

Foundations in Children's Literature

Room: STV 0221 B

Times: Monday/Wednesday/Friday 3:00pm-3:50pm

Instructor: Meghann Meeusen

Contact Information:

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I prefer email as the method to contact me with inquiries regarding class, and check for messages regularly. Please only use my private phone for dire emergencies and keep in mind I am not always available to answer.

Office Hours: Monday/Wednesday/Friday 2pm-3pm. I am also available outside of these times by appointment.

TEXT REQUIREMENTS

- Kate Dicamillo's *The Tale of Despereaux*
- Gail Carson Levine's *Ella Enchanted*
- Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland & Through the Looking-Glass*
- Eric Shanower and Skottie Young's *Wonderful Wizard of Oz*
- Shaun Tan's *The Arrival*
- Christopher Paul Curtis's *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963*
- Neil Gaiman's *Coraline*
- Jeanne DuPrau's *City of Ember*
- Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games*

Other Requirements: You will also need to select one picture book and one Dr. Seuss text from a list and procure a copy to use during one week of class. Other outside reading will also be necessary for midterm and final projects. Finally, additional supplemental readings will be available online, including some required handouts.

In all cases, any edition/version 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, although many materials are available and/or submitted online, some printing is necessary, so please make sure you have the means by which to do so.

COURSE OVERVIEW

As the first course in the children's literature sequence at Illinois State University, ENG 170, *Foundations in Literature for Children*, is designed to serve as a general introduction to literature for those students studying children's literature. The course covers K-8th grade literature. The primary goal of the course is for students to learn to read literature using children's literature as texts.

The course focuses on children's texts for pre-readers and young readers, including picture books, chapters books, series books, novels, poetry and nursery rhymes, folklore, mythologies, information books and children's films at the K-8th grade level. Texts covered in the class include both canonical and noncanonical texts, recognized and recent children's texts, with attention to classics and multicultural texts, both historical and contemporary. Students in the class learn a range of conceptual materials as they are exposed to this wide variety of children's texts, including how to analyze genre, narrative and poetic form, ideology and issues of social construction, and introductory literary concepts.

COURSE CONTENT

Unit One: Retelling the Classics

Retelling and Re-Imagining: Fairy Tales, Folklore and Mythology

Topics: Ideology, Fairytales, Folklore, Gender Constructions and Binaries, High Fantasy, Retellings, Animal Tales, Adult/Child Relationship, Cultural Variants

Readings: "Cinderella", *Ella Enchanted* and the *Tale of Despereaux*

Fantasy Revisited- Canonical Texts and Adaptation

Topics: Genre, History of Children's Literature, Instruction versus Delight, Nonsense and Poetry, Adaptation, Graphic Novels, Gothic/Uncanny, Aedonormativity

Readings: *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*, *Wizard of Oz* (graphic novel), *Coraline*

Unit Two: Children and Agency

Just a Child? Culture and Power in Fiction for Young People

Topics: Historical Fiction, Realistic Fiction, Issues of Race and Internationalism, Gender and Power, Critical Consideration, Writing Workshops

Readings: *Watsons Go to Birmingham- 1963*, *The Arrival*

Words and Pictures: Visual Children's Literature

Topics: Visual Theory, Word/Picture Interaction, Children's Literature Awards, Nursery Rhymes, Revisiting Nonsense and Children's Poetry, Mythology, Walt Disney Corporation's Influence, Consumerism

Readings: Picture Book Selection, Seuss Selection, Mythology

Fearing the Future – Dystopia in Children’s Fiction

Topics: Children’s Text and Popularity/”Fandemonium,” Age, Dystopian Fiction, Young Adult Fiction, Identity and Performativity

Readings: *City of Ember* and *The Hunger Games*

ASSIGNMENT CONTENT**Readings Engagement Journal / Daily Participation- 30%**

The purpose of the readings engagement journal is for students to demonstrate their active participation in class readings and discussion by writing about their experience with course texts, documenting their engagement with in-class ideas/topics and synthesizing this information in short essay style responses.

It is also my expectation that you will participate actively during class and attend regularly. Excessive absence or failure to participate can result in a lowering of the journal/participation grade. Exceptional attendance can also positively affect this score (see attendance policy).

Theoretical Engagement / Critical Article Handout- 10%

Students will select and read a critical article, highlighting, underlining and/or noting it to show active reading (I recommend turning in this notation, though this is optional). They then create a one page (two sided) handout that discusses 1) the main points of the article, 2) how the author supports his/her thesis, and 3) a selected bibliography of related texts/articles. This assignment is not interpretative, rather, students are simply recounting what argument or idea the article is presenting. Students should provide copies for all colleagues and be prepared to speak to their article during discussion.

Textual Engagement Project (Midterm)- 20%

Students will complete six short annotations on children’s texts on a specific topic/theme. These should be in the form of a book review, approximately 200-250 words with the first paragraph offering summary and the second paragraph critiquing/analyzing the merit of the text. Students will provide digital copies for entire class and must include at least three medium/medias: aka, film, television, poetry, novel, picture book, graphic novel, short story, etc.

