Course Information: Adolescent Literature
HU 2548/Fall 2008
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Course Description
This course serves two functions at Michigan Tech: (1) it is a required course for students seeking state certification in teaching English; and (2) it is a general education elective course for students in all majors. As a group we’ll make an effort to support the preparation of future teachers by sharing our perspectives on the role (or non-role) of literature in young adult lives. We will also approach the course as an opportunity to read quality literature written for young adults and to think about and discuss the complicated issues faced by young adults in the early 21st century.

Some of the questions we’ll address include the following:

- What is adolescence? When does it begin and end? Is adolescence necessary?
- What are some of the challenges faced by adolescents? What social conditions contribute to those challenges? What should teachers and parents of adolescents know about those challenges?
- Why do adolescents read (or not)? What can be gained from reading quality literature written for young adults? What are effective ways to encourage adolescents to read?
- Who decides what is appropriate for adolescents to read and how and why do they do it?
- How is the quality of adolescent literature determined? What marks adolescent literature as a specific genre? When or how does adolescent literature become “adult” literature?

Discussing controversial topics
The course reading includes some controversial topics, including race relations, social class, sexual orientation, and sexual development, and some of the authors use coarse language. A mature attitude and open mind are required. Remember that you will not be pressured to change your values but you will be expected to think about controversial issues, to express and listen to a range of perspectives, and to understand the values and experiences of others.

Through the reading this semester, we will engage with issues that are endemic in our culture but not often effectively addressed in school (such as bullying, terrorism, political and religious coercion, racism, sexism, homophobia, teenage pregnancy, physical and emotional abuse perpetrated by others as well as abuse inflicted on the self (anorexia, cutting, drug and alcohol addiction). Reading literature allows us to occupy the lives of others who are different from us, thus it challenges and expands our moral and ethical intelligence.

What you can expect to gain from the course work
A thoughtful engagement with the course material will prepare you to live and work as a member of a complex society; in addition, it will prepare you to think about your own thoughts and behaviors as an adult as well as your relationship with young adults, whether as a parent, a sibling or other relative, a community volunteer, a coach, or a teacher. Perhaps the most important question we’ll address is: what options do young people have for engaging in society and creating a hopeful future?
Course Requirements

Texts
We will read a total of 10 books: I have picked the first six; you will choose a book of your own to read and pitch to the class in a book talk. From the book talks, we will vote on 3 additional books to read as a class.

Required Texts:
- Haddon, Mark, *Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night*, 2003
- Compestine, Ying Chang, *Revolution is Not a Dinner Party*, 2007
- Green, John, *Looking for Alaska*, 2005
- Plus 1 book of your choice
- Plus 3 books selected by the class

Required Assignments/Quizzes
Weekly reading quizzes
Three 1-page Interpretation Memos
Book Talk
Book Talk Binder
Panel Discussion (group project)
Group Research Report (group project)
Peer Evaluation of Group Projects

Grades
All assignments must be completed to pass the course.

Final grades are calculated as follows:
- Reading Quizzes/Reflection Memos 35%
- Book Talk 25%
- Book Talk Binder 5%
- Group Panel Book Discussion 10%
- Group Research Presentation 15%
- Peer Evaluations of Group Participation 10%

Criteria include: Quality of preparation and reliability; quality of insight and ideas, quality of respect for individuals, quality of contribution to group process.

Course Policies
The course is enriched by everyone's preparation, attendance, and full participation. Thus, the following policies are in effect throughout this course:

- **Absence policy**: More than 3 absences will lower your final grade. The limit of 3 absences includes both excused and unexcused. It is a smart practice to keep me informed via email about the reasons for your absence. Regardless of the reason for your absences, you are expected to make up the work you missed, including missed quizzes. **Missed quizzes must be made up before the next class period.**
- **Electronic Device policy**: Cell phones and other electronic devices are distractions for yourself and others. Be sure that they are turned off and put away during class.
- **Academic Integrity policy**: Some assignments call for research. In oral presentations and in written reports, document all of your sources. Do this in parentheses after each direct or indirect use of
every source. At the end of the presentation or report, provide a list of all the sources you used. Be especially attentive to the quality, credibility, and trustworthiness of all your sources.

- Participation policy
  Complete the reading on time; mark significant passages in your books; review the book before class; bring the book to class; ask other people what they think; listen with respect; speak from your experience and with reference to the readings; share what you think; allow others to think differently.

