Young Adult Literature • HU2548

Course Info
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Coordinator 
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June–August, 2011 
Office Hours: M-R 8-9a.m. 
Or by appointment 

Find space in your schedule to read textbook chapters, articles, and 8 novels, also plan time for developing one significant group project—small groups will be responsible for teaching one of the novels (*). 

Required Texts:
1. *Anderson, L. H. Speak 
2. Anderson, M.T. Octaviaan Nothing 
3. Butler, O. Mind of My Mind 
4. *Crutcher, Chris. Staying Fat for Sarah Byrnes 
5. *Jimenez, F. The Circuit 
6. Myers, W.D. Monster 
7. Satrapi, M. Persepolis 
   Essentials of T.A Lit 

This course serves two functions at Michigan Tech: 
(I) 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. 
We will make an effort to support the preparation of teachers by sharing our perspectives on the role (or non-role) of literature in young adults’ 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 facing young adults over time.

What is Young Adult Literature? What is its significance? 
Who are young adults, who are they becoming, and why are they important? 

- 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 ways are there to encourage adolescents to read? 
- Who decides what is appropriate for adolescents to read? 
- How is the quality of adolescent literature determined? What marks adolescent literature as a specific category? When or how does adolescent literature become adult literature?
Discussing controversial topics
Readings will include controversial topics, including race relations, social class, sexual orientation, and sexual development. Some 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. We will engage with serious issues that may not always be effectively addressed in school (such as bullying, terrorism, political and religious coercion, racism, sexism, homophobia, teen pregnancy, physical and emotional abuse perpetrated by self and other (such as incest, cutting, anorexia, addiction, and so on). Reading literature allows us to occupy the lives of others who are different from us, thus it challenges and expands our moral, ethical, and emotional intelligence.

What you may gain from this course
A thoughtful engagement with the course material could be dangerous, as the conversations prompted by literature demand that we question our own stories—what we think we believe—and perhaps rethink them. Our reading and conversing should develop how you think about your own thoughts and behaviors as an adult as well as your relationships with young adults, whether as a parent, a sibling or other relative, a community volunteer, a coach, or a teacher.

My philosophy of teaching YA Literature:
In designing and implementing a learning experience, I start by thinking about the outcomes, and I don’t mean the final assignments, I mean the big philosophical questions: “Why am I teaching this, and what is “this?” The answer will always have to be “because something about this experience will contribute to the greater good in the world.” My answer to “Why teach YA Lit?” is “the YA Lit class can help us understand the concept of “choice” and the role power plays in our lives from childhood to old age.” This is a huge answer and it leaves much to discuss. We’ll get to those discussions over the course of the next seven weeks. I look forward to our shared experiences, especially our rich discussions about literature and the roles it can play in our lives. Here are some core topics that will play into our future conversations:

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Required Assignments (all assignments must be completed to pass the course)
- Four reading quizzes (100 pts)
- Four reading response papers (100 pts)
- Textbook Chapter/Octavian Nothing Test (100 pts)
- Book talk (ya novel or nonfiction book of choice) (100 pts)
- Group Performance/Project (conducting learning activities with one book) (300 pts)
- Reflective Report, including peer evaluations of group participation (300 pts)

* Four reading quizzes, each worth 25 pts, are intended to promote timely, yet aesthetic readings. By reading deeply, then going back into the text to reflect, you’ll be well prepared to take the quiz. The quizzes will focus on factual recall. So if you’ve read
ahead, be sure to refresh your memory before quiz day. If a question on a quiz is ambiguous, please let me know.

• **Four reading response essays**, each worth 25 pts, are intended to encourage you to support your interpretations of a text through introspection and analysis. You will develop personal relationships with a story, and then to select an aspect of the story to discuss. The purpose of the response papers is to come to better understandings of yourself, and deeper knowledge of how texts “work” – the outcome is to see that interpretation is a “transaction” and how those transactions are different for each one of us, potentially. While quizzes deal with factual aspects of a story, reading responses are reflective, thoughtful, explorative, creative, personal. Your responses should be addressed to the class as a group, focus on issues, perspectives, themes, characters, tensions, or literary elements. These papers will serve as conversation starters.

Grades on response essays: C papers are clear and reflective; B papers are clear, reflective, and contain specific references (including page numbers and direct quotes) to scenes, dialog, characterization, description, etc; A essays do all that B essays do but they compel others to think more deeply about the novel, or an issue raised in relation to the novel in terms of their own experiences, the current social context, history, or the value of the novel to other young adults.

• **Book Talk** (100 pts). Pick an award-winning YAdult Novel or non-fiction book. Tell the class about it following instructions located in your textbook.

• **Group Performance and Book Project** (300 pts). This is a major contribution to the class in which your group takes responsibility for a required novel: *The Circuit, Speak*, or *Staying Fat for Sarah Byrnes*. This assignment consists of an opening “skit” or other attention-getting performance, as well as conducting two days of instruction and discussion on your novel. A separate handout with more detailed instructions for how to complete this assignment will be provided. Because of the complexity of this assignment and the preparation time you’ll need, the class will not meet on Mondays.

• **Reflective Report** (300 pts). Your final assignment explains what you have learned in this class, what thoughts you are leaving with, and an analysis and reflection on how your group functioned focusing on your contribution.

**Reading and Assignment Schedule** (additional readings from the textbook or relevant articles will be added)

*No class on Mondays throughout the track. Use that day for reading and project development. Your group’s project will be to lead the group in a study of one of the novels.*

Week One • course intro, textbook overview, *Octavian Nothing*
M Intro course (texts and syllabus)
T Ch 1 and 2 of *Essentials;* McMahon article
W Ch 5 and 9 of *Essentials* “The Transit of Venus”
R *Octavian Nothing* “The Pox Party”
Week Two
T Octavian “The Pox Party” and “Liberty and Property” (sample quiz)
W Octavian “The Great Chain of Being” (reading response paper)
R Test (Octavian and Essentials)

Week Three
T Monster (quiz)
W Monster
R Monster (reading response paper)

Week Four
T Speak (quiz)
W Speak
R Speak (reading response paper)

Week Five
T Circuit (quiz)
W Circuit
R Circuit (reading response paper)

Week Six
T Staying Fat (quiz)
W Staying Fat
R Staying Fat (reading response paper)

Week Seven
T Mind (NO quiz)
W Mind
R Mind; Final Remarks; submit final reflective papers

Course Policies:
Your preparation, attendance, and full participation will enrich this course immeasurably.

Absence
More than two absences will lower your final grade. Please take good care of yourself and others by staying home if you are sick. Let me know if you know you’ll be absent, or contact me asap if you must be absent, but can’t let me know in advance. If you miss a quiz, please make it up within two days.

Electronic Devices
Turn off all devices before class begins.

Academic Integrity
Document all resources using in text citations and a “works cited” list at the end of your paper. Attend to the quality and credibility of sources.
Participation
Complete readings on time; mark significant passages in your books; review before class; bring the book to class; University Policies:
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.

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