

English 98r. Junior Tutorial
Children's Literature
Spring 2017
Instructor: Emily Silk

Course Overview:

This junior tutorial is an introduction to the study of children's literature. Our readings draw widely on more than 250 years of children's books, from John Newbery's *A Pretty Little Pocketbook* (1744) to the most recent winner of the Newbery Medal that takes his name: Matt de la Peña and Christian Robinson's *Last Stop on Market Street* (2015). Addressing both classic texts and emergent trends, we will consider the intersections between childhood and adulthood, fantasy and reality, instruction and play, words and pictures, the page and the screen. Along the way, we will also seek to answer big questions about the history and scope of the field. What is children's literature? Who is it for? What defines its conventions and its audiences in 1817, in 1917, in 2017?

More broadly, this course serves as an introduction to scholarly writing in the discipline of English. Our readings draw on a range of secondary materials, intended to familiarize you with current approaches and debates in the study of children's literature. Ultimately, you will situate your own work with regards to these approaches and debates through the research and writing of an original 20-25 page scholarly paper (the junior essay) on a relevant topic of your choosing.

Course Objectives:

By the conclusion of this tutorial, students should be able to:

- Describe and analyze a range of children's literary texts, as well as broader generic, historical, thematic, and formal trends in children's literature from the eighteenth century to present day
- Understand, evaluate, and apply critical approaches to children's literature
- Summarize and participate in current scholarly debates about children's literature
- Design a research question and conduct scholarly research to address it, making productive use of secondary criticism in addition to primary texts
- Develop a coherent and compelling literary argument in the form of a 20-25 page research paper

Required Texts:

The following texts should be purchased or borrowed from the library (copies will be available on reserve in Lamont). Note that the extensive children's collection at the Cambridge Public Library is another great resource for borrowing books. All other readings will be provided as handouts or available on Canvas.

Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) & *Through the Looking-Glass* (1871)
Louisa May Alcott, *Little Women* (1868-69)
Robert Louis Stevenson, *Treasure Island* (1888)
Beatrix Potter, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (1902)

J. M. Barrie, *Peter and Wendy* (1911)
Frances Hodgson Burnett, *The Secret Garden* (1911)
Margaret Wise Brown (writer) & Clement Hurd (illustrator), *Goodnight Moon* (1947)
Ezra Jack Keats, *The Snowy Day* (1962)
Stephen Chbosky, *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (1999)
Neil Gaiman, *Coraline* (2002)
Shaun Tan, *The Arrival* (2006)
Jacqueline Woodson, *Brown Girl Dreaming* (2014)
Matt de la Peña (writer) & Christian Robinson (illustrator), *Last Stop on Market Street* (2015)

Assignments:

Two Brief Presentations (5 minutes each) evaluating critical readings on our syllabus; we will have sign-ups for presentation dates during the first week of class.

Short Written Exercises (max. 300 words), responding to questions about the readings and/or applying skills relevant to the junior paper (for instance, I might ask you to practice summarizing an argument by writing a two-sentence synopsis of a critical reading). These periodic assignments will be due in class, and always distributed several days in advance.

Short Paper (5-6 pages) that makes an argument based on a close reading of one or more works read during the first third of the course. Due Week 4.

Junior Essay (20-25 pages) on a topic of your choice related to children's literature, to be determined during the first few weeks of class in consultation with me. The final essay is due at the end of reading period and is preceded by several intermediate deadlines:

- **Research Orientation (1 hour)** at Widener Library. During Week 3.
- **Prospectus (2 pages)** outlining the junior essay topic and a provisional argument. Due Week 6.
- **Annotated Bibliography** of at least 8-10 sources, including a brief description of each work's main argument and how the junior essay will engage with it. Due Week 6.
- **Rough Draft (20-25 pages)** of the junior essay. Due Week 9.
- **Conference Presentation (5 minutes)** on your research, to be delivered aloud at the Junior Tutorial Conference. Due Week 11.

