In this tutorial, we will read children’s and young adult literature from the last two centuries alongside various complementary texts including poetry, philosophy, and recent and canonical criticism. The study of young adult literature goes far beyond nostalgia; it has taken up a place in several academic fields, including the studies of Romantic and Victorian literature, as well as psychoanalytic and narrative theory, among others. In contemporary publishing, young adult literature has become an exceptionally lucrative market, and several writers and critics have argued that the genre is currently producing the most exciting and ambitious writing (Philip Pullman has even said that young adult literature is now the only place where the author can be taken seriously). What are the implications of these claims? What can the modern scholar of literature/psychology/philosophy learn from the unreal worlds in which these fictions play out?

We will also look at the young adult novel as a microcosm of various literary techniques. Since young readers are more likely to abandon a book that fails to grab them, young adult fiction is a great place to examine the essentials of storytelling (and, thus, the basic elements of narrative theory). It is also a fascinating place in which examine the function of allusion and literary influence; many of the texts we read are—in several different senses—rewritings of older stories. And many are implicitly or explicitly about the very process of reading and interpretation. Students are encouraged to choose a specific area of interest (genre, literary technique, theoretical framework, etc.) early in the semester so that weekly discussion and supplementary reading can be tailored to their individual projects.

Course Requirements:

Regular attendance and participation, occasional short response papers, one midterm paper, an in-class presentation, library session with Widener library staff to discuss research resources and methods, prospectus and draft submission, and the Junior Essay (20-25 pages).

Course Texts

I will provide photocopies of almost all secondary materials (which will also be available on the course website) as well as some primary materials. You may already own copies of many of our texts and, with the exception of His Dark Materials, you are welcome to use your own copies. Required texts:

- Pullman, Philip. *His Dark Materials*. (Please buy the Everyman Library edition, which is available on Abebooks.com and contains all three novels. ISBN 9780307957832)


- Gaiman, Neil. *Coraline*
Schedule:

Each week, we will focus on a young adult novel or short story—our primary text—alongside a set of secondary texts (ranging from literary criticism to canonical works of philosophy or psychoanalysis). Both primary and secondary texts are required. I will be recommending additional material as students’ interests develop and sharpen over the course of the semester.

WEEK 1: Introduction: The Child is the Father of the Man

Secondary: The Case of Peter Pan: The Impossibility of Children's Fiction (Jacqueline Rose); “Children's Texts and the Grown Up Reader” (U.C. Knoepflmacher)

WEEK 2: Horror and the Fairytale

Primary: “The Sandman” (E.T.A. Hoffman); Coraline (Neil Gaiman)
Secondary: “The Uncanny” (Freud); Selections from The Uses of Enchantment (Bettelheim)

WEEK 3:* Young Adult Literature and the Epic Tradition

Reading: The Golden Compass (Philip Pullman); Books I and II of Paradise Lost (Milton), Selections from Songs of Innocence & Experience (Blake)
Criticism: “Fantasy’s Alternative Geography,” (Cambridge Companion), “Is this the Way? The Improving Fictions of Bunyan, Milton, and Philip Pullman” (Margaret Kean)

*Submit tentative list of research interests in preparation for our library visit

WEEK 4: Library Visit

WEEK 5: Innocence & Experience / Here & Elsewhere

Reading: The Subtle Knife and The Amber Spyglass (Philip Pullman)
Criticism: “On the Marionette Theater,” (Heinrich Von Kleist); (Foucault); “On Other Spaces,” (Michel Foucault); selections from The Anxiety of Influence (Harold Bloom)

WEEK 6: Fantasies of the Self

Primary: Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (Lewis Carroll); Peter and Wendy (J.M. Barrie); “Peter and Alice” (John Logan)
Secondary: Alice in Wonderland: The Child as Swain” (William Empson); from Problems of the Self (Bernard Williams); “All Sorts of Pitfalls and Surprises” (Jennifer Greer)
WEEK 7:* Allegories of Good and Evil

Reading: *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* and *The Last Battle* (C.S. Lewis)
Criticism: “Odysseus's Scar” from *Mimesis* (Erich Auerbach); “The Dark Side of Narnia” (Philip Pullman); Selected essays from *Cheek by Jowl* (Ursula K. Le Guin)

*Two to three page prospectus and annotated bibliography due in class

SPRING BREAK

WEEK 8: Narrative Strategy

Reading: *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (J.K. Rowling)
Criticism: “Morphology of the Folk Tale” (Vladimir Propp); From *S/Z* (Roland Barthes)

WEEK 9:* Contemporary YA and its Future

Reading: *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (Stephen Chbosky); *The Fault in Our Stars* (John Green); one self-published YA novel (to be chosen in consultation with instructor)
Criticism: “Look Homeward, Reader: A Not-So-Young Audience for Young Adult Books” (Meg Wolitzer, *NY Times*); “Against YA” (Ruth Graham, *Slate*)

*Draft of final essay due in class

WEEK 10: TBA

*Readings to be determined by participants*

WEEK 11: Student Presentations & Draft Workshops

WEEK 12: Student Presentations & Draft Workshops

FINAL ESSAY DUE MAY 3rd