

ENGL 6385 01D: Seminar in Special Topics—Young Adult Literature

Dr. Angela S. Insenga

Summer Session II, 2015

3 Credit Hours

Adolescence, Alliteracy, and the Culture of the Kid: Making Friends with Young Adult Literature



THE INSTRUCTOR

Contact Information

- ❖ Office: 2248 TLC, department of English and Philosophy
- ❖ Phone: 678-839-4864 or 770-378-2387
- ❖ Email: please communicate electronically with me by using the Course Den email tool. To use this tool, click the “Email” button that remains at the top of the page while you are on our course’s page in Course Den. Please do not use my UWG email unless Course Den is down.

Summer Office Hours, Virtual and Face-to-Face

I will be available online M and W, 1-3 p.m. and face-to-face by scheduled appointment. Students may call, email, or use Blackboard Collaborate to communicate during online office hours. To set up a face-to-face appointment, please email my Course Den email account by clicking on the “Email” button at the top of the page on our course’s page in Course Den. I ask that you give me 36 hours to respond. Please use my Course Den email to communicate with me.

The News Feed on our class’s homepage in Course Den is also a place where I will regularly communicate with you, sharing links, videos, written messages, and reminders. Check it often.

THE CLASS

Course Description

In a June 2014 condemnatory editorial entitled “Against YA,” *The Slate* writer Ruth Graham writes:

A 2012 survey by a market research firm found that 55 percent of [YA] books [are] bought by people older than 18. . . . The largest group of buyers in that survey—accounting for a whopping 28 percent of all YA sales—are between ages 30 and 44. That’s my demographic, which might be why I wasn’t surprised to hear this news. I’m surrounded by YA-loving adults, both in real life and online. Today’s YA, we are constantly reminded, is worldly and adult-worthy. That has kept me bashful about expressing my own fuddy-duddy opinion: Adults should feel embarrassed about reading literature written for children.

She goes on to rebuke adults who have developed a vested interest in YA, and, though she refers to the difficulty of defining the parameters of the literary category, she becomes part of the problem, using only a small utterance from Jen Doll’s multifaceted definitional article to argue reductively that “At its heart, YA aims to be pleasurable.” Such criticism of YA and its readers is not limited to Ms. Graham’s, and, certainly, the “fuddy-duddiness” that defines her piece is not limited to the confines of *The Slate* editors’ offices. After all, Graham’s two-page piece sparked over 85,000 Facebook “likes” and over 3,200 comments in numerous virtual arenas. Amongst these online comments exists a discernible thread: it is patently irresponsible to judge YA or its proponents if your only exposure to it is purposely limited and visceral instead of comprehensive and critical.

As thinkers actively engaged in the literacy-building work of the academy, you and I are called to identify high-quality literature written for adolescents through organized scholarly and cultural investigation. Then—and only then—are we equipped to dole out judgments regarding who should—or should not—read YA and how these folks should feel if they happen to enjoy a text written for a tween.

This summer’s predominantly online YA graduate seminar will involve students in the scholarly, educational, and political conversation surrounding the category of YA. Our tasks will involve reading primary and secondary material; analytical writing and discussion about our readings; and investigation of the largely alliterate target audience’s cognitive and moral development and resultant academic and social needs.

Come, join in, and let us be “embarrassed” together!

Course Competencies

- ❖ Students will develop an understanding of basic reading processes.
- ❖ Students will exhibit familiarity with a range of classic and contemporary Young Adult texts, many customarily taught in grades 7-12, and will participate in reading, reviewing, and critiquing such literature in a collaborative manner with peers and instructor.
- ❖ Students will demonstrate an understanding of students’ abilities to learn from reading and the language arts and understanding of the ways in which novice readers process textual information.
- ❖ Students will demonstrate how to provide support to students at every stage of that process both by scaffolding specific reading skill exercises and creating accessible textual, contextual, and illustrative material for novice readers.
- ❖ Students will show an understanding of higher-order literacy, including how to build language development, strategies to advance analytical and concept development, and ways to teach both efferent and aesthetic reading.
- ❖ Students will demonstrate an understanding of the development of various types of moral reasoning skills through literature.
- ❖ Students will learn to select instructional strategies and develop lesson and unit plans that demonstrate a sincere effort to teach reading and learning strategies in a literary environment.
- ❖ Students will learn about the “Classics versus Moderns” debate in YALit studies and then work to devise methods that can bridge distances—perceived and real—between classic literature and Young Adult texts.
- ❖ Students will define the rights and responsibilities of teachers, parents, students, and other groups with respect to literature curriculum content and establish proficiency in writing rationales for texts that may be challenged.
- ❖ Students will demonstrate an awareness of ways to create a multicultural and gender-balanced curriculum.
- ❖ Students will advance personal professional development through self-examination.
- ❖ Students will demonstrate in both oral and written work discipline-specific critical facility through convincing and well-supported analysis of related material.
- ❖ Students will demonstrate the command of academic English and the tenets of sound composition by means of thesis-driven analytical prose.