Course Assignments/Course Work

1. Reading Quizzes
   - The reading quizzes are intended to promote timely and careful reading. If you do the reading, you’ll find it easy to do well on the quizzes, and your good quiz grades will be your reward for being prepared. The quizzes focus primarily on factual recall rather than interpretation. Because of this, they require that the novel be fresh in your mind. If you read the book a week or two ahead of a quiz day, be sure to review the book before the quiz. Let me know if you find that a question on a quiz can be interpreted in more than one correct way.
   - If you are absent on a quiz day, you must contact me before the next class to make up the quiz or you will have a zero averaged in your final grade.

2. Reflection Memos
   - Bring a one-page (typed) reflection memo for each of the first three books. Your memos will form the basis of class discussion. These memos are an opportunity to practice the reflective, interpretive, critical, and creative thinking that success in this class requires.

In contrast to the quizzes, which focus on factual information, the memos should focus on interpretive issues. They should be thoughtful, explorative, creative, personal, invitational. The memo should be addressed to the class as a group and it should focus on issues, perspectives, themes, and characters, tensions in the novel.

Below are a few suggested prompts that you can use to get started, or you can create your own entry point.

a. If this novel were read in a school setting, what would be teachable questions, important issues, significant scenes, interesting tensions to explore with students? How could this novel be used to teach students to think more about characteristics of novels: setting, plot, characters, central tensions, point of view, etc. Would this be a controversial novel to teach? What would be the value of having young adults read, discuss, and write about this novel?

b. What is my personal response to this novel? What has the novel left me thinking or wondering about? What in the novel triggers my response? What in my experience triggers my response? What do I learn about myself by thinking about this question? Are others likely to share my response? How might their responses differ from mine? What would I like to know about how others respond to the novel?

c. What perspective does this novel offer about a current social issue? What questions does it raise that are important for young adults (and those who care about them) to think about? What does it say about the challenges young adults face today? Are the challenges faced by the characters in this novel character-forming or character-destroying challenges?
Grades on Reflection Memos
To earn a C, memos must be clear and reflective.
To earn a B, memos must be clear, reflective, contain specific references (including page numbers and some direct quotes) to scenes, characters, etc.
To earn an A, memos must be clear, reflective, contain specific references, and prompt others to think more deeply about the novel, either in terms of their own experiences, the current social context, the value of this novel to other young adults.

3. Book Talks/Book Binders
   • Explained on separate handout.
4. Group Panel Discussion
   • Explained on separate handout
5. Group Research Report
   • Explained on separate handout

Michigan Tech complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination, including the Americans with Disability Act of 1990 (ADA). If you have a disability and need a reasonable accommodation for equal access to education or services at Michigan Tech, please call the Dean of Students Office (487-2212). For other concerns about discrimination, you may contact your advisor, department head, or the Affirmative Action Office (487-3310).
HU 2548 Adolescent Literature Syllabus Fall 2008 Dr. Nancy Grimm

Sept. 2 Course Introduction
Sept. 4 (1) Review of Literary Concepts, (2) Guidelines for Discussion of Difficult Topics, (3) Book Talk Assignment
Sept. 9 Haddon, Curious Incident (quiz and reflection memo)
Sept. 11 (1) Bring two possible choices for Book Talks; (2) Preview of Panel Discussion Assignment
Sept. 16 Kephart, Undercover (quiz and reflection memo)
Sept. 18 (1) Preview of Group Research Report Assignment; (2) Discussion of Banned Book Week; (3) A Test of Adultness
Sept. 23 Book Talks begin
Sept. 25 Book Talks
Sept. 30 Book Talks; Banned Books Week
Oct. 2 Book Talks
Oct. 7 Alexie, Absolutely True Diary (quiz and reflection memo)
Oct. 9 Screening of Adolescent Film
Oct. 14 Book Talks
Oct. 16 Book Talks
Oct. 21 Green, Looking for Alaska (quiz and panel discussion)
Book Voting Day; Order your books soon after class!
Book Talk Binders Due
Oct. 23 Green, continued
Oct. 28 Yang, American Born Chinese, (quiz and panel discussion)
Oct. 30 Preparation for Group Research Report
Nov. 4 Compestine, Revolution is Not a Dinner Party, (quiz and panel discussion)
Nov. 6 Group Research Reports
Nov. 11 Book 1 (class selected), (quiz and panel discussion)
Nov. 13 Group Research Reports
Nov. 18 Book 2—(class selected) (quiz and panel discussion)
Nov. 20 Group Research Reports
Thanksgiving Holiday
Dec. 2 Book 3—(class selected) (quiz and panel discussion)
Dec. 4 Group Research Reports
Dec. 9 Group Research Reports
Dec. 11 Final Reflections