The University of Maryland, College Park  
College of Education

Introduction to Children’s Literature  
EDCI 443: Section 0301  
Tuesday/Thursday 11:00 – 12:30  
EDU 3236

Course Syllabus  
Fall 2009

Instructor: Angela S. Lawrence  
Office: 0108 Cole Field House  
Office Hours: By Appointment  
Email: aslawren@umd.edu

Course Overview

This undergraduate course provides an introduction to literature written for children and adolescents (birth – middle school) and the role of children's literature as a conduit for a culturally relevant curriculum. We will analyze texts using literary as well as sociopolitical perspectives. The course is organized by literary genres with an emphasis on diversity as well as the interaction between reader and text. Identity is an important aspect of this course – both our own identities and those of our students. Throughout this exploration, we will analyze which groups of people are represented in children's literature and which groups are excluded. We will use these assessments to discuss the social and historic events surrounding the publication of certain books, as well as the implications for effectively teaching a diverse group of students.

In particular, you will:

- Read and discuss texts from a variety of genres and traditions
- Learn how to use literary criteria to select and evaluate children’s literature
- Become familiar with authors and illustrators of classic and contemporary children’s texts
- Exhibit a familiarity with a range of children’s literature awards
- Understand the hegemonic influence of Western literary traditions in American schools
- Recognize the hegemonic portrayal of history and society by popular Western media
- Think critically about representations of race, ethnicity, class, gender, and/or sexuality in texts for children
- Learn how to use literature to connect to the lives of diverse students
- Understand the sociopolitical contexts surrounding selected award winning titles
- Recognize the transformative power of literature
- Learn how literature is a vital component of a culturally relevant curriculum
Conceptual Framework

This course is a requirement for the teacher education program. The intent of the teacher education program at UMCP is to prepare reflective practitioners for a diverse society through research based professional programs. Our shared vision is consistent with our mission as a Research I institution that views Research and Inquiry, Diversity, Collaboration, and Technology as foundations to our conceptual framework. For more information please visit, http://www.education.umd.edu/teacher_education/downloads/framework.doc

The Elementary Education program strives to help students develop a knowledge base that is shared by teaching professionals. The College of Education (COE) Conceptual Framework provides a foundation for the development of this knowledge base. The COE Conceptual Framework is integrated with standards from the Elementary Education Performance Based Assessment Plan, which address the planning, delivery, and assessment of effective instructional practice. Through this framework, students learn that reflective practitioners make effective instructional decisions based upon their interactions with several types of professional knowledge.

First, reflective practitioners need knowledge of curricula, subject matter, and appropriate pedagogical techniques for imparting subject matter knowledge. In addition, reflective practitioners need knowledge of learners, including knowledge of student characteristics and cognitions as well as knowledge of motivational and developmental aspects of how students learn to read. Reflective practitioners also need knowledge of educational goals and assessment techniques to effectively monitor student progress. Finally, reflective practitioners need knowledge of the social and cultural context to understand how issues of equity (e.g., cultural and linguistic differences, gender, socio-economic status) influence the processes of teaching and learning about literature in schools.

Required Texts

Readings Posted on Blackboard


Course Requirements

Class attendance and preparedness are essential to the success of this course. You will be evaluated for your contributions to making the class successful. It is imperative that you come on time, stay for the entire class, and come prepared with all materials and assignments. It
would benefit you to find a class “buddy” that you can contact if you miss a class. I will pass around a sign-in sheet each class.

Annotated Bibliography 5 points

During each class session, you will be exploring a variety of children’s literature. As you do, select those that interest you, and not their title, author, publication information, and a few sentences about their content. You will need a total of 15 books in your bibliography, so pace yourself accordingly.

Quizzes 30 points

There will be 7 brief quizzes at the very beginning of some classes. Each quiz will be worth 5 points, allowing you to drop your lowest quiz score, for a total of 30 possible points. If you are late to class, you will miss the quiz. Quizzes cannot be made up for credit unless you provide a doctor’s note.

Attendance and Participation 10 points

I expect you to attend all scheduled classes and to participate in all class discussions. Please be on time. Late arrivals disrupt other students and our class time. Consistent tardiness will result in a lowered grade for the course. Your participation grade includes a Newbery group project and a variety of assignments done in class.