THE WORK

Required Texts (in the order you will read them)*

- ❖ *Using Young Adult Literature in the English Classroom*, by John Bushman and Kaye Parks Haas, 4th edition
- ❖ *Maze Runner*, by James Dashner
- ❖ *Feed*, by M.T. Anderson
- ❖ *The Crossover*, by Kwame Alexander
- ❖ *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, by Sherman Alexie
- ❖ *Between Shades of Gray*, by Ruta Sepetys
- ❖ *Children of Heaven*, directed by Majid Majidi
- ❖ *Are You There, God? It's Me, Margaret*, by Judy Blume
- ❖ *Hatchet*, by Gary Paulsen
- ❖ *Speak*, by Laurie Halse Anderson
- ❖ *The Chocolate War*, by Robert Cormier
- ❖ *The Catcher in the Rye*, by J.D. Salinger
- ❖ *Black Beauty* (selections), by Anna Sewell

*All required texts are available at the university bookstore or purchasable from major outlets like Amazon. Most are available on Kindle or Nook. You can rent *Children of Heaven* online and the library owns a copy. Should you purchase Bushman and Haas from another outlet, make certain to obtain the 4th edition. Finally, whenever I refer to specific page numbers of any text, I use the editions I ordered from the bookstore. Should you have another edition, simply write down the first few words of any quotation and search for it later in your text.

Major Assignments, Percentage Breakdown

- ❖ Discussion Topic Contributions and Discussions during Face-to-Face Class Periods, 30%
- ❖ Four Colloquies and Connected Work, 35%
- ❖ Three Formal Essays, 35%

Major Assignment Descriptions and Rubrics for Evaluation

❖ Discussion Forum Posting

Each Module will have its own discussion forum with two to four topics in each. There will always be at least one Formal Topic in which you submit answers to related to primary and secondary required readings. I will also ask you to reflect upon others' ideas in Reflection Topics and to complete a contemplative activity or two before responding to peers. At the

beginning of each topic, I will provide parameters for the written discussion to occur in your thread(s).

I have also created a seventh forum with two topics: “Course Questions” and an “Open Topic.” In these, you may create threads to discuss ideas or texts. Here, you could also seek to set up pairs for voluntary Peer Review, colloquy group work, or face-to-face discussion with each other.

When I evaluate your contribution to each topic, I will use the following rubric:

| Topic Grade | Reading Comprehension | Argumentation | Grammar Convention and Rhetoric | Tone and Engagement |
|--------------------|--|--|--|---|
| 95 | Student reads the topic parameters and peer responses correctly and carefully before composing/responding. | Student always answers question(s) thoughtfully using clearly articulated reflective and/or argumentative sentences with requisite detail and support. | Student uses Standard English, sound logic, and cogency at all times. | Student always observes netiquette and a genuine desire to build knowledge through written or taped discussion, per topic parameters. |
| 75 | Student reads most of the topic parameters correctly and carefully before composing/responding. | Student answers questions thoughtfully using clearly articulated reflective and/or argumentative sentences most of the time, providing requisite detail and support in most cases. | Student uses Standard English, sound logic, and cogency most of the time. | Student always observes netiquette. Student exhibits a desire to build knowledge through written or taped discussion, per topic parameters, most of the time. Responses could be seen as perfunctory, completed only because of assignment. |
| 55 | Student misreads or does not read topic parameters before composing/responding. | Student answers some of questions posed. Student may articulate some points clearly but may be missing requisite detail and/or support. | Student lacks Standard English, sound logic, and/or cogency. | Student always observes netiquette but struggles to exhibit a genuine desire to build knowledge through written or taped discussion, per topic parameters. Student response is clipped or curt. |
| 0 | Student does not read topic and/or does not adhere to requirements in topic while composing/responding. | Student does not compose at all or composes little so that professor cannot adequately determine his/her composition abilities. | Because there is little or no written response(s), professor cannot assess student’s grasp of Standard English, sound logic, and/or cogency. | Student always observes netiquette but demonstrates through a lack of engagement and response little to no desire to build knowledge through written or taped discussion, per topic parameters |

❖ Colloquies

A colloquy is a formal conversation. Our class will convene for four colloquies in face-to-face and online arenas. There will be parameters for each, ranging from pairing up to conduct a recorded podcast-style conversation that you then share to meeting in a traditional, seminar fashion to discuss our readings, both primary and secondary.

