

ENG 3830: LITERATURE FOR THE INTERMEDIATE READER

Class: CRN#: 42651 Monday/Wednesday 12:00pm-1:40pm
CRN#: 41176 Tuesday 6:30pm-9:50pm

Instructor: Dr. Meghann Meeusen

Contact Information: meghann.meeusen@wmich.edu, 586-651-0289
I prefer email as the method to contact me with inquiries regarding class, and I check for messages regularly (typically responding in less than 24 hours). Please only use my private phone for dire emergencies, and keep in mind I am not usually available to answer.

Office Hours: 922 Sprau Tower
Monday and Wednesday from 11am-12pm and 2pm-5pm
I am also available outside of these times by appointment.

TEXT REQUIREMENTS

Required Book List

- Gail Carson Levine, *Fairest*
- JM Barrie, *Peter and Wendy*
- Neil Gaiman, *Coraline*
- Kate DiCamillo, *Flora and Ulysses*
- Cece Bell, *El Deafo*
- Kadir Nelson, *Heart and Soul*
- Jacqueline Woodson, *Feathers*
- Thanhha Lai, *Inside Out and Back Again*
- Deborah Ellis, *Breadwinner*

Students will also be required to read several self-selected picture books and illustrated texts selected from a list of options, as well as at least one additional children's text for the analysis/project.

Each week, in addition to a primary text (a work of children's fiction or nonfiction), students will have the opportunity to delve into the week's topic with a critical article and other short reading selection available online. While we will talk more about the primary text in class, these readings often act as the basis or backdrop of topics for discussion. Since critical readings will not be featured in quizzes or the final exam, students should explore these readings using the daybook (see below).

Required Class Materials (should have each day of class)

- Composition Notebook (hard cover, bound pages—not spiral/binder)
- Glue Sticks and Post-It Notes

Please bring a paper or digital copy of all books to class each day during the week they are assigned. This is an important element of actively participating in class discussion, and thus doing so is considered part of in-class participation grades.

In all cases, any unabridged edition of a text is acceptable, including digital texts. Listening to books via audio is also encouraged, although a hard copy is necessary for class. Finally, printing is required for the submission of several assignments, so please make sure you consistently have the means by which to do so.

COURSE CONTENT

COURSE DESCRIPTION

An exploration of human and literary values in the best of children's works for preadolescents. Emphasis is on critical sensitivity and techniques necessary for interpreting and evaluating works representative of the major forms of children's literature for the older reader. Discussion will focus on narrative forms and on how the more experienced reader comes to prose and poetry. Novels will be explored both in terms of literary structure and content and in terms of what makes a piece of literature work for children. Genres such as historical fiction, realistic fiction, nonfiction, fantasy, and survival literature will be considered. Ever growing complexity in structure and content will be evaluated as they relate to child's biological, psychological, and mental development, and in the context of cultural and historical change. How media influence literature will be explored as well as the changing population of child-readers and what that means for book production.

OBJECTIVES

- Students will learn to identify the social, cultural, and ideological messages presented in texts and identify what books and other media composed for children reflect about contemporary society.
- Students will examine the social and historical context that defines and influences texts for children, considering how these texts both reflect and shape notions of childhood.
- Students will interrogate how scholars and teachers think, write, and speak about literary texts, producing examples of this unique literary approach and articulating the defining characteristics of such literary discourse in its various forms.
- Students will investigate the common and conflicting trends in how scholars and teachers think about texts with particular attention to analysis and interpretation.

- Students will demonstrate and reflect on their own use of purposeful writing techniques and rhetorical strategies as fitting within the conventions of scholarly writing and other forms of writing about literature.
- Students will prepare for future studies in literature by building foundational skills in literary analysis, criticism, and technique.
- Students will explore and articulate explicit and implicit ideologies, studying texts in terms of their social context with special attention to intertextuality, historical basing, and position within contemporary culture.
- Students will build knowledge about foundational topics, concepts, theories, and approaches to children's texts.
- Students will develop a language with which to discuss children's texts built on contemporary theoretical perspectives.

ASSIGNMENTS & STUDENT WORK

DAYBOOK- 20% (100 midterm points & 100 final points)

The daybook is one of the most significant ways of engaging with course material this semester, kept in the form of a composition notebook. It is my hope that students will take this daybook with them everywhere, and they must bring it to class each day with a glue stick. Anything can go in it—random thoughts, more developed musings, things you want to remember, poems, pictures, mementos, etc., as well as assignments we do in class. Each week, the weekly reading guide will include several suggestions for daybook activities, and after each class, a “homework” or extension activity for the daybook is provided. While students decide themselves what to include in their daybook, their goal should be to fill the entire composition notebook by the end of the semester.

Twice during the semester, students will turn in a portfolio that will demonstrate the depth of work they have done in the daybook, collecting work in a folder by selecting and photocopying entries. Students will include entries that demonstrate roles they have enacted throughout the semester, such as questioner, creative thinker, connection maker, researcher, and reviser.

ATTENDANCE / PARTICIPATION- 20% (200 points)

As the foundation of this course is the study of literature, students should complete all readings in their entirety by assigned due dates and prepare to discuss these texts fully in the classroom setting. To demonstrate their thoughtful reading, written engagement, active participation, and critical thinking, students will complete a variety of assignments in class. These will primarily include reading quizzes, exit tickets, and daybook checks.

Reading Quizzes: Students will complete short unannounced quizzes at the beginning of class throughout the semester. Quizzes will ask students to recount main elements from primary text readings and make connections in short answer questions that rely upon careful reading. Occasionally, having the book in class will exempt a student from the reading quiz.

