA Terms/Quotes worksheet Explanation: Visual Response Project for <i>Speak</i>
	April 29th	Giving Voice to <i>Speak</i> through color, shape, image, and design Bring: your copy of <i>Speak</i> Visual response project plans & art materials of preference Due: “So, what . . . ?” response for <i>Speak</i>
	May 1st	Giving Voice to <i>Speak</i> -- informal presentation The Printz Award and <i>The ALAN Review</i> Read: “The First Printz Award Designations: Winners All” [on Blackboard] Due: Explanation/Reflection of visual response project
6	May 4th	No Class – work on YA Author Project (gather and read author info, interviews, speeches, online resources, etc.) Read anything you can find about your author
	May 6th	Meet in YA Author Study teams w/any biographical materials, articles, resources, books, etc. – Share progress and establish responsibilities
	May 8th	Young Adult Literature: Focus on Historical Fiction Read: <i>The Book Thief</i> to end of Part 3 2-3 sticky notes marking text passages, personal connections, emotional reactions Due: Author Study Progress Report

When I was a teenager, I remember reading a book by the sociologist Peter Berger in which he said, “The difference between dogs and people is that dogs know how to be dogs.” This is what we do as teenagers, and forever after: We try to figure out how to be people. I like writing for teenagers because they are still trying to figure out how to be people in un-self-conscious, forthright ways—because they are still open to the idea that a single book might change their understanding of how to be a person. It is my fervent hope that, at least for some teenagers, books can play a role in helping them navigate the labyrinth—that books can help show us how to choose the awful pain of love over the strange comfort of destruction, that books can be a pillar to help us endure and prevail. [John Green, The 2006 Printz Award Speech for *Looking for Alaska*]

Week	Date	Topics, Readings & Assignments
7	May 11th	Young Adult Literature: Focus on Historical Fiction (cont.) Read: <i>The Book Thief</i> to end of Part 6 2-3 sticky notes marking text passages, personal connections, emotional reactions Read: interview with Zusak in Teenreads.com [available on Blackboard]
	May 13th	Young Adult Literature: Focus on Historical Fiction (cont.) Read: <i>The Book Thief</i> to end of book 2-3 sticky notes & YA Terms/Quotes worksheet Due: “So, what . . . ?” response for <i>The Book Thief</i>
	May 15th	Young Adult Literature: Science Fiction and Speculative Fiction Read: <i>Feed</i> to end of Part 2 <i>The House of the Scorpion</i> to end of Ch. 11 <i>The Hunger Games</i> to end of Ch. 7 2-3 sticky notes marking text passages, personal connections, emotional reactions
8	May 18th	Young Adult Literature: Science Fiction and Speculative Fiction (cont.) Read: <i>Feed</i> to end of Part 3 <i>The House of the Scorpion</i> to end of Ch. 23 <i>The Hunger Games</i> to end of Ch. 21 2-3 sticky notes marking text passages, personal connections, emotional reactions Read anything you can find about the author on the web
	May 20th	Young Adult Literature: Science Fiction and Speculative Fiction (cont.) Read: to end of <i>Feed</i> , <i>The House of the Scorpion</i> , <i>The Hunger Games</i> 2-3 sticky notes & YA Terms/Quotes worksheet Criss/Cross Dialogue Due: “So, what . . . ?” response for YA SciFi/Speculative fiction
	May 22 nd	Work session on YA Author Presentation
9	May 27th	Author Focus: Chris Crutcher [tentative]
	May 29 th	Author Focus (cont) Due: YA Terms/Quotes worksheet
10	June 1st	Young Adult Author Presentations Explanation: Final Project – Focus on Character
	June 3rd	Young Adult Author Presentations
	June 5th	Young Adult Author Presentations
	Wednesday, June 10th 3:30-5:30 p.m.	Sharing “Focus on Character” final projects

→ **Consider joining ALAN: The Assembly on Literature for Adolescents**, one of the National Council of Teachers of English’s special-interest groups, designed to showcase the use of young adult literature in the classroom. Membership includes a subscription to *The ALAN Review*, published three times a year. See me for membership application materials. www.alan-ya.org

What is YA literature?

- The main character is almost always a teenager.
- The story is often narrated by a teenager, creating intimate contact between the reader and writer.
- The story is about a problem or concern with which teenage readers can identify.
- The first page or two demands readers' attention, enticing them to read on.
- The book includes universal themes, including the eternal questions: *Who am I? Where do I fit in?*

Teenage readers connect to YAL immediately because:

- They find the book(s) interesting because they're easy to read/understand
- They gain insight into human relationships; they begin to discover how or why human beings relate to one another
- They discuss the books with friends and discover they understand the author's purpose.

Herz, S.K. *From Hinton to Hamlet: Building Bridges Between Young Adult Literature and the Classics*. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1996, 8-9 & 16.



The Michael L. Printz Award

<http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/yalsa/booklistsawards/printzaward/Printz.cfm>

2000 marked the debut of the Michael L. Printz Award, which was established to recognize a book that "exemplifies literary excellence in young adult literature," according to the Young Adult Library Services Association division of the American Library Association. The Award is named for Michael L. Printz, a former school librarian at Topeka West High School in Kansas. Throughout his career he was a respected colleague and teacher, and an active and dedicated member of YALSA. He passed away in 1996.

The Printz winner and up to four honor books (or runners up) are chosen annually by a committee of nine YALSA members.



"While young adults . . . will read 'classics' with teen protagonists--such as Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* . . . or Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* or even William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*--such novels are not strictly considered YA literature. Similarly, contemporary novels popular with adults and young people, such as those written by Danielle Steel, Tom Clancy, and Stephen King, are also not in the category of YA literature."

Christenbury, Leila. *Making the Journey: Being and Becoming a Teacher of English Language Arts*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1994.



Remember the two-part definition for young adult literature:
Literature that is written for and marketed to young adults.

Daily

*I notice you frown
at my thick casing,
feel you poke me
with the sharp tip
of your booted words.
You laugh,
rap my woody shell
with wicked whispers shaped
like knuckles,
then toss me aside.
Lucky for me,
I don't bruise easily.
Besides,
your loss
is someone else's gain
for I am coconut,
and the heart of me
is sweeter
than you know.*



From:
Bronx Masquerade, by Nikki Grimes
(Dial Books, 2002)

Just because I love darkness
Doesn't mean I'm depressed
Doesn't mean I can't love
Doesn't mean I'm blind.
Just because I love my Mom
Doesn't mean I'm not a rebel
Doesn't mean I can't love others
Doesn't mean I'm a mama's boy.
Just because I act psycho
Doesn't mean I need medication
Doesn't mean I can't be compassionate
Doesn't mean I don't cry.

Marcel Mendoza, age 16



HE SHAVED HIS HEAD

He shaved his head to release his imagination.
He did it to get a tattoo on his shiny head.
He did it to lose his normality.
He did it to become a freak.
He did it because he was angry.
He did it to make people angry.
He did it for himself.

Rene Ruiz, age 13



From:
You Hear Me? Poems and Writing by Teenage Boys, edited by Betsy Franco
(Candlewick Press, 2000)