When I evaluate your performance in each colloquy, I will use the following rubric:

| Grade | Preparation | Attendance | Artifacts Produced | Engagement |
|------------|--|---|---|--|
| A (90-100) | Student demonstrates that s/he has read and annotated all assigned texts verbally and/or in writing. | Student completes all requirements of the colloquy, including attendance, physical or virtual. | Student produces all required artifacts, and each is well-articulated with clear support and sophisticated analysis. | Student seeks to complete all required work and consistently and actively engages with peers during discussion or written response. |
| B (80-89) | Student demonstrates that s/he has read and annotated all assigned texts but struggles to articulate one or two ideas verbally or in writing. | Student completes all requirements of the colloquy, though s/he may not attend one portion, physical or virtual. | Student produces all required artifacts, though one may lack clear articulation, support, or sophisticated analysis. | Student completes all required work and almost always engages peers consistently and actively during discussion or written response. |
| C (70-79) | Student demonstrates that s/he has read and annotated all assigned texts but struggles to articulate more than three ideas verbally or in writing. | Student completes most requirements of the colloquy and/or may not have attended more than one portion, physical or virtual | Student produces all required artifacts, though one or more may lack clear articulation, support, or sophisticated analysis. | Student completes all required work but may struggle to engage peers consistently and actively during a portion of the discussion or written response. |
| D (60-69) | Student demonstrates that s/he has read and annotated all assigned texts but cannot articulate ideas verbally or in writing. | Student does not complete one of the requirements of the colloquy and/or does not attend two or more portions, physical or virtual. | Student does not produce all required artifacts, and more than two lack clear articulation, support, and/or sophisticated analysis. | Student does not complete all required work and struggles in one or two areas to engage peers consistently and actively during discussion or written response. |
| F (1-59) | Student does not demonstrate that s/he has read or annotated and can/does not articulate ideas verbally or in writing. | Student does not turn in work or turns in work that is not complete. Student does not attend the colloquy in question. | Student does not produce required artifacts and/or the artifacts turned in lack clear articulation, support, and/or sophisticated analysis. | Student does not complete all required work and struggles in more than three areas to engage peers consistently and actively during discussion or written response |

❖ Formal Papers

Students will complete three papers, each of which will offer options applicable to the differing contingencies in our class. All will be thesis-driven and depend upon a student's ability to craft a sound argument supported with specific evidence and cogent argumentation and analysis. All require MLA formatting and documentation as well as the use of academic, Standard English. Each will be 4-6 pages long, for a total of 12-18 pages of formal writing during this eight-week semester.

To evaluate your performance on each essay, I will utilize the English department's rubric for classes 2000-level and above. Click this link to view [the rubric](#).

Required Technology

You will need a webcam with microphone for filming yourself, a YouTube account where you can upload videos, and a high-speed internet connection for streaming video, downloading and uploading documents, or listening to audio. You may find that using other suggested technological platforms also helps you communicate with peers and me. For instance, in an early Reflection Topic, I suggest filming your response using your webcam or Periscope before posting a link in your Response Topic thread.

Modules

Modules are units of study utilized in online courses. You will click on either the "Content" tab at the top of our class's page in Course Den or and then on the Module number or the title of the Module in the right-hand sidebar so that you can view the work ahead. In the description of each Module, I will provide an Aerial View that outlines assigned reading, topics you will find in the discussion forum for that Module, and the colloquy and/or formal writing assignment you will complete.

Sometimes, I will provide scholarly articles or images, and I find that small chunks of video/audio can help as I strive to make salient points. In conjunction with the Aerial View, I also provide a checklist for each Module so that you can check off tasks as you complete them before the Module's due dates. When possible, items in Modules are due on the last day of them, though some will have due dates staggered throughout each Module to ensure that you stay on track. Due dates for Colloquies and Formal Papers are listed on the Aerial View documents, while Discussion Forum postings are almost always due on the end date of each Module by 11:30 p.m.

