

Dr. Kenneth Kidd  
LIT 4333  
W Pds. 6-8  
Spring 2004

Office: TUR 4214  
392-6650, ext. 302  
Hours: W Pds. 9-10  
& by appointment

This syllabus is also available on my Web page ("syllabi" links):  
<http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/kkidd/>

## Literature for the Adolescent

### Texts

Laurie Halse Anderson, *Speak*  
M.T. Anderson, *Feed*  
Edward Bloor, *Crusader*  
Frank Chin, *Donald Duk*  
Robert Cormier, *I Am the Cheese*  
Daniel Clowes, *Ghost World*  
Virginia Hamilton, *Sweet Whispers, Brother Rush*  
David Levithan, ed., *You Are Here, This Is Now*  
Billy Merrell, *Talking in the Dark*  
Philip Pullman, *The Golden Compass*  
Pam Munoz Ryan, *Esperanza Rising*  
Cynthia Voigt, *Dacey's Song*  
Ellen Wittlinger, *Hard Love*

All books are at Goering's/Bageland near campus.

There is also a small coursepacket from Xerographic, available at their store (927 NW 13th St).

### Overview

This section of LIT 4333 will concentrate on contemporary young adult literature, with reference to the history of adolescence and of adolescent/young adult literature as well as to twentieth-century American culture more broadly. *I Am the Cheese* and *Dacey's Song* are our earliest texts; everything else has been published very recently. The course will pay attention to these texts as individual works but also as part of the contemporary scene of young adult publishing, prize-giving, and reviewing -- that is, we'll look at the cultural machinery through which "young adult" literature has been invented, sustained, and transformed through the current moment. We'll consider the entanglement of literary and cultural understandings of adolescence, and make use of relevant scholarship in history, social science, and literary criticism. Some of that scholarship is included in the coursepacket; at other times I will lecture based on that material.

Although I will sometimes provide you with background information, for which you are responsible, we will conduct class as a seminar, which means that participation is vital. Please come to class every day on time having read the assigned material. Be ready to share your responses. On occasion I may ask you to work in small groups.

On February 27, Dr. Julia Mickenberg, Assistant Professor of American Studies at the University of Texas-Austin, will present a lecture on progressive children's and YA literature entitled

### **Attendance Policy**

Your participation is vital, and attendance is mandatory. Because we meet once a week, missing one class means missing a week's worth of work. For that reason, you are allowed to miss only one class session without explanation. For each subsequent missed class without a doctor's note I will reduce your final course grade one-half of a letter grade. If you are not here when I take attendance -- usually at the beginning of class, but sometimes at the end -- you will be counted absent. If you have attendance problems, please do not sign up for this class.

### **Assignments and Grading**

Your course grade will be based on the following assignments. There are no exams; nearly your entire grade comes from your writing. This means that while you won't have to remember all of the texts in detail, you will be writing about most of them. Because we have a lot to do in class, I don't plan to devote class time to writing issues, but I'm very available during office hours for help. I'm always happy to read drafts.

I reserve the right to give unannounced quizzes if I feel that students are too far behind in the reading or if discussion lags; should we have quizzes, they will be averaged with the memos.

Memos (10)	30%
Essay 1	25%
Essay 2/Project	35%
active participation	10%

Memos. Over the semester, you will write 10 reading responses of 1-2 s-s., typed pages each. Out of some thwarted business urge I call such a response a "memo." The memo is simply a short meditation on the reading. Your memo should offer a response to the book as a whole; don't turn in a memo if you haven't finished the assignment. You may address a number of issues or focus more in-depth on one or two; just be as specific as you can, and support your responses with examples and details from the text. Sometimes I may ask you in advance to write about a particular issue, but usually I won't; if I don't, then you should develop your own response.

I do not expect you to have a thorough interpretation, but your memo should offer some kind of evaluation or analysis of the book as a whole. In other words, it should be more than simply random or unconnected thoughts about the work. If you like, you may make use of outside readings (biographical sketches, scholarly articles, websites, etc.). This assignment is designed to stimulate class discussion, and to help you remember the texts and generate paper ideas.

You may write these at any point in the semester, beginning with the second week, but you may not do more than one memo per week, and I will accept them only in class on Wednesday -- do not email them to me, or leave them in my mailbox. I will return them the following week. They do not need to be perfect, but please try to correct spelling and typing errors. I will grade each memo and average the grades.

