

# ENG 170: FOUNDATIONS IN LITERATURE FOR CHILDREN

**Class:** Monday, Wednesday and Friday 12:00pm-12:50pm in STV 221B

**Instructor:** Meghann Meeusen

Contact Information:

mfmeeus@ilstu.edu or mmeeusen@davenport.edu, 586-651-0289

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

Office Hours: MWF 1pm-2pm in Stevenson 414B

I am also available outside of these times by appointment.

## TEXT REQUIREMENTS

**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 participation grades.**

### Required Book List

- *Reading Children's Literature* by Carrie Hintz and Eric Tribunella
- *Ella Enchanted* by Gail Carson Levine
- *Coraline* by Neil Gaiman
- *Alvin Ho #1: Allergic to Girls, School, and Other Scary Things* by Lenore Look
- *Peter Pan* by JM Barrie
- *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (Marvel Graphic Novel) by Shanower & Young
- *The True Meaning of Smekday* by Adam Rex
- *The Circuit* by Francisco Jimenez
- *One Crazy Summer* by Rita Williams Garcia
- *Diamond Willow* by Helen Frost

The following picture books are required, but are also on reserve at the Milner Library (and can be read in a shorter period). If you have a copy, please bring it to class, but doing so is not required.

- *Glass Slipper, Gold Sandal* by Paul Fleischman and Julie Paschkis
- *The Name Jar* by Yangsook Choi
- *Encounter* by Jane Yolen
- *The Composition* by Antonio Skarmeta
- *We Are the Ship* by Kadir Nelson

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, printing is required for the submission of all assignments, so please make sure you consistently have the means by which to do so.

## **COURSE CONTENT**

### **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.

### **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 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**

### **Written and Verbal Participation- 40%**

Literary scholars think, speak and write about literature in very unique and specific ways. Written and verbal participation in this course allows students to interrogate these practices, methods and approaches to literature, thus developing the ability to replicate this kind of thinking and transfer this critical consciousness to new situations. To these ends, students will produce work in a variety of written/spoken genres and comment on these texts, attempting to articulate the similarities and differences in the ways literary scholars think about literature. Written and verbal participation includes the following:

**Written Responses:** Written responses should be typed (except post-it notes) and submitted in hard copy on scheduled due dates. Written reading responses include the following:

- **Textbook Chapter Responses:** for chapters from the Hintz/Tribunella text, please define five terms or main ideas and use examples to elaborate on each explanation. Please number each term/idea, as these entries will be checked for completion on due dates, but collected with their corresponding primary text responses.
- **Responses to Primary Texts** (everything but Hintz/Tribunella chapters):
  - for these weekly readings, prompts will be provided to guide responses
  - each response should reference at least ONE term from corresponding textbook readings, which should be highlighted or marked
  - responses typically do NOT need to be in paragraph/essay form—use whatever layout or format allows for most fruitful exploration and presentation of ideas
  - up to five times throughout the semester, students may complete a “choice” response (instead of following the prompt) accompanied by a brief rationale for this choice
- **Class Notes:** active participants keep records of what they learn and observe, and thus students are expected to take detailed notes during class and/or during their reading. These notes should include commentary on both content AND critical thinking practices utilized during particular activities or in the creation of various genres (some meta-commentary on class discussion, literary activities, etc is required in class notes section).

- **Post-it Note Commentary:** describe specifically how various reading responses engage in critical thinking or evidence literary activity, typically utilizing 40-50 post-it notes (the types of ideas students might comment upon will be discussed further in class)

**Verbal Participation:** Students are expected to actively participate in the course, sharing their ideas and contributing to the classroom community in thoughtful, prepared ways. This participation should include: vocal contributions to large and small group discussions, preparation for class including completing all readings and bringing assigned book to class, and active listening during all activities and lecture. Verbal participation is a significant portion of the overall participation score.

### **Individual Writing Project- 30%**

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 or creating (and defining) a genre that will demonstrate their understanding of the unique ways that scholars and teachers think about literary texts. **This project includes the project itself, planning documents and a rationale.** Students will also be encouraged to schedule a conference outside of class with the instructor regarding their topics.

### **Midterm and Final Exams- 30%**

Midterm and final exams are open note, and students may use any materials they have accumulated via written and verbal participation. They may NOT use the Hintz/Tribunella text or various primary texts to take the exam. The midterm exam (10%) will be mainly term identification, asking students to recall major themes and ideas from the semester thus far. The final exam (20%) will include a similar section of terms from the second half of the semester and an essay section requiring students to interrogate their own critical thinking activities and the ways that scholars think and write about literature. Please bring a bluebook to both the midterm and final exam.

### **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

Written and verbal participation will be scored on a check scale with the following expectations. *Check Plus* work is exceptional, the equivalent of a 3/3. *Check / Check Plus* work is thoughtful and complete, the equivalent of a mid B (2.5/3). Work marked

with a *Check* fulfills minimal requirements or misses only minor elements, the equivalent of 2/3. A *Check Minus* denotes failure to meet minimum requirements (1/3).

## 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. Students may miss one week of class (up to 3 total days) with no penalty. After the third absence, 3% will be deducted from the final grade for each additional absence. Attendance will be completed via a sign in sheet, and it is students' responsibility to sign in each day to receive extra credit. There is no system of excused versus unexcused absences, and students need not bring any documentation to account for missed class. **All absences, regardless of reason, count as an absence, as does failure to sign in.** There will be no exceptions to this policy without a university sanctioned directive.

When student have substantial absences, it is usually because they have encountered a serious family or personal emergency. I recommend that if you are an undergraduate facing an emergency, you should call the Dean of Students, who can help in a number of ways, including setting up appointments with a counselor, contacting your professors, and/or providing you with academic advice. You can contact the Dean of Students office at (309) 438-2008.

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 can 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 rare and 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

**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. 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 and Students Services:** Any student needing to arrange an accommodation for a documented disability should contact Disability Concerns at 350 Fell Hall, 438-5853 (voice), 438-8620 (TTY). I also strive to create a productive classroom environment flexible to all students and individual situations. If you find that there are ways that the class could be better molded to your particular needs, please speak to me, and I would be happy to help navigate a way to work with you.

Life at college can get very complicated. Students sometimes feel overwhelmed, lost, experience anxiety or depression, struggle with relationship difficulties or diminished self-esteem. However, many of these issues can be effectively addressed with a little help. Student Counseling Services (SCS) helps students cope with difficult emotions and life stressors. Student Counseling Services is staffed by experienced, professional psychologists and counselors, who are attuned to the needs of college students. The services are FREE and completely confidential. Find out more at [Counseling.IllinoisState.edu](http://Counseling.IllinoisState.edu) or by calling (309) 438-3655.

**Computers in the Classroom:** Although I encourage students to use personal computers in the classroom, 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 AND students bring the text on their laptop computer or an electronic reader to class.