Exit Tickets: Participation in activities during class and short in-class writing assignments will also frequently be used as “exit tickets,” turned in on the way out of the classroom.

Daybook Checks: To make sure that students are on track with the work they do in their daybook, they will be asked on certain days to share a new entry that they have completed outside of class. Some opportunities to share are unannounced, and other times, students will be asked to photocopy an entry to turn in on a specific day (announced at least one class in advance). At least once during the semester, an unannounced daybook check will require students to share an entry related to a critical reading.

Please Note: No in-class participation assignments, including quizzes, exit tickets, or daybook checks, can be made up in the event of absence. Students can only earn these points by being present in class, as they rely heavily on class participation.

WRITTEN ANALYSIS- 20% (200 points)

Students will conduct a critical study of one or more pieces of children’s literature **not included in the assigned reading**, follow specific instructions to demonstrate a research driven analysis of a topic related to children’s texts. This assignment asks students to compose a short piece of analytical writing explaining an interpretation and research drive thesis that will then act as the basis of the subsequent individual project. Students will have the choice to receive written or verbal feedback on this assignment, encouraged to schedule a conference outside of class with the instructor to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of their written analysis essay.

While topics for the written analysis are student selected, they must reflect two key elements: 1) the ability to draw a connection between two texts and 2) an understanding of an important or unique aspect of children’s literature, with particular attention to trends, patterns, related critical theory, or historical significance. Mostly importantly, students must present a conclusion drawn about one or more text that is not readily obvious or apparent; the analysis should recount something students have noticed in their study that would not be easily observed by everyone, explaining why what they have noticed is important to a deeper understanding of literature for children.

INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH PROJECT- 20% (200 points)

Scholars and teachers who study literature write in a variety of ways, utilizing numerous approaches and multiple genres. This project asks students to choose their own approach to writing about literature, purposefully and thoughtfully selecting and creating a project that will demonstrate their understanding of the unique ways that scholars and teachers think about literary texts. Suggested genres (types of projects) will be provided, and this project also includes a rationale, a written defense that explains how the project meets certain objectives.

FINAL EXAM- 20% (200 points)

The final exam includes short answer and essay length questions related to class content, activities, lectures, and readings. Questions will ask students to draw connections between texts and apply various class ideas and critical approaches to children's literature. While the essay portion of the exam is a take home assignment, short answer and identification sections are completed during the final exam period.

GRADING BREAKDOWN

93%-100% A	exceptional, outstanding work
88-92% BA	
83%-87% B	strong, thoughtful work
78-82% CB	
73%-77% C	average, complete work
68-72% DC	
62%-67% D	problematic, sloppy work

ATTENDANCE AND LATE WORK

As active participants in an academic community, students must attend class every day. Furthermore, regular attendance is necessary for successful completion of all major assignments. As part of the attendance policy, **attendance / participation points (including quizzes, exit tickets, and daybook checks) can ONLY be earned if a student is present in class**, as the opportunity to earn these points is based upon participation in the class itself. As such points are attendance based, they can only be earned via a student's attendance of the class period and active participation in class.

If a student must be absent, he/she is responsible for all missed content, including turning in assignments on their given due date. Please demonstrate professionalism by arriving to class on time. Additionally, it is a personal pet peeve of mine when students pack up their belongings before I have dismissed them, as it is extraordinarily distracting during a time

when I typically announce important summary points or assignment requirements for the next class. Please do not begin preparations to leave the classroom until class has officially ended. Finally, any health conditions that prevent students from regular attendance should be discussed with me at the beginning of the semester.

I do not accept late work. Although I reserve the right to make exceptions to this policy, this is only possible after a meeting with me. If you foresee a problem completing an assignment on time, please speak to me at least 48 hours in advance, at which time I am far more open to making arrangements.

OTHER PROCEDURAL INFORMATION

Students are responsible for making themselves aware of and understanding the University policies and procedures that pertain to Academic Honesty. These policies include cheating, fabrication, falsification and forgery, multiple submission, plagiarism, complicity and computer misuse. The academic policies addressing Student Rights and Responsibilities can be found in the Undergraduate Catalog at <http://catalog.wmich.edu/content.php?catoid=24&navoid=974> and the Graduate Catalog at <http://catalog.wmich.edu/content.php?catoid=25&navoid=1030>

If there is reason to believe you have been involved in academic dishonesty, you will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. You will be given the opportunity to review the charge(s) and if you believe you are not responsible, you will have the opportunity for a hearing. You should consult with your instructor if you are uncertain about an issue of academic honesty prior to the submission of an assignment or test. In addition, students are encouraged to access the Code of Honor, as well as resources and general academic policies on such issues as diversity, religious observance, and student disabilities:

- Office of Student Conduct www.wmich.edu/conduct
- Division of Student Affairs www.wmich.edu/students/diversity
- Registrar's Office www.wmich.edu/registrar and www.wmich.edu/registrar/policies/interfaith
- Disability Services for Students www.wmich.edu/disabilityservices

If you are a student with a disability (e.g. physical, learning, psychiatric, vision, hearing, etc.) and think that you might need special assistance or a special accommodation in this class or any other class, please call Disability Services at (269) 387-2116 or visit them at Woodlawn Place at 2210 Wilbur Ave. Please don't hesitate to speak with me about ways to meet your needs or offering necessary accommodations.

Additionally, I am more than happy to discuss ways that this course could better meet any student's needs, and encourage anyone who is struggling for any reason to contact me. I will do my very best to accommodate all students who express concerns in a respectful manner.