

English 305
Children's Literature
Dr. Susan Louise Stewart
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Hall of Languages 314
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Office Hours:

Tues/Thurs, 10-11, Tues., 3:30-5:30, or by appointment. I will generally respond to e-mails within 24 hours of receiving them Monday-Thursday. If I receive your e-mail early enough on Friday, I'll try to respond that day.

Catalog Description:

A survey of children's literature. The course includes various authors and illustrators in such genres as the oral tradition, fantasy, realistic and historical fiction, poetry, and the picture book. Prerequisite Eng 1302.

Course Description:

During this course, we will be exploring a number of children's novels and texts through various genres. This includes contemporary, classic, historical, and realistic fiction, fantasy, picture books, and folk and fairy tales. Whew. That's a long list, but ultimately, this course has several goals. You will become familiar with the genres I've listed above, but together, we'll also be exploring various ideas conveyed in the texts, the historical development and context of children's fiction, how novels for young readers have changed and/or stayed the same, and the intersections among language, theory, politics, ideology, and children's fiction. Most important, however, we will be examining the ideologies embedded in the texts as well as the ideologies that guide our culture, particularly in terms of children and the literature they read. We'll also be tackling several questions throughout the semester. What IS children's literature anyway? What is its purpose, how does it function, and why? Is it successful in its function? What are adult expectations of children as set forth in these texts? What might these novels say about our culture? Why study children's literature in the first place? As far as I know, there aren't any definitive answers to the above questions, but that doesn't mean they aren't worthy of our attention. The fact is, I'm not here to answer the above questions; I'm here to ask them, identify problems, encourage you to ask questions and identify problems, and discuss them with you. Ultimately, I want you, in the time we have, to become as informed as possible regarding children's literature. This will hopefully allow you to come to an informed, aware, and sensitive approach to children's literature, and to understand the various concerns and assumptions surrounding literature for young readers.

A Few Items You Should Know about This Course:

It will be tempting to turn discussions toward what children will or will not like or understand and what is appropriate and inappropriate. I ask that you refrain from those kinds of observations for a couple of reasons, which I've identified below. I've also included other items to keep in mind during the class.

1. The purpose of the class is to think about and discuss children's literature just as you would any other literature—Shakespeare, Woolf, Alcott, Steinbeck, and others. Children's literature deserves that kind of status, don't you think? If you have any doubts, I suspect I'll convince you by the end of the semester that children's literature is indeed complex. I doubt that you discuss whether or not high school students, who are assigned to read Shakespeare, Woolf, Alcott, and so on, will understand those texts or not in your American or Brit lit classes. That's not the point of those classes, even if you are seeking certification and thinking of how to teach those authors and their texts. Rather, the point is to study those texts as literature. The same goes for children's literature.
2. You already know how to talk about what is or is not appropriate. This class is intended to help you with concepts you don't know how to discuss or have never heard of.
3. We're reading these texts as adults, not how we think children read them. Don't forget who writes these novels: adults ☺.
4. Some of you might have children and will thus use them as the basis of what children will/won't understand or like. But remember, those are your children; we can't base observations on one or two children. Researchers spend a great deal of time studying children; they draw from pools of multiple children sometimes over multiple years. For instance, Robert Cole, author of *The Political Life of Children*, engaged in a longitudinal study of children (he followed the same children over several years) in multiple countries including the U.S., Ireland, South Africa, Brazil, and more. He discovered that children are very political. To base a conclusion on what a few children do or think is misleading and not really helpful. Additionally, for most instances you provide regarding what children will like, I can show you they won't like it; for most instances you show me what children won't like, I can provide evidence that they will like it. Remember, for the purposes of this class, there is no such thing as a universal child. They are all different, even though our school systems frequently try to treat them as though they are the same.
5. Try to avoid indicating that I or anyone else is "digging too deeply." If it's there, it's there. I would agree that one can go too far, and I can promise that I'll probably push some boundaries, but if I can support my claims . . .

6. For the most part, avoid authorial intent. Even when authors say what they're doing, they sometimes lie. Gasp. But they're fiction writers. They're paid to engage in literary lying. Also, if you've heard of Freud and the unconscious, you'll know that things go on in our heads that are difficult to explain and they come out in the oddest ways. You've heard of the Freudian slip, yes?

And never fear. You will indeed identify ways to teach texts. *Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* will be one such text in particular. And, you'll be learning about ways to discuss race. How to teach these books just won't be the focus of the class.

We will approach these texts in a multitude of ways, possibly including cultural and historical perspectives, which further includes approaches such as feminism, Marxism, whiteness and race studies, and cultural poetics. Ultimately, you will need to demonstrate your ability to read these texts closely, critically, creatively, intellectually, and theoretically.

Required Texts:

Please note that the only requirement on any of the texts is that they be unabridged. Electronic (Kindle, Nook, etc.) and audible formats are also fine, though it will be nearly impossible to write an essay using an audible format.

