Course Information: Adolescent Literature
HU 2548/Fall 2009
Dr. Nancy Grimm, Professor, Humanities, and Director of Michigan Tech Writing Center
Office: 103 Walker
Office Hours: T 2-3; Th 3-4 (others by appointment)
Office Phone: 487-3265
Email: ngrimm@mtu.edu
Course email list: yadlit-l@mtu.edu

Course Description
This course serves two functions at Michigan Tech:
(1) it is a required course for students seeking state certification as English teachers;
(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? How does adolescence differ in cultures other than American?
• 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 readings include 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. 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 the literature this semester, we will engage with serious issues that are often not 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
- Yang, Gene Luen, *American Born Chinese*, 2006. (may need to substitute a different one)

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)
- Insight Report (group or individual)
- Peer Evaluation of Group Projects

**Grades**
All assignments must be completed to pass the course.

Final grades are calculated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading Quizzes/Reflection Memos</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Talk</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Talk Binder</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Panel Book Discussion</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insight Report (group or individual)</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Evaluations of Group Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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, so think of this policy as a sick-leave policy. If you are sick, particularly if you have flu symptoms, stay home and take care of yourself. Send me an email to let me know what's going on. If you are traveling for a Michigan Tech sport, let me know your status and anticipated absences. If you are traveling for a special family or work occasion, let me know that. Otherwise, come to class. If I do not receive an email, I'll assume you are engaging in behavior that detracts from your success. Regardless of the reason for your absences, you are expected to make up the work you missed, including missed quizzes. **Whenever possible, missed quizzes must be made up before the next class period.**
• **Electronic Device policy**

Cell phones and other electronic devices distract from the work of the class. They compete for your attention and they distract the people near you. Be sure to turn them off and put them away before class begins.

• **Academic Integrity policy**

Some class 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. You are responsible for following up on this. Missed quizzes count as 0%.

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 Talk/Book Binders
   • Pick an award-winning YAD-Lit novel or work of non-fiction. Pitch it to the class as a candidate for one of 3 class-selected books. More detail on a separate handout.

4. Group Panel Discussion
   • A group leads discussion of one of the novels, beginning October 20 and continuing through the term. More detail on separate handout.

5. Insight Report (group or individual)
   • Investigation of an issue related to one of the novels or to teaching literature to young adults. Can be informative or creative. Should contribute to a deeper understanding of one of the novels or to an issue of importance to young adults or to ideas for teaching adolescent literature to young adults. Can be group or individual. More detail on a separate handout. Begins October 29.

University Policies
Academic regulations and procedures are governed by University policy. Academic dishonesty cases will be handled in accordance the University's policies.

If you have a disability that could affect your performance in this class or that requires an accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act, please see me as soon as possible so that we can make appropriate arrangements. The Affirmative Action Office has asked that you be made aware of the following:

Michigan Tech complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination, including the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. 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, at 487-2212. For other concerns about discrimination, you may contact your advisor, department head or the Affirmative Action Office, at 487-3310.

Academic Integrity:
http://www.studentaffairs.mtu.edu/dean/judicial/policies/academic_integrity.html

Affirmative Action:
http://www.admin.mtu.edu/aao/

Disability Services:
http://www.admin.mtu.edu/urel/studenthandbook/student_services.html#disability

Equal Opportunity Statement:
HU 2548 Adolescent Literature Syllabus Fall 2009 Dr. Nancy Grimm

Sept. 1 Course Introduction; What is Adolescent (Young Adult) Literature?
Sept. 3 (1) Review of Literary Concepts, (2) Guidelines for Discussion of Difficult Topics, (3) Book Talk Assignment

Sept. 8 Haddon, Curious Incident (quiz and reflection memo)
Sept. 10 (1) Bring two possible choices for Book Talks; (2) Preview of Panel Discussion Assignment

Sept. 15 Kephart, Undercover (quiz and reflection memo)
Sept. 17 (1) Preview of Insight Report Assignment; (2) Discussion of Banned Book Week; (3) A Test of Adultness

Sept. 22 Book Talks begin
Sept. 24 Book Talks

Sept. 29 Book Talks; Banned Books Week; (Career Day)
Oct. 1 Book Talks

Oct. 6 Alexie, Absolutely True Diary (quiz and reflection memo)
Oct. 8 Screening of Adolescent Film

Oct. 13 Book Talks
Oct. 15 Book Talks

Oct. 20 Green, Looking for Alaska (quiz and panel discussion)
Book Voting Day; Order your books soon after class!
Book Talk Binders Due

Oct. 22 Green, continued

Oct. 27 Yang, American Born Chinese (or alternative) (quiz and panel discussion)
Oct. 29 Preparation for Insight Report

Nov. 3 Compestine, Revolution is Not a Dinner Party (quiz and panel discussion)
Nov. 5 Insight Reports

Nov. 10 Book 1 (class selected) (quiz and panel discussion)
Nov. 12 Insight Reports

Nov. 17 Book 2 (class selected) (quiz and panel discussion)
Nov. 19 Insight Reports

Dec. 1 Book 3 (class selected) (quiz and panel discussion)
Dec. 3 Insight Reports

Dec. 8 Insight Reports
Dec. 10 Final Reflections

Thanksgiving Holiday