Culturally Relevant Lesson Plan (To be distributed in class) 10 points

Reading Response Assignments 5 points

To facilitate class discussion, on specified days you are expected to come prepared with a reading response assignment sheet completed (please see attached description). This is your opportunity to put your thoughts on paper and make it easier for you to speak in class. I will collect some assignments and not others. When I collect them, I will return them with a check mark and record that you have completed them, provided they are satisfactory. Please make copies of the attached weekly assignment sheet.

Expert Author Presentation 5 points

Each class session, students will serve as experts on an assigned author for that week. Each student will present a 3-5 minute Power Point presentation on a particular author and provide a one-page two-sided handout for each student in the class and for the instructor. Bring in at least 3 books by your author to pass around during your author presentation. Do not cut and paste sections of book reviews that you read on the Internet! This is plagiarism and is a serious offense. Please read the books and write your own. For Power Points, reduce the amount of text per slide. Slides should capture highlights from your handout and your oral presentation, not the exact same text. Please make sure that you do not simply read the information verbatim from your Power Point.

Critical Reading Logs (see attached description) 20 points (10 each)

Disney Film Analysis (see attached description) 5 points
Other things you need to know:

All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date listed in the syllabus. Please place your assignments in the manila folder with your name on it. When assignments are graded, I will place them back in your folders and you will collect them. Please DO NOT send assignments or attachments via email unless I request them from you. All components of your assignments need to be handed in on the date due. Late assignments will lose one point for each day beyond the due date. If you have a special circumstance and won't be able to meet the deadline, let me know before the assignment is due and we will discuss your request.

Please use APA style when citing sources in ALL assignments. An online guide can usually be found at http://www.lib.umd.edu/guides/citing_apa.html#specific but as of August 2009, has been removed for revisions. An alternate source is the OWL at Purdue website: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/

Honor Statement:

The University of Maryland, College Park has a nationally recognized Code of Academic Integrity, administered by the Student Honor Council. This Code sets standards for academic integrity at Maryland for all undergraduate and graduate students. As a student, you are responsible for upholding these standards for this course. It is very important for you to be aware of the consequences of cheating, fabrication, facilitation, and plagiarism. For more information on the Code of Academic Integrity or the Student Honor Council, please visit http://www.shc.umd.edu. To further exhibit your commitment to academic integrity, please include the Honor Pledge on all assignments in your own handwriting:

“I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this assignment.”

Grading Scale:

100 Possible Points:
A = 90-100
B = 80-89
C = 70-79
D = 69 and below

A Excellent mastery of the content and outstanding scholarship
B Good mastery of the subject and good scholarship
C Acceptable mastery of the subject and the usual achievement expected
D Marginal performance, and does not represent satisfactory progress toward a degree
F Failure to comprehend the subject matter and unsatisfactory performance

Note:
Please let me know how I can assist you if you require any special accommodations in the course
Please turn cell phones off during class or at the minimum, place them on silent. Phones vibrating in bookbags is disruptive to learning and the sending/receiving of text messages during class is disrespectful. To reiterate, papers will not be accepted electronically – hard copies only, please.

**Course Outline**

September

1  Introduction to the Course and to each other: Our experiences with text, reading experiences in school, and aspirations for our future students as readers

3  Reading and Responding to Literature  
Come Prepared to Discuss: Cover to Cover, Ch. 1, 7, 8  

*Due: Reading Response Assignment (choose any chapter)*

8  Reading Critically  
Come Prepared to Discuss: Getting Beyond, Ch. 1, 2  
“10 Quick Ways to Analyze Children’s Books for Racism and Sexism”**  
(** indicates a Blackboard posting)

*Due: Bring an everyday text/example of environmental print to class with you (advertisements, etc; see Getting Beyond, Ch. 2 for more ideas)*

**Author Presentations: Laurence Yep/Tomie dePaola**

10  Connecting Children’s Lives to Books  
Come Prepared to Discuss: Getting Beyond, Ch. 3, 4, 6  
“The Importance of Visibility: Students’ and Teachers’ Criteria for Selecting African-American Literature”**

15  The Role of Literature in Culturally Relevant Teaching  
Come Prepared to Discuss: “Spanglish, Bilingualism, Culture, and Identity in Latino Children’s Literature”**