Essay 1. There are now a number of book awards given to outstanding young adult titles, most administered and promoted by the American Library Association. You are to choose one of these awards and then read and evaluate one award-winning title. I would suggest that you consider the book in relation to the stated criteria for the award, but I'm open to any kind of interpretation as long as you address in some way the question of the book's alleged distinction. Please do not argue that yes, the book deserved the award or that no, it didn't -- provide a more specific analysis of the book's themes or structure or ideology that situates the book in relation to the aims and criteria of the award. Possible awards to choose from: the Alex Awards, the ALA Best Books for Young Adults, the Michael L. Printz Awards -- these are all described on the ALA's Web site: [www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org). If you like, you may also choose the Belpré Medal or the Coretta Scott King Award, both of which recognize distinction with respect to social identity and are often given to young adult narratives. I do not want biographical criticism, although you may use some biographical data in your essay. 5-7 d-s pp.

Essay 2. Write a longer analysis of a young adult genre or special topic or particular author, using at least two outside primary readings and at least two outside secondary sources. If you like, you may instead use a particular critical methodology to illuminate and connect two texts. Whatever you choose to do, develop a specific argument and support your claims. Some biographical information may be appropriate, but this paper should not be a biographical essay. You must meet with me to discuss this paper. 8-10 d-s pp.

**or**

In lieu of the critical essay, you may plan and begin work on a young adult writing project of some kind, probably a novel but perhaps a work of poetry or nonfiction, even a play. If you would like to work on such a project, you must come talk to me about your ideas during office hours by the end of February, even though of course the piece will continue to evolve as you work on it. I will evaluate your project according to both its quality and the energy you put into it, with the understanding that a good faith effort with relatively few writing errors can earn you an "A." In other words, I do not expect literary genius -- though that would be nice for everyone, you especially -- but I do expect you to

put in some real time and effort. Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to produce at least the following:

1. A chapter-by-chapter outline, or possibly a detailed section outline;
2. A complete first chapter;
3. Another fairly complete section, preferably a later one, which might include important scenes and dialogue; and
4. A short explanation of how you got your ideas and how they changed (if they changed) in the process of brainstorming, writing, and revising.

If you model your work on other writings, you might want to photocopy relevant sections and attach them as well. Probably it would be best to assemble a portfolio or folder so that these individual items don't get separated.

As always, I'd be happy to help in any way, so don't hesitate to come see me. This could be quite fun, but don't underestimate the time it will take. If you're looking for some inspiration, there are a number of creativity manuals out there; a particularly useful (if also somewhat flaky) one is Julia Cameron's *The Artist's Way*.

Grading Scheme. I give A's to essays using an original and spirited argument to illuminate complexities of language and theme. I give B+'s to well-organized, well-developed, relatively error-free essays with sparks of originality or daring, and B's to competent essays needing more complex development and/or clearer focus. Lower grades mean greater problems with development, structure, and grammar. Recurrent grammatical errors lower the grade; occasional spelling errors and typos don't. The best essays sustain complex and/or audacious arguments; a good B essay capably summarizes and compares themes.

Active participation means attending regularly, asking questions, offering insights, sharing memos -- in short, being actively involved. I respect individual styles, and I do not expect you to talk all of the time, but plan to attend and to contribute to discussion.

## Reading Schedule

### January

- |    |                                                                                                    |
|----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 7  | Introductions.                                                                                     |
| 14 | Neubauer; Kristeva; Hine (both chapters) -- all in coursepacket (CP); and Trites, Ch. 1 (handout). |
| 21 | <i>I Am the Cheese</i>                                                                             |
| 28 | <i>Dacey's Song</i> ; Trites, Ch. 2 (handout)                                                      |

### February

- |   |                   |
|---|-------------------|
| 4 | <i>Donald Duk</i> |
|---|-------------------|

11 *Sweet Whispers, Brother Rush*  
18 *Speak*; Martin (CP)  
25 *Ghost World*; **Essay 1 due**

### **March**

3 *The Golden Compass*  
10 Spring Break  
17 *Crusader*; Latham (CP).  
24 *Esperanza Rising*  
31 *You are Here, This is Now*

### **April**

7 *Talking in the Dark*; Sedgwick (CP)  
14 *Hard Love*; Duncombe (CP)  
21 *Feed*; **Essay 2/Projects due**