Lowry, *The Giver*, 9780440237686
 Curtis, *Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963*, 9780440414124
 Almond, David, *Skellig*, 9780440416029
 DiCamillo, *Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane*, 9780763647834
 Spinelli, *Maniac Magee*, 9780316809061
 Magoon, *The Rock and the River*, 9781416978039
 Napoli, *Zel*, 0141301163

Course Goals/Objectives

1. By the end of the semester, students will be to analyze and clearly articulate interpretations of the various meanings of the texts we read, with particular reference to relevant contexts and subtexts. "Texts" include written and spoken language, visual, pictorial, kinetic, multimodal, and in general "semiotic" artifacts. (Just about everything is a text—even your professor! The most successful students can generally "read" their professors). Ultimately, I want you to be able to read the assigned texts closely, critically, creatively, intellectually, and theoretically, and articulate that ability

Student Learning Outcomes:

To be successful in this class, students will:

1. Demonstrate familiarity with the terminology identified in the class. This outcome will be assessed by one or more of the following: quizzes, exams, or written analyses.
2. Demonstrate the ability to recognize, identify and communicate the role of ideology in children's texts. This outcome will be assessed by one or more of the following: quizzes, exams, or written analyses.

Assignments:**Please note that assignments will be graded as follows:**

- ✚ Reading quizzes (up to 20 pts. each)
- ✚ 3 Response Papers, 20 pts. each (a 4th response paper will be part of your final exam, which will be:
- ✚ Final Exam, Part 1 (response paper/*Skellig*) 20 pts., Part 2, 40 pts. (objective and short answer over *Skellig* and other texts assigned through the semester)

Grading Scale:

90-100%=A; 80-89%=B; 70-79%=C; 60-69%=D; 59 and below=F

Response Papers: Throughout the semester, you'll write analytical responses to three areas of the course wherein you explore an idea or concept reflecting the nature of the course (a fourth response will be included in your final exam): picture books, folk and fairy tales, and “race matters.”

Responses are required of the following areas:

Response 1, Picture Books

Response 2, Folk and Fairy Tales

Response 3, Race Matters (that includes *Watsons*, *Rock and the River*, and/or *Maniac Magee*, *American Born Chinese*)

You will be writing a response paper to *Skellig* as part of your final exam. That will be your fourth response.

These responses are not exercises in personal responses (I hated this book; I loved this book); rather, I will give you a prompt to which you'll need to respond, or I will ask you to write a free response where you decide on an issue relative to the nature of the class. Unless otherwise specified, your responses should:

- Be a minimum of 700 words (that does not include the title, your name, the class and so on).
- Have an introduction wherein you state the idea, speculation, or question with which you're working; a body where you explore that idea, speculation, or question; a conclusion that gives your reader something to think about.
- Include quotations from the novel that advance/support your idea, speculation, or question (**please note that in order to receive full credit for response, quotations, page numbers where the quotations are found, and a works cited must be included**)
- Go beyond the obvious
- Avoid generalizations
- Be uploaded to eCollege dropbox.

The rubric for this assignment is located in eCollege document sharing.

Final Exam:

The final exam will consist of 2 parts. The first part will be a response to *Skellig*. The response will be similar to those you have written throughout the semester. The second part will consist of a mixture of objective and short answers.

Course Policies

Academic Honesty Policy: Texas A&M University-Commerce does not tolerate **plagiarism** and other forms of academic **dishonesty**. Conduct that violates generally accepted standards of academic honesty is defined as academic dishonesty. "Academic dishonesty" includes, but is not limited to, plagiarism (the appropriation or stealing of the ideas or words of another and passing them off as one's own), recycling papers written for other classes, cheating on exams or other course assignments, collusion (the unauthorized collaboration with others in preparing course assignments), and abuse (destruction, defacing, or removal) of resource material. See the following helpful resources regarding plagiarism:

1. your *MLA Handbook*
2. <http://www.plagiarism.org/>
3. <http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/plagiarism.html>
<http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml>

Egregious plagiarism such as recycling a paper, turning in a paper that you did not write, or similar actions will result in one or more of the following: a 0 for the assignment, an F for the class, disciplinary action administered by the university.

Late Papers, Attendance, and Incomplete Grades Policies: I seldom accept late papers, and if I do, it is at my discretion. Additionally, expect no better than a C on a paper that is turned in late.

Be here. I do not allow for make-ups on quizzes or exams. There is no extra credit. If you miss 4 classes or more, expect no better than a C. If you miss 6 classes, expect to fail the course.

Only under exceptional circumstances will I grant an incomplete for the course, and then it depends on the Dean as to whether or not the incomplete will be permitted. You will have to supply documentation in order to obtain an incomplete. That doesn't come from me. It comes from the dean.

Civility and Etiquette: Students are expected to be civil, polite, and accommodating to differences of opinion and will follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. University policy provides the means for dismissing students who do not meet these requirements, and I take politeness very seriously.