*Due: Reading Response Assignment*

17  Characterizations in Children’s Literature  
Come Prepared to Discuss: “Characters As Guides to Meaning”**

*Due: Bring an example of any text that meets the criteria specified in the article to class for our group discussion*
Animal Fantasy
Come Prepared to Discuss: The Tale of Despereaux
Due: Reading Response Assignment

Fairy/Folk Tales: European Traditions and African, Asian, and Native American Variations: Which tradition is dominant?
Come Prepared to Discuss: Tales, “Little Red Riding Hood,” “Cinderella”

Author Presentations: Chris Van Allsburg/Ed Young

Fairy/Folk Tales: Violence and Sexuality
Come Prepared to Discuss: Tales, “Hansel & Gretel,” “Bluebeard”
“Sex and Violence”*

Author Presentations: Leo & Diane Dillon/Paul Fleischman

Fairy/Folk Tales: Gender Representations
Come Prepared to Discuss: Tales, “Beauty and the Beast”
“What if Beauty Had Been Ugly?: Reading Against the Grain of Gender Bias in Children’s Books”*

Author Presentation: Paul O. Zelinsky

October

6 A Close Look at Disney: Reproduction or Transformation?
In Class Film: Mickey Mouse Monopoly

8 Disney Movies: Race, Class, and Gender
Come Prepared to Discuss: Tales, “Breaking the Disney Spell”
“Seeing White: Children of Color and the Disney Fairy Tale Princess”**

13 Picture Books – Their Origin, Some Early Titles, and a Variety of Styles
Come Prepared to Discuss: Cover to Cover, Ch. 5; Picture This, entire text
Due: Bring a book that you intend to review for your reading log
Due: Disney Movie Analysis assignment

Author Presentations: Avi/Margaret Wise Brown
15 Picture Books – Social and Political Implications and Influence  
Come Prepared to Discuss: “Multicultural Children’s Literature as an Instrument of Power,”** and “Creating a Caring Classroom with Children’s Literature”***

20 Multicultural Literature: “Why do we need Black History Month?”  

We will utilize Banks’ and Sleeter's models of multicultural education to explore a variety of children's texts.

*Due: Reading Log #1*

**Author Presentations: Ezra Jack Keats/Mildred Taylor**

22 Newbery Award Winners and their Societal Contexts (The Holocaust, Slavery, Racism)

*Due: Reading Response assignment on your Newbery book*

**Author Presentations: Patricia Polacco/Jerry Spinelli**

27 Newbery Award Winners  
Group Presentations

29 Transitional Books: Who are the readers? Who are the characters? Who is being excluded?  
National Reading Statistics  
Come Prepared to Discuss: *Cover to Cover*, Ch. 6

**Author Presentation: Cynthia Rylant**

November

3 Historical Fiction: Native American Representations/Westward Movement  
Come Prepared to Discuss: *The Little House on the Prairie*  
“Home on the Range”***

5 Historical Fiction: The Holocaust  
Come Prepared to Discuss: *The Butterfly*
“Authenticity in Holocaust Literature for Children”

Due: Reading Log #2

10 Non-fiction/Biographies I: What messages do they convey?
Come Prepared to Discuss: The Librarian of Basra and Alia’s Mission
“A Secret Mission”**

Author Presentation: Molly Bang/David Shannon

12 Non-fiction/Biographies II
Come Prepared to Discuss: Cover to Cover, Ch. 2

Due: Bring a Picture Book Biography to class

Author Presentation: Gail Gibbons/Brian Collier

17 Fantasy
Come Prepared to Discuss: Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone
“Harry Potter and the Public School Library”**

Due: Reading Response Assignment, Bring an artifact from popular culture related to Harry Potter (movie ad, newspaper article, game, etc.)

Author Presentation: Jane Yolen/J.K. Rowling

19 Poetry – Langston Hughes and the Harlem Renaissance, Eloise Greenfield, Nikki Giovanni, Nikki Grimes, Pat Mora, and Gary Soto
Come Prepared to Discuss: “Developing a Poetry Friendly Classroom”**

Author Presentations: Pat Mora/Eric Carle

24 Science Fiction… and those who challenge it
Come Prepared to Discuss: The Giver

Due: Reading Response Assignment, The Giver

Due: Culturally Relevant Lesson Plan

Author presentations: Mo Willems/Madeline L’Engle/E.L.Konigsburg
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1    | **Censorship – Challenged and Banned Books; Intellectual Freedom**  | Come Prepared to Discuss: “Parents Against Bad Books”  
http://www.pabbis.com/org.html  

Due: Bring a newspaper article, website, etc. that deals with censorship of children’s literature.  

