

Dr. Kenneth Kidd
4331 Children's Literature
Summer B 2000

Office: TUR 4214
Phone: 392-0777 ext. 302
Hours: M-R Period 5 & by
appointment

Course Description and Policies

Required Texts (available at Goering's)

Beverly Cleary, *Dear Mr. Henshaw*
Christopher Paul Curtis, *The Watsons Go To Birmingham -- 1963*
Jean Craighead George, *Julie of the Wolves*
Karen Hesse, *Out of the Dust*
Carl Hiassen, *Team Rodent*
Ezra Jack Keats, *The Snowy Day*
Theresa Nelson, *Earthshine*
Maurice Sendak, *Where the Wild Things Are*
Doris Buchanan Smith, *A Taste of Blackberries*
Maria Tatar, *The Classic Fairy Tales*

AND a coursepack from Xerographic, available at Goering's.

Where possible, I'd like for you to use the editions I ordered so that we'll be referring to the same pages, but if you already own other editions, or if you can find them cheaper elsewhere, that's fine. Please buy the coursepack immediately, as you'll need it first.

Overview

This course surveys children's literature from its inception as a genre (or set of genres) to its present interdisciplinary forms. It has three major objectives: 1) to review the rich history and changing incarnations of children's literature; 2) to explore the ideologies of childhood from a variety of critical/theoretical perspectives; and 3) to help future and practicing teachers evaluate the artistic, literary, psychological, and social merit of books and multi-media texts available for use in K-12 schools. Because the course is offered by the English department, we shall concentrate on literary and cultural analysis. In other words, this course is not a teaching methods course. Do not assume that "childhood" or "children's literature" are consistent or self-explanatory terms – quite the contrary, as we'll see.

The traditional elements of literature (plot, character, setting, etc.) will often be our the beginning points of analysis only. You are expected to familiarize yourself with terms and concepts that enable children's literature to be discussed as an intellectually and ideologically challenging discipline. We will be interdisciplinary and eclectic in our approach. We'll study canonical and contemporary texts from major and minor genres to see how children's literature has evolved. Alongside more traditional texts we'll try to address children's films, commercials, cartoons and other forms of mass and popular culture. Despite its infantilized and sentimentalized reputation, children's literature has grown up in many respects, addressing such tough issues as AIDS, sexual abuse, sexual harassment, drugs, war, racism, and homophobia.

Please note: In this particular section, due in part to the brevity of the summer term, I've opted to emphasize contemporary books and films rather than classic works of children's literature, and also to concentrate on realistic literature rather than fantasy. You're welcome to cover other territory in your essay.

Format and Expectations

Class format will be a combination of lecture and discussion. Arrive ready to talk. Because of the class size we have the opportunity to get to know one another and discuss the readings in detail. I will lecture when appropriate, and you are responsible for that information.

You are always responsible for the reading material, even if we do not discuss it in class. Sometimes I will discuss the readings in detail, but sometimes I will assume you've read and remembered it, and will provide you with additional information, so be prepared. On the exams I will emphasize what we've talked about together, but I will still ask basic questions about all of the reading.

This is an informal class, but that does not mean that anything goes. Please don't read the newspaper or do homework during class. If you distract me or others by talking during discussion, I will ask you to leave.

Cheating results in an automatic "F" on that assignment. I'd prefer that you work with me if you need any help with assignments.

Assignments and Grading

All students will be examined over the material read collectively and lecture information. There will be two exams, the second of which is not cumulative. Both are short-answer (around 20 questions), but not scantron. You will also write a 5-7 pp. essay on the Newbery Medal book of your choice. There will also be 5-10 unannounced quizzes which you may not make up unless you can provide documentation of illness or emergency. These quizzes will usually consist of 3-4 short and simple questions about the reading which you can answer in several sentences or less. Finally, you will receive a grade for active participation, which means coming to class regularly and on time, paying attention, asking questions, and contributing to in-class discussion.

Exam 1	25%
Exam 2	25%
Quizzes	15%
Essay	25%
Active Participation	10%

Schedule

Week 1

7/3 Introductions. **History and Theory of Childhood and Children's Literature.**

7/4 Holiday.

7/5 "Outline of the History . . ."; Kruppa, "The History of Childhood" and Somerville, "The Business of Entertaining Children."

7/6 History continued (using coursepacket materials).

7/7 Hiassen, *Team Rodent*; Sachs, "The Last Commodity."

Week 2

7/10 **Folklore and Its Discontents.** Maria Tatar, Introduction, and the section on "Little Red Riding Hood."

7/11 Tatar continued: "Beauty and the Beast."

7/12 Tatar continued: "Snow White" and "Cinderella."

7/13 Film: *Freeway*. Darnton, "Peasants Tell Tales . . ." (in Tatar).
 7/14 *Freeway* continued.

Week 3

7/17 **Picture Book Poetics**. Caldecott talk and slide-show, Rita Smith, Curator of the Baldwin Collection. Kidd, "Picture Books."
 7/18 Sendak, *Where the Wild Things Are*; Shaddock, "*Where the Wild Things Are*: Sendak's Journey into the Heart of Darkness."
 7/19 Keats, *The Snowy Day*. Neff, "Strange Faces in the Mirror."
 7/20 **Exam 1**.
 7/21 Early Readers. Smith, *A Taste of Blackberries*.

Week 4

7/24 Cleary, *Dear Mr. Henshaw*.
 7/25 **Gender and the Feral Child**. Film: *The Secret of the Wild Child*.
 7/26 George, *Julie of the Wolves*. Kidd, "Men Who Run . . ."
 7/27 **Historical Fictions**. Hesse, *Out of the Dust* (pp. 3-114).
 7/28 Hesse continued (pp. 115-227).

Week 5

7/31 Curtis, *The Watsons Go to Birmingham – 1963*.
 8/1 continued.
 8/2 **Essay due. Sexuality**. Mental Hygiene film excerpts.
 8/3 Film: *American Pie*. Wojcik-Andrews, "The Politics of Children's Films."
 8/4 *American Pie* continued. Begin reading *Earthshine*.

Week 6

8/7 Nelson, *Earthshine* (pp.1-88); McRuer, "Children's Literature and the Anti-Body."
 8/8 continued (pp. 89-182).
 8/9 Film: *Ma Vie en Rose*.
 8/10 continued.
 8/11 **Exam 2**.