We will complete six modules this summer. Next to each in the list below, I include the dates that govern each and then the types of assignments with due dates. Specific times items are due are included in Aerial Views and on Checklists for each Module.

- ❖ **Module One—June 1-June 4:** Reading and Discussion Forum topics (both due June 4)
- ❖ **Module Two—June 5-June 15:** Reading (due June 8), Discussion Forum topics (due June 15), Colloquy One (due June 8 and 11), and Formal Paper One (due June 15)
- ❖ **Module Three—June 16-29:** Reading (due June 25), Discussion Forum topics (due June 29), and Colloquy Two (due June 27 and 29)
- ❖ **Module Four—June 30-July 10:** Reading (due July 8) , Discussion Forum topics (due July 10), Colloquy Three (due July 8 and 9), and Formal Paper Two (due July 10)
- ❖ **Module Five—July 11-July 20:** Reading (due July 16), Discussion Forum topics (due July 16), and Colloquy Four (due July 16)
- ❖ **Module Six—July 21-July 24:** Community Definition of YA topic and collaborative Google Doc (due July 23) and Formal Paper Three (due July 24)

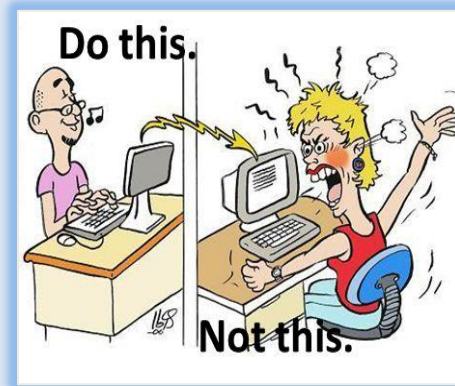
Words on Workload in this Course

All summer classes present challenges because of time constraints. Eight-week summer graduate classes must cover the same amount of work as is typically completed during a fifteen-week semester. Thus, summer online graduate classes offer us more challenges to overcome creatively, as the bulk of your work—reading, annotating, discussing, and composing—must occur on your own. Thus, your commitment to complete focus, responsible engagement, and striving for intellectual growth is vital. If you struggle, your commitment to obtaining my help is also an imperative.

We have a great deal of material to read and discuss together, so staying on track should be a goal, as our adolescent students say, “from the get.” **In short: woe betide the student who falls behind during our eight-week slog towards YA dominance!**

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Netiquette



Communication in an online environment requires special consideration, or what we call "Netiquette." Here are some guidelines for productive communication, which I adapt from San Diego Community College's Distance Learning division:

- ❖ *Show Professionalism and Courtesy.* Exhibit the same professionalism and respect in the online class as you would in the physical classroom and workplace.
- ❖ *Use Correct Spelling and Grammar.* Adhere to correct spelling and grammar convention. It is good practice to compose your message in a word processing program where you can check your spelling and grammar prior to sending. Avoid typing in all capital letters, as this is considered to be shouting (flaming). Avoid abbreviations and texting language (e.g. "WTF" "OMG" "LMFAO").
- ❖ *Use a Positive Tone.* Before hitting the "Send" or "Submit" button, review your message. The ease and speed of the Internet makes it easy to say something you might regret later. Remember: you are communicating with other human beings who have feelings, sensitivities, and opinions. When composing a message, ask yourself, "Would I say this to the person face-to-face?"
- ❖ *Follow the Course Discussion Board Guidelines.* Make sure that you are posting in the correct forum topic and read all postings in that topic prior to posting your message to avoid needless repetition. Keep in mind that each of our forums has several topics in which you will respond, so, again, keeping this suggestion in mind is a must.
- ❖ *Be Respectful of Others' Time.* Think carefully about who the recipients of your email should be. Avoid sending an email to the entire class, unless you feel that everyone must read it. Please also remember that Dr. Insenga needs 36 hours to respond, so sending multiple emails is not appropriate unless it has been over 36 hours.

- ❖ *Use descriptive subject lines for email messages and discussion board postings.* Each Formal and Reflection Discussion Forum topic will have its own title, and you will respond to it with your own thread. Title your threads appropriately, always using your first and/or last name so that I—and others—can locate your work with ease. If you post in the “Open Topic,” of Discussion Forum Seven, title your threads specifically so that we can easily assess whether or not they can contribute productively.