**Author Presentation: Judy Blume** |

| 3    | **Contemporary Realistic Fiction – The Changing Images of Childhood** | Come Prepared to discuss: Maniac Magee  
“And Then I Read,”  
http://www.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Resources/Journals/VM/0084-may01/VM0084And.pdf  

**Author Presentation: Walter Dean Meyers** |

Rethinking Schools, 19: 16-19. Available online at www.rethinkingschools.org  

**In Class Reading:** And Tango Makes Three, The Different Dragon, The Family Book |

| Final Class | 10 | **Final Exam & Self-Evaluation** | **Due:** Annotated bibliography |
Disney Film Analysis

The Disney Corporation is a 3.8 billion dollar company – one of the largest media and entertainment corporations in the world. Founded in 1922, Disney has grown into a company that owns 10 television stations (including ABC), 3 on-line interactive media groups, parks and resorts in the US, Japan, France, and Hong Kong, a cruise-ship line, a cable network, a home video division, Broadway theatrical productions, and merchandise ranging from apparel, toys, home décor, books and magazines to interactive games, food and beverages, stationery, electronics and animation art.
(For more information, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Walt_Disney_Company)

Given its influence on millions of children across vast populations, and its control of the media seen by children and adults alike, we will explore how the Disney Corporation chooses to represent men, women, and members of “minority” groups to the children who are watching and learning about their world. For this assignment, you will be required to put aside your personal feelings and to objectively explore the themes that are communicated through a movie of your choice.


Part 1
Working in pairs, locate the year your movie was released along the time line of news events that you will retrieve from Blackboard. In 2-3 paragraphs, comment on how your movie either reflects the general state of American society or offers a transformative view. For example, if your movie was released during or after the years of the creation of President Kennedy’s Commission on the Status of Women, are the female characters portrayed as subservient and dependent (reflecting society) or as independently-minded, competent leaders (transforming societal trends)?

Part 2
In order to analyze the characters, create a list of all characters in the film; categorize each of the characters in the film by gender (if identifiable) and by whether they play a major or minor role.
Then describe each of the characters, especially those in major roles, according to some selection of the following traits:

• stereotypical masculine traits: physically strong, achievement-oriented/ambitious, self-reliant, self-confident, independent, responsible, decisive, rational, dominant/assertive, aggressive/violent

• stereotypical feminine traits: obedient, submissive, dependent, anxious to please, emotional, nurturing, affectionate, gentle, understanding, sensitive, sacrificing, family oriented, obsessed with physical appearance, seductive.
Part 3

What conclusions can you draw from your content analysis? Write briefly about what you found (2-3 paragraphs) and place your findings in the context of societal trends of the day. Stick to the film you viewed not your feelings about Disney or other Disney films. Some questions to think about include:

Are the major roles in this Disney film given primarily to males or females? Are the male and female characters in Disney films stereotypically masculine and feminine in their traits and behaviors? For the lead character in each film, what is his/her primary goal or wish to be realized in the course of the film? Does this vary by gender?


Part 1

Working in pairs, locate the year your movie was released along the time line of news events that you will retrieve from Blackboard. Comment on how your movie either reflects the general state of American society or offers a transformative view. For example, if your movie was released around the time of the 1954 Supreme Court Case, Brown v. Board of Education, observe whether the Black characters portrayed in a negative, less-than-equal manner (reflecting American society) or as being equal in stature to the White characters (transforming societal norms)?