Grading Breakdown:

Attendance & Participation: 10%
Presentations & Written Exercises: 15%
Short Paper: 20%
Prospectus & Annotated Bibliography: 10%
Draft of Junior Essay: 10%
Conference Presentation: 5%
Junior Essay: 30%

COURSE SYLLABUS

Unit 1: Moral Tales for Boys and Girls

Week 1 Introduction and Eighteenth-Century ‘Origins’

Primary Reading:

John Newbery, *A Little Pretty Pocket Book* (1744)
Mariah Edgeworth, “The Purple Jar” (1796)
John Locke, from *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693)

Secondary Reading:

Marah Gubar, “On Not Defining Children’s Literature” (2011; genre criticism)

Week 2 Fairy Tales and Fables

Primary Reading:

Charles Perrault, “Little Red Riding Hood,” “Sleeping Beauty,” “Cinderella,” “Bluebeard,” from *Stories or Tales from Times Past, with Morals* (1697)
Jacob & Wilhelm Grimm, “Little Red Cap,” “Little Briar Rose,” “Cinderella,” from *Children’s and Household Tales* (1812, 1815)
Oscar Wilde, “The Happy Prince” & “The Selfish Giant” (1888)
E. Nesbit, “The Prince, Two Mice, and Some Kitchen-Maids” & “Melisandre or, Long and Short Division,” from *Nine Unlikely Tales* (1901)

Secondary Reading:

J.R.R. Tolkien, “On Fairy-Stories” (1939; genre criticism)
Maria Tatar, “‘Teaching Them a Lesson’: The Pedagogy of Fear in Fairy Tales” from *Off with Their Heads!: Fairy Tales and the Culture of Childhood* (1993; cultural studies)
Zohar Shavit, “The Concept of Childhood and Children’s Folktales: Test Case— ‘Little Red Riding Hood’” (1983; feminist criticism)

Week 3 ‘Moral Pap for the Young’: Alcott and American Girlhood

***1-hour research orientation at Widener Library to be scheduled for a separate time this week*

Primary Reading:

Louisa May Alcott, *Little Women* (1868-69)

Secondary Reading:

Judith Fetterley, “‘Little Women’: Alcott’s Civil War” (1979; feminist criticism)
Barbara Sicherman, “Reading Little Women” from *Well-Read Lives: How Books Inspired a Generation of American Women* (2010; reception history)

Week 4 The Rise of Children's Periodicals

****Due Friday: Short Paper**

Primary Reading:

Mary Mapes Dodge (editor), selections from *St. Nicholas Magazine* (1873-1940)
W. E. B. Du Bois (editor), selections from *The Brownies' Book* (1920-21)
Children's magazine of choice (list of suggestions to be provided)

Secondary Reading:

Robin Bernstein, "Introduction" and "Chapter One" from *Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood from Slavery to Civil Rights* (2011; performance theory / critical race theory)
Maria DiCenzo, "Remediating the Past: Doing 'Periodical Studies' in the Digital Era" (2015; digital humanities / distant reading)

Unit 2: Strange and Fantastic Journeys

Week 5 Adventure on the High Seas: Victorian Boyhood & Empire

Primary Reading:

Robert Louis Stevenson, *Treasure Island* (1888)

Secondary Reading:

Joseph Bristow, "Island Stories" from *Empire Boys: Adventures in a Man's World* (1991; postcolonial / historical criticism)
Marah Gubar, "Treasure Island as Anti-Adventure Story" from *Artful Dodgers: Reconceiving the Golden Age of Children's Literature* (2009; postcolonial / historical criticism)

Week 6 O Frabjous Day: Literary Nonsense

****Due Friday: Prospectus & Annotated Bibliography**

Primary Reading:

Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865); *Through the Looking Glass* (1871)
Edward Lear, selections from *A Book of Nonsense* (1846); "The Owl and the Pussycat" (1867)
Shel Silverstein, selections from *Where The Sidewalk Ends* (1974)

Secondary Reading:

Gilles Deleuze, from *The Logic of Sense* (1969; philosophical criticism)

Week 7 Neverlands: On (Not) Growing Up in Children's Literature

Primary Reading:

J.M. Barrie, *Peter and Wendy* (1911)

Secondary Reading:

Jacqueline Rose, from *The Case of Peter Pan: or, The Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (1984; psychoanalytic / poststructuralist / genre criticism)
Perry Nodelman, "The Case of Children's Fiction; or, The Impossibility of Jacqueline Rose" (1985; genre criticism)

Week 8 Mysterious Houses and Hauntings

Primary Reading:

Frances Hodgson Burnett, *The Secret Garden* (1911)
Neil Gaiman, *Coraline* (2002)

Secondary Reading:

Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny" (1919)
Rebecca-Anne C. Do Rozario, "Fantastic Books: The Gothic Architecture of Children's Books" (2005; genre criticism)

Unit 3: Borders and Horizons

Week 9 Visualizing Literature: Picture Books & Graphic Novels

**Due Friday: Full Draft of Junior Paper

Primary Reading:

Beatrix Potter, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (1902)
Margaret Wise Brown (writer) & Clement Hurd (illustrator), *Goodnight Moon* (1947)
Ezra Jack Keats, *The Snowy Day* (1962)
Matt de la Peña (writer) & Christian Robinson (illustrator), *Last Stop on Market Street* (2015)
Shaun Tan, *The Arrival* (2006)

Secondary Reading:

Perry Nodelman, "Decoding the Images: How Picture Books Work" (1999; genre criticism)

Week 10 Young Adult Literature

Primary Reading:

Stephen Chbosky, *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (1999)
Jacqueline Woodson, *Brown Girl Dreaming* (2014)

Secondary Reading:

Michael Cart, from *Young Adult Literature: From Romance to Realism* (2011; genre criticism)
Ruth Graham, "Against YA" (*Slate* 2014)

Week 11 Topic of Choice & Presentations

***Due in Class: Conference Presentation (for practice run & peer feedback)*

Topic and readings of choice, to be determined by the interests of the class. Possibilities might include: children's theater, the child as author, adaptations and revisions, children's literature and the environment, utopias and dystopias, contemporary children's poetry, etc.

Week 12 Conclusion: The Digital Age & Beyond

***Final paper due the last day of reading period by 5:00 pm*

Primary Reading:

Select 1-2 children's literary apps, e-books, or other digital technologies to explore and report on to the class (list of suggestions to be provided)

Secondary Reading:

Erica Hateley, "Reading: From Turning the Page to Touching the Screen" from *(Re)imagining the World: Children's Literature's Response to Changing Times* (2013)

COURSE POLICIES

Academic Honesty: Plagiarism is the use of another person's ideas or writing without giving them proper credit. Consequences of plagiarism can range from failure on the assignment to dismissal from the course to even more serious actions. You are responsible for familiarizing yourself with Harvard FAS's Honor Code: "Members of the Harvard College community commit themselves to producing academic work of integrity – that is, work that adheres to the scholarly and intellectual standards of accurate attribution of sources, appropriate collection and use of data, and transparent acknowledgement of the contribution of others to their ideas, discoveries, interpretations, and conclusions. Cheating on exams or problem sets, plagiarizing or misrepresenting the ideas or language of someone else as one's own, falsifying data, or any other instance of academic dishonesty violates the standards of our community, as well as the standards of the wider world of learning and affairs."

Collaboration: I encourage you to talk with other students about the course and our readings, as well as to read one another's work. In individual assignments (including presentations, written exercises, and papers), academic collaboration and external sources should be always cited.

Office Hours & Conferences: In addition to regular weekly office hours (dates and times TBD), I am always happy to schedule additional meetings to discuss readings and research; it's never too early to come talk to me about ideas for your junior paper! I would also like to schedule individual check-ins with each of you across the semester to discuss the progress of your work. Expect to attend at least two 20-minute conferences with me, the first after you submit your short paper and the second after you submit the rough draft of your junior paper.

Email & Course Website: I will communicate with you by email each week on relevant logistics and what to expect in the upcoming class session. In addition, you should always feel free to email me with any thoughts, questions, or suggestions you may have. Our course website will serve as a repository of resources and information: readings, useful links, and announcements all will be posted there, though announcements will always also be distributed by email.

Attendance: Attendance in tutorial is key to your own success and to that of the class, as is attendance at Junior Tutorial General Meetings (dates TBD) and other required events (research orientation, Junior Tutorial Conference, etc.). I will allow each student one "free" absence in case of sickness, travel, etc.: no explanation necessary. Missing more than one class will impact your participation grade, and excessive absence could result in course failure. If you have extenuating circumstances, please communicate with me as soon as possible so we can decide on a plan of action together.

Deadlines & Late Grades: Unless otherwise specified, assignments are due by 11:59 pm on the date listed in the schedule; late assignments will have one-third of a letter grade subtracted per day late. I am willing to grant extensions for exceptional circumstances: if you think that you will need an extension on an assignment, please talk with me as soon as possible. Note that I cannot grant extensions for the final paper, which must be submitted by the due date: students who fail to submit a final paper, or who submit a final paper late without an official excuse, will fail the tutorial.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: "Students needing academic adjustments or accommodations because of a documented disability must present their Faculty Letter from the Accessible Education Office (AEO) and speak with the professor by the end of the second week of the term, (DATE). Failure to do so may result in the Course Head's inability to respond in a timely manner. All discussions will remain confidential, although Faculty are invited to contact AEO to discuss appropriate implementation."