Physical and Virtual Attendance

As announced on Banweb and in an email on April 23rd, 2015, we meet face-to-face three times this semester. Make every possible effort to attend each of these classes. Should there be a significant barrier to attending all of these sessions, please schedule an appointment with me to discuss it. In some cases, there could be a solution.

One of the benefits of an online course environment is that you can log in at virtually any time. In our eight week semester, I cannot imagine a scenario in which you do not log in at least once per day to check for messages, to begin work, to submit responses, etc. Should I note that you are not often logging into our class’s page and/or that such an online absence correlates with missed or poor work, I will invite you to an online or face-to-face conference to discuss problems you may be having with online learning.

University of West Georgia Honor Code and its Application to this Course

At the University of West Georgia, we believe that academic and personal integrity are based upon honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. Students at West Georgia assume responsibility for upholding the honor code. West Georgia students pledge to refrain from engaging in acts that do not maintain academic and personal integrity. These include, but are not limited to, plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, aid of academic dishonesty, lying, bribery or threats, and stealing. The University of West Georgia maintains and monitors a confidential Academic Dishonesty Tracking System. This database collects and reports patterns of repeated student violations across all the Colleges, the Ingram Library, and the School of Nursing.

The department of English defines plagiarism as “taking personal credit for the words and ideas of others as they are presented in electronic, print, and verbal sources.” The department expects that students will accurately credit sources in all assignments.

Did you know?

“Excessive collaboration” includes having family members, friends, or significant others edit your work. This means that no one should “fix” your grammar for you or “write in” sentences/ sources/documentation for you. This sort of behavior is also cheating and will be treated as such. We will collaborate, and you have the University Writing Center as well as my input should you need extra advice about your writing.

Plagiarism is grounds for failing this course. Should I have any evidence of any cheating, you will earn an “F” for the course. My policy, then, is a zero tolerance one.

Required Format

Each Formal Essay must be word-processed. When formatting and citing in essays, please use MLA documentation. If you need a refresher on MLA format, please see [this MLA documentation guide](#) and/or feel free to talk with me during virtual office hours or in a scheduled face-to-face appointment. In the forums, focus on MLA documentation as you cite texts so that we can all reference page and/or scene numbers. You do not need Works Cited materials in the topics unless a peer or I request the title of the article/text.

UWG Email Policy

Please send all electronic communication to me via the Course Den email tool. Remember, too, that the Federal Education Rights Protection Act (FERPA) prevents me from discussing grades online or over the phone. I can discuss and record your grade(s) with you in the Course Den environs, so, again, make certain to email me there.

Americans with Disabilities Act and Accommodations

Students with a documented disability may work with UWG Disability Services to receive essential services specific to their disability. All entitlements to accommodations are based on documentation and USG Board of Regents standards. If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability or chronic illness, or if you need to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please notify your instructor in writing by the end of the second full week of class and include a copy of your Student Accommodations Report (SAR), which is available only from Disability Services. Students are entitled to accommodations if they deliver the SAR to the instructor no later than the end of the second full week of class.

Any student who has a special need should inform me at the end of the first class. We will then set up a conference to discuss the specifics of the official paperwork from Disability Services.

Late Work/Make-Up Work**

As a general rule, late work is not accepted except under the direst of circumstances. However, if you believe your circumstance to be extenuating, make every attempt to contact me via phone, during virtual office hours, or in a face-to-face conference to discuss the problem. At that time, I will determine whether or not an assignment can be turned in late and what deduction, if any, will apply.

**I realize that, occasionally, “life happens” and that some problems beyond your control crop up once in a while. Never hesitate to discuss problems with assignments or attendance with me if you feel that your circumstance is dire. With honest and swift communication, many issues can be resolved to your advantage!

Credit Hour Policy

The University of West Georgia grants one semester hour of credit for work equivalent to a minimum of one hour (50 minutes) of in-class or other direct faculty instruction AND two hours of student work outside of class per week for approximately fifteen weeks. For each course, the course syllabus will document the amount of in-class (or other direct faculty instruction) and out-of-class work required to earn the credit hour(s) assigned to the course. Out-of-class work will include all forms of credit-bearing activity, including but not limited to assignments, readings, observations, and musical practice. Where available, the university grants academic credit for students who verify via competency-based testing, that they have accomplished the learning outcomes associated with a course that would normally meet the requirements outlined above (e.g. AP credit, CLEP, and departmental exams).