Technology Requirements:

This course is supported by e-College, the Learning Management System used by Texas A&M University-Commerce. Various readings and the grade book are available through eCollege. You will also turn in assignments through dropbox function of eCollege.

The following information has been provided to assist you in preparing to use technology successfully in this course. You will need access to the following technologies:

1. Internet access/connection – high speed recommended
2. Word Processor: MS Word [doc or docx]. If you do not have MS word, you can save your texts as rtf (rich text format) or txt (plain txt). Be aware that saving documents in rtf or txt will possibly cause problems with formatting, and formatting is important in this class in this class. If saving your document in txt or rtf, contact me, and I will identify a solution.

Our campus is optimized to work in a Microsoft Windows environment. This means our courses work best if you use a Windows operating system (XP or newer) and a recent version of Microsoft Internet Explorer (8.0).

Your courses will also work with Macintosh OS X along with a recent version of Safari 2.0 or better. Along with Internet Explorer and Safari, eCollege also supports the Firefox browser (3.0) on both Windows and Mac operating systems.

I strongly recommend that you perform a “Browser Test” prior to the start of your course. To launch a browser test, login in to eCollege, click on the “myCourses” tab, and then select the “Browser Test” link under Support Services.

What to Do First:

1. Come to class
2. Read the syllabus
3. I will announce and explain assignments in class, but you should browse the course content so that you will know what is coming up

Communication and Support and Primary Communication Tools

I rely mainly on office hours, e-mail, and comments on assignments to communicate with students.

While I reply to individual e-mails with non-campus e-mail addresses, if I send out a mass e-mail, it will go to the email address identified in eCollege. Please check your campus e-mail frequently.

eCollege Student Technical Support:

Texas A&M University-Commerce provides students technical support in the use of eCollege. The student help desk may be reached by the following means 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Chat Support: Click on “Live Support” on the tool bar within your course to chat with an eCollege Representative.

Phone: 1-866-656-5511 (Toll Free) to speak with eCollege Technical Support Representative.

Email: helpdesk@online.tamuc.org to initiate a support request with eCollege Technical Support Representative.

Help: Click on the “Help” button on the toolbar for information regarding working with eCollege (i.e. How to submit to dropbox, How to post to discussions etc...)

University Student Technical Support

The writing center located in the Hall of Languages is a great resource. Be sure to take advantage of their expertise.

University Procedures/Policies

Drop a Course: Students may drop a course by logging into their myLEO account and clicking on the hyperlink labeled “Drop a class” from among the choices found under the myLEO section of the Web page.

Administrative Withdrawal: I reserve the right to administratively drop students for excessive absences.

Students with Disabilities: The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

VERY TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Week	Day	Date	
1	Tues	26-Aug	Getting acquainted
	Thurs	28-Aug	Writing handbook

2	Tues	2-Sep	Ideology and picture books, Part 1
	Thurs	4-Sep	Ideology and picture books, Part 2
3	Tues	1-Sep	Ideology and picture books, Part 3
	Thurs	11-Sep	Folk and Fairy Tales, Part 1
	Friday	12-Sep	Response: Your thoughts regarding ideology and picture books
4	Tues	16-Sep	Folk and Fairy Tales, Part 2
	Thurs	18-Sep	Folk and Fairy Tales, Part 3
5	Tues	23-Sep	“Little Mermaid”
	Thurs	25-Sep	“Little Mermaid”
6	Tues	30-Sep	Class dismissed, convocation
	Thurs	2-Oct	“Snow White” & Coover Text
	Friday	3-Oct	Response: Your thoughts regarding folk and fairy tales
7	Tues	7-Oct	<i>Zel</i>
	Thurs	9-Oct	<i>Zel</i>
8	Tues	14-Oct	<i>Wonderful Wizard of Oz</i>
	Thurs	16-Oct	<i>Wonderful Wizard of Oz</i>
9	Tues	21-Oct	<i>Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane</i>
	Thurs	23-Oct	<i>Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane</i>
10	Tues	28-Oct	Race Matters
	Thurs	30-Oct	Race Matters (Suture)
11	Tues	4-Nov	<i>Maniac Magee</i>
	Thurs	6-Nov	<i>Maniac Magee</i>
12	Tues	11-Nov	<i>Watsons Go to Birmingham, 1963</i>
	Thurs	13-Nov	<i>Watsons Go to Birmingham, 1963</i>
13	Tues	18-Nov	<i>Rock and the River</i>
	Thurs	20-Nov	<i>Rock and the River</i>

			Response: Your thoughts regarding race and children's literature
14	Tues	25-Nov	<i>Giver</i>
	Thurs	27-Nov	Class dismissed
15	Tues	2-Dec	<i>Giver</i>
	Thurs	4-Dec	<i>Skellig</i>
	Tues	9-Dec	Final Exam, 10:30-12:30, though it might be a take-home