In addition to the six annotations, students will also briefly describe the implications of this research by describing several considerations relevant to texts in this grouping. For example, what kind of social/cultural implications would be important to consider for texts such as these? What kinds of conclusions or observations were you able to draw

about the texts you studied? Secondary source research into the topic can be helpful in this regard, but is not required.

Critical Engagement Project- 40%

The Critical Engagement Project asks students to analyze critical, scholarly publications in children's literature and produce an essay that enters into this disciplinary discussion. They then use this research to develop a field-specific project that puts the research into practice. This includes the following components:

Scholarly Discourse Article (20%):

- **Genre Analysis/Proposal:** First, students create a genre analysis report on critical scholarship in children's literature, based upon discussion of at least three master text examples (which I recommend notating and attaching to the report). With the genre analysis, students should also submit their thesis statement and an outline for the paper to receive instructor feedback and commentary. Please turn in a hard copy of these documents, which will receive comments/feedback and be returned to use for the final essay.
- **Scholarly Academic Essay:** Selecting either a text/text read in class or in addition to class materials, students will write critical analysis essay modeled after scholarly articles in children's literature. This essay should use at least four critical sources and be at least six pages in length. They will also be notated (using margin notation or a similar method) to comment upon specific genre choices that match those examples the essay is modeled after and articulate those instances when the essay diverts from the genre.

Field-Specific Research Application (20%): Students then take their research and apply it in a practical way to their field of study. For example, education students might elect to create a unit plan based on the idea or topic explored in their academic essay. English majors might want to create a conference presentation or a more extensive research endeavor.

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. Thus, exceptional attendance will be rewarded by points added to the final readings engagement grade (10% for perfect attendance, 7% for only one missed day, 5% for two missed days, 3% for three missed days). Excessive absence may also incur grade deduction from the readings engagement grade. Attendance will be completed via a sign in sheet, and it is students responsibility to sign in each day to receive extra credit to the readings engagement score.

If a student must be absent, he/she is responsible for knowledge of all content missed during that class, including turning in assignments on their given due date. Please

demonstrate professionalism by arriving to class on time. Any health conditions that prevent students from regular attendance should be discussed with the instructor 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 both rare and unlikely, and is only possible after a meeting with me.

GRADING BREAKDOWN

90%-100% A	exceptional, outstanding work
80%-89% B	strong, thoughtful work
70%-79% C	average, complete work
60%-69% D	problematic, sloppy work
59% F	incomplete, careless work

ASSIGNMENT BREAKDOWN

Assignment	%
Midterm Textual Engagement Project	20
Critical Engagement Project: Proposal/Critical Essay	20
Critical Engagement Project: Field Specific Application	20
Critical Article Handout	10
Readings Engagement Journal / Participation	30

OTHER PROCEDURAL INFORMATION

Student Conduct: As adults in the academic community, a respectful and appropriate behavior code is expected at all times. However, should this behavior code be broken by a disruptive or disrespectful student, he/she may be asked to remove him/herself from class for the day. Furthermore, if a student is sleeping during class, he/she will be marked absent for the day. For information on specific behavior expectations, please see the ISU Student Conduct Code.

Academic Integrity/Plagiarism: Students are responsible for making themselves aware of and understanding the policies and procedures found in the Student Code of Conduct, including those policies regarding academic dishonesty and plagiarism. Although plagiarism comes in many forms, students are expected above all to produce their own work in an ethical and honest way. Additionally, issues of correct citation and use of resources are crucial to both work as a student and development as a writer, and students are expected to consider carefully these tenets in the production of all class texts. Students should consult with the instructor if they are uncertain about an issue of academic honesty prior to the submission of an assignment.

Students engaging in any level of academic dishonesty or plagiarism will have to meet with the instructor outside of class to discuss academic penalty based on the severity of the offense, which can include a failing grade on the assignment or a failing grade in the entire course.

Accommodations: Any student needing to arrange a reasonable accommodation for a documented disability should contact Disability Concerns at 350 Fell Hall, 438-5853 (voice), 438-8620 (TTY).

Computers in the Classroom: Although I encourage students to use personal computers in the classroom, these should be used exclusively for class related work. While students are welcome to check email, Facebook, or browse the Internet before class, once class begins every student should be actively engaged in class content. Electronic readers may be used for class texts when available as long as the format remains reasonably similar.

Format and Submission: All writing should be completed in MLA format, due at 3pm on the date prescribed unless otherwise indicated. For reading responses, a paper copy is preferred, while for midterm and final projects/papers, electronic submission is requested (excepting in the case of the proposal/genre analysis, for which I prefer a paper copy as well). I ask that you use MS word if possible; if this is not feasible, please let me know before submitting an assignment.

Please see me if you have questions about MLA format, as significant class time will not be devoted to introducing this topic. I'd be happy to go over the parameters of MLA citation with students individually outside of class time.