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 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.

Objectives • Students will
- Reveal a deeper understanding of the role literature plays in history, culture, and individual lives through its ability to develop empathy in readers.
- Exhibit and present a multi-media project that demonstrates their deep understanding of and significant insights into a theme that runs through three of the novels read in common.
- Demonstrate their ability to discover significant themes in a text and use inferences to support claims when they write reflective reading responses that synthesize their personal reactions, passages from the book, and theory or ideas from outside sources.
- Share their enthusiasm and knowledge of a young adult novel (not assigned in 2548), its value to adolescents and adult readers, and their own presentation skills, when they deliver a ten-minute book talk for the class.
- Connect and re-evaluate their assumptions, perceptions, viewpoints, and insights when they discuss novels in class, listening to others' discoveries, and adjusting and expanding their understandings.
What is Quality 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 Contemporary 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?
• Why should adults read YA fiction?

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 in class and online should influence 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.

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 al-
Required Assignments (all assignments must be completed to pass the course)

- Three reading quizzes (100 pts)
- Four reading response posts (100 pts)
- Book talk (ya novel or nonfiction book of choice) (100 pts)
- Group Performance/Project (conducting learning activities with one book) (350 pts)
- Reflective Project, including peer evaluations of group participation (350 pts)
- Three reading quizzes, totaling 100 points, 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 postings (100 pts, each worth 25 pts) are intended to encourage you to support your interpretations of a novel through introspection, analysis, and synthesis with another source (scholarly article, events in the world, other literature, etc.). These reflections will serve as “spring boards” for class discussion—so they must be posted on time and read by everyone. Two key purposes of these responses is to (1) discover new understandings of yourself, and (2) deepen your knowledge of how texts “work.” The theory that informs reader response posits that interpretation is a “transaction” between reader and text; those transactions are potentially, thought not always, unique and different for each one of us, and by witnessing our own and each others transactions, we can develop more understanding and empathy.

While quizzes deal primarily with factual aspects of a story, reading responses deal with the reader's subjective experience with those facts and events. They are personal, reflective, thoughtful, explorative, theoretical, and creative—you could choose poetry, art, or music to express your experience with one or two of the novels.

Responses should focus on how you relate to and explain aspects of the book: authors’ perspectives, themes, characters, tensions, literary elements, and so on. These responses will contribute to conversations between you and the book, your reading and others' readings, your reading in terms of a scholarly article we’ve read—and they might even bridge your thoughts to the next novel. These responses will support your final report.

Scoring Responses: B (20 pts) responses are clear, reflective, and contain specific references (including page numbers and direct quotes) to scenes, dialogue, symbolism, characterization, description, etc; A responses (25 points) do all that B responses do but they compel others to think more deeply about the novel, perhaps show a unique perspective, or make connections to something beyond self and story. An A response creates an Aha! Experience for the writer and the reader. It is possible to score lower than 20 pts.

- One Book Talk (100 pts) vivid description of a young adult novel—preferably an award-winner—that made a difference in your life. Ten-minute oral and visual presentation.

- Group Performance and Book Project (350 pts). This is a major contribution to the class in which your group takes responsibility for a required novel: Persepolis, Absolutely True Diary, 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. Because of the complexity of this assignment and the preparation time you'll need, the class will not meet on Mondays.

The “opening skit” can be a readers' theater performance, or a more inventive or dramatic performance than readers' theater, and it demonstrates that you have thorough knowledge of the story and have discovered something of significance there. It also piques the interest of the class and connects
with the next two days of engagement with the book. If you use film, be sure to connect the film to the novel in meaningful ways—and certainly through discussion. Groups will turn in their planning materials, any handouts, and a final analysis of their group dynamics for a grade.

- **Reflective Visual Report (350 pts).** Your final assignment shows and explains what you have learned in this class, what thoughts you are leaving with, and what connections you’ve made with three or more novels we’ve read in class.

  This final project will be presented to the class in a final “art show.” Please use a poster format (or other tangible, non-digital format), and include your typed ‘artist’s statement’ to help explain the display. On the last day of class, we will each give a short talk on our displays, and take questions from the audience. This will be similar to an artist’s talk given during the opening of an exhibition. If you’ve ever attended an art exhibit opening, you’ll know what I mean. Your visual response will represent—or symbolize—something of significance in your experience with the literature we’ve read in this class.

  To complete this assignment, use at least three of the novels we read this semester to visually show your message. Use a tri-fold or other substantial material. Words will be allowed on the visual, but they should be minimized. Your ‘artist’s statement’ is in the form of a caption that makes your message more explicit and summarizes your talk.

  These final projects should look good, say something, and be worthwhile experiences 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.
Express their knowledge of an assigned novel, and its significance, by successfully completing reading quizzes and reading responses.

Apprehend the elements of adolescence and adolescent literature so that they are able to understand how to evaluate, recommend, and converse with young people about stories.

Effectively collaborate with group members to conduct a meaningful learning experience organized around one of the assigned novels.

Course Policies: Your preparation, attendance, and full participation will enrich this course immeasurably and influence your grade. Complete readings on time; mark significant passages in your books; review before class; bring the book to class; contribute to conversations; post your responses on time.

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.

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

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

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.

Disability Services: http://www.mtu.edu/dean/disability/services/

It allows us to occupy the lives of others who are different from us, thus it challenges and expands our moral, ethical, and emotional intelligence.

**Concepts (themes, topics) for discussion**

Here are some core topics that will play into our future conversations, and are listed here to inspire your thinking when you post reading responses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conviction</th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Mind</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contentment</td>
<td>Visibility</td>
<td>Voice</td>
<td>Intention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morality</td>
<td>Love</td>
<td>Silence</td>
<td>Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truth</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deception</td>
<td>Society</td>
<td>Evil</td>
<td>Individuality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>Race</td>
<td>Consciousness</td>
<td>Censorship</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>