In this class, “be who you are and say what you feel, because those who mind don’t matter, and those who matter don’t mind.” Dr. Seuss

Young Adult Literature • HU2548

Course Info
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Ofc Hours: M-R 8-9a.m.
Or by appointment
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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.
We will support the preparation of teachers, and anyone who interacts with young adults, 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 14 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 (total: 100 pts, 25 pts ea.)
- Book Talk/Pitch (100 pts.)
- Final (fifth) reading quiz (50 pts), *Persepolis*
- Test on Textbook Chapter & *Octavian Nothing* (100 pts)
- Classroom activities, participation (100 pts)
- Literature Circles (conducting learning activities with one book) (300 pts)
- Reflective Report, including peer evaluations of lit circle participation (250 pts)

- **Reading quizzes** are intended to promote a range of reader transactions. By reading deeply, then going back into the text to reflect, you'll be well prepared to take the quiz. The quizzes will include factual recall, and your interpretations. 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. Quiz questions will be used for conversation starters.

- **Literature Circle** (300 pts). This is a major contribution to the class in which your group takes responsibility for a novel you choose to read in common with group members not the whole class. This assignment consists of an opening "skit" or other attention-getting performance, such as reader's theater, as well as presenting information related to the article. A separate handout with more detailed instructions for how to complete this assignment will be provided. This is a major project, is creative, and should be fun and intellectually challenging for everyone.

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• Reflective Report/Response (250 pts). This final project will be textual and visual, interpreting and symbolizing something of significance in your experience with the literature we’ve read in this class. In brief, you’ll create an image, then explain and discuss how your image says something about the novels you’ve selected and your transactions with their ideas. This is a combination of literary interpretation using written essay form, and visual symbolism. To complete this assignment, use at least three of the novels we read this semester to visually show your message. I expect final projects to look good, say something, and be worthwhile for all of us. These projects should demonstrate that you’ve learned something and articulated it with sophistication and creativity. When I look at your project I’ll be able to tell that you couldn’t have done this without the effort you put into the class this summer.

Please meet with me at any time to discuss questions or ideas you may have. This last project is very open—but that is what makes it difficult. Sometimes talking with someone can help refine your thinking.

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

Aug. 31 • Week One • course intro, textbook overview, Octavian Nothing
Homework for Week Two: Essentials Ch 1, 2, 5; Octavian Nothing “The Transit of Venus” and “The Pox Party” (use Octavian Nothing discussion guide)

Sept. 7 • Week Two
Octavian “The Transit of Venus” and “The Pox Party” (book discussion)
Homework for Week Three: Octavian “Liberty and Property” and “The Great Chain of Being”

Sept. 14 • Week Three
Octavian “Liberty and Property: and “The Great Chain of Being” book discussion
Octavian Nothing Test
Homework for Week Four: Monster; Essentials Ch 3, 8, 9

Sept. 21 • Week Four
Monster (quiz) and Essentials quiz, Discussion, Activity
Homework for week five: select a lit circle book to pitch to your group. Read Speak, Essentials chapter 10 and 11

Sept. 28 • Week Five
Speak (quiz), Discussion, Activity

Oct. 5 • Week Six
Speak Discussion

Oct. 12 • Week Seven
Circuit (quiz), Discussion, Activity

Oct. 19 • Week Eight
Circuit
Groups meet in Literature Circles (pitch, deliberate, and choose common book)
Students pitch books for literature circles to small groups (Prepare to convince your
group to pick your novel, to read this book in common and then to present it to the whole
class, see Literature Circles in Chapter 9 of Essentials.)

Oct. 26 • Week Nine
Staying Fat (quiz), Discussion, Activity
Groups meet in Literature Circles (book discussion)

Nov. 2 • Week Ten
Staying Fat
Literature Circles
Groups meet in Literature Circles (book discussion)

Nov. 9 • Week 11
Mind of My Mind (quiz), Discussion, Activity
Groups meet in Literature Circles (presentation planning)

Nov. 16 • Week 12
Mind of My Mind
Literature Circle Presentations

Nov. 30 • Week 13
Persepolis, (quiz), Discussion, Activity
Literature Circle Presentations

Dec. 7 • Week 14
Persepolis
Literature Circle Presentations
Course Evaluations

Dec. 14 • Show final assignments to class instead of taking a final. Turn projects in by
December 16, 2011 to my office, 339 Walker Hall.

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:

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