Part 2

In order to analyze the racial and ethnic representations of the characters, create a list of all characters in the film. Categorize each of the characters in the film by race/ethnicity (if identifiable) and by whether they play a major or minor role. Then, describe each of the characters, especially those in major roles, according to some selection of the following traits:

- positive traits: honest, showing integrity, intelligent, wise, kind
- negative traits: sinister, cruel, lying, stealing, brutal, mischievous, foolish

Part 3

What conclusions can you draw from your content analysis? Write briefly about what you found (2-3 paragraphs). Stick to the film you viewed not your general feelings about Disney or other Disney films. Some questions to think about include:

What is the racial/ethnic identity of the major sympathetic characters? What is the racial/ethnic identity of the major unsympathetic characters? What characteristics seem to be associated with each identifiable racial/ethnic characterization? If the race/ethnicity of any characters are not easily identifiable, do you think they are nonetheless portrayed in the mold of white Americans (e.g., no identifiable accent / standard American accent, middle-class American values, etc.?)
Reading Log #1 (10 points): Award Winning Picture Books

"Literature records the depths and heights of the human experience. It can develop compassion by educating the heart as well as the mind. It can help children entertain new ideas; develop insights they never had before. It can stretch the imagination, creating new experiences, enriching old ones. It can develop a sense of what is true and just and beautiful."

—Charlotte Huck

Part I:
Write a one page introduction, explaining the subject of your paper, and the criteria for judging picture books. Those criteria should be taken from chapter 5 in Horning’s From Cover to Cover.

Part II:
You will have read a minimum of 4 award-winning or honor books to review. Pick one picture book from each of the following award lists:

- Boston Globe Award
- Caldecott Award
- Coretta Scott King Award
- Pura Belpre or the Americas Award

Write a critical evaluation for each book. Each critical evaluation should be approximately 100-400 words. Divide each evaluation into 3 parts:

Descriptive
- Objective statements about the book. (length, fiction/non-fiction, black and white, color)

Analytical
- Statements about literary and artistic elements (design, lines, how the illustrations work with the text) comparison and mention of contributions to the field.

Sociological
- Judgments based on nonliterary considerations, such as potential controversial elements or predictions about popularity. Issues about diversity and racial/ethnic/ gender representations would go here.

Make up a list of all the points you would like to include in your review, placing each one in its corresponding category. Descriptive points might lead you to ask questions that lead to analysis. For instance, if the book has color photographs, how do they support the text? Are they well placed?

Part II:
Your reading log will conclude with a reflection on what you’ve learned about children’s picture books. Highlight the key issues that came up as you read the articles and the literature. Please put thought into this section and make sure it is approximately one page in length.
Human Identity & Children’s Literature

Part I:
You will read and write a summary (1 paragraph) of one scholarly article. The article must address the history, selection and/or use of literature that represents a particular group of people, united by a common identity. The identity you choose to explore may be based on race, class, gender, nationality, language, or sexuality.

Articles should come from scholarly journals such as, *Children’s Literature in Education, The New Advocate, Children’s Literature Quarterly,* and *Language Arts.* You can also find articles in books such as Violet Harris’s *Using Multi-ethnic Literature in the K-8 Classroom.*

Part II:
You will then review three children’s books, using the criteria from the articles and the course handout. You must capture the identity of any ONE particular group; all three books need to represent THE SAME particular group. Your books need to include one of each of the following:

- Picture book
- Novel
- Nonfiction

You might want to consult the following web sites for appropriate book titles:

Orbis Pictus
http://www.ncte.org/elem/awards/orbispictus/115475.htm

National Council of Social Studies Notable Trade Books for Young People (NCSS) (1)
http://www.socialstudies.org/resources/notable/

Part III:

Your reading log will conclude with a reflection on what you've learned about multi-ethnic literature. Highlight the key issues that came up as you read the articles and the literature.
Reading Response Assignment

Name: ________________________________________________________________

Date:_______________________________________________________________

Title: ______________________________________________________________

1. Readers interpret what they read in unique and individual ways. Their interpretations are based on their own past experiences and on the parts of their identities that are most salient at any given time. As you read, write down your reactions to the assigned text. You may choose to write about its similarities to other texts, memories it calls to mind, speculations about the writer, or your (dis)agreement with the content.

2. Identify one passage in the text that you would like to talk about in class.

Page #:

Passage(Quote):

Why did you pick this particular passage? Why do you find it meaningful?

2. Identify at least two questions about the book/article that you would like to discuss in class. Create questions that deal with the text itself. For example, “Why do you think the author…..”; “When the author says….what do you think she means?” (These should not be yes/no questions or questions for your instructor. Nor should they be questions about the appropriateness of the book for a particular age or grade level.)