

English 405 Spring (2011) - Fiction for Adolescents (CRN 13823 - section W01–17194 - section W02)

Instructor: Dr. Rudolph Almasy
Department of English
West Virginia University
225 Colson Hall
PO Box 6296
304-293-9826
E-mail Rudy.Almasy@mail.wvu.edu

OFFICE HOURS

M and W 9:45 -10:20 am
M and W and F 11:30 - 12:20
TR after 1:30
By appointment

COURSE GOALS:

- § to introduce students to a type of fiction called adolescent literature or young adult literature
- § to experience the variety of this literature, its literary aspects, and its cultural significance
- § to have an opportunity for students to respond to their reading of young adult literature
- § to understand various issues, like censorship, which surround reading and using this literature
- § to consider the reading needs, interests, and habits of individuals between 12 and 20 years of age for whom different kinds of adolescent literature are directed
- § to learn various pedagogical approaches to or techniques for reading and using this literature
- § to consider the place of this literature in the middle school and secondary school curriculum in addition to seeing the value of this literature for voluntary reading and enjoyment

COURSE TEXTS:

Virginia Monseau and Gary Salvner, eds. Reading Their World: The Young Adult Novel in the Classroom (second edition). **IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT YOU USE THE SECOND EDITION OF THIS TEXT.**

Required novels which will be read in this order:

Spite Fences by Trudy Krisher
The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian by Sherman Alexie
The Pigman by Paul Zindel
Killing Mr. Griffin by Lois Duncan (try to get the 2010 revision)
Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone by J K Rowling
Ender's Game by Orson Scott Card
Esperanza Rising by Pam Muñoz Ryan
Sarah Bishop by Scott O'Dell
The Chocolate War by Robert Cormier
Slam! by Walter Dean Myers

A graphic novel of your own choosing, except *Maus*.

COURSE STRUCTURE:

This is **NOT** a self-paced course. It is designed essentially around weekly learning units which require reading a chapter in the course textbook and a YA novel (they aren't that long), and completing content questions and response activities in your electronic discussion site (on ECAMPUS) for each chapter and each novel.

In addition to the weekly units, there are as many as five **writing intensive assignments**, depending on whether you are trying to earn a “C” or a “B” or an “A”. Please see WRITING INTENSIVE ASSIGNMENTS description.

COURSE GRADING:

There is a minimum of work needed to be done satisfactorily for a grade of “C”. If you shot for a “B” there is more to do, and of course an “A” requires the most work. So please see the EARNING YOUR GRADE link for details and be sure you understand how the assessment will work.

In the gradebook, which you will be able to view, all assignments will be marked with “P” for pass or “NP” for no pass. Your instructor expects that you will redo unsatisfactory work until it is considered satisfactory. For electronic submissions, use college level prose and standard mechanics and grammar. No short-cutting please.

Your lack of participation may very well affect your course grade. You will need to come to those class periods which are scheduled in order to participate in class discussion. If you are not here, your participation grade will reduce your course grade a letter. You will also be graded for attendance. Note that (o) after a date on the schedule indicates the class does not meet as a group. Rather, your instructor will be in his office if anyone needs to touch bases or chat.

COURSE SCHEDULE

In general, for any given week Mondays are taken with discussion on a chapter from the course text and Wednesdays with discussion on the week’s novel. Depending on the university calendar this pattern could be Wednesday and Friday for certain weeks. Generally, Almasy will be in his office on Fridays during the class time. However, there may be class activities scheduled or open hours or writing conferences on some Fridays. You will be expected to do your electronic activities each day of the week but especially in Friday.

WHO IS YOUR INSTRUCTOR?

My name is Rudolph Paul Almasy, and I have been teaching at West Virginia University since 1969. I grew up in Chicago, did my graduate work at the University in Minnesota, and taught the sixth grade for a few years in Blue Island, Illinois (a suburb of Chicago). I am a professor of English in the Department of English, West Virginia University. I have served as chair of the department, and for the college as associate dean for academic affairs, associate dean for college development, and three times as interim dean of the Eberly College of Arts and Sciences.

I believe I developed as a young reader because, for one thing, my older sister loved to read to me. And I liked to listen. But I remember an event in seventh grade which might very well have changed my life. Our teacher decided to have a book fair, and so she ordered lots of paperback books (25 cents each) for her teenage students to check out and, if we were able, to purchase one book to read on our own. Yes, free reading—reading for enjoyment—without having to write a book report! I selected Walter Lord’s *A Night to Remember* (it had a great cover), the story of the sinking of the Titanic, and this version of the story focused on what happened in the final nine hours before the ship went down. It was a great read (I still have it in my library), and it showed me about the great adventure reading can be when you pick up something that looks interesting and you read it for the pleasure of reading. Writers

of Young Adult Literature (YAL) are hoping that this is what is happening with books now being written specifically with the teenager in mind.

At WVU in the late 70s and early 80s, I co-directed a summer Language Arts Camp for children in grades fifth through eighth who came to the WVU campus to stay in a residence hall for a week and be immersed in language arts activities. That experience really introduced me to the power of books written specifically with the young adult in mind, and I began paying more attention to this genre, especially since my daughter went to the camps and I wanted her to be a reader as I was when I was a teenager. Now I have to continue paying attention to all the new books that are coming out since I now have a grandson who loves books.

Eventually, almost 20 years ago, I started teaching future teachers about fiction for adolescents, and I have done so almost every year since then.

Please remember that West Virginia University is committed to social justice. The instructor of this course concurs with WVU's commitment and expects to maintain a positive learning environment based on open communication and mutual respect. Any suggestions as to how to further such an environment will be appreciated and given serious consideration. If you are a learning, sensory, or physically disabled student and feel that you need assistance in this course, please do not hesitate to post your professor as soon as possible.

And don't forget about ACADEMIC INTEGRITY. Your instructor believes in academic integrity and does not want you to cheat. When you cheat, you undermine the educational mission of WVU and compromise the value of your degree and the integrity of your conscience. Dr. Almsy will enforce rigorous standards of academic integrity in all aspects and assignments of this course, especially using when necessary TurnItIn.com and PlagiarismCheckers.com. For WVU's policy regarding the definition of acts considered under academic dishonesty and possible ensuing sanctions, see the Student Conduct Code at <http://studentlife.wvu.edu/studentconductcode.html>. Should you have any questions about possibly improper work or activity that may be interpreted as an attempt at academic dishonesty, please communicate with your instructor.

SCHEDULE:

WEEK 1 – January 10 and 12 and 14

Question: What are the various ways a teenage reader might approach a piece of literature?

Text - Chapter 5 "Navigating by the Stars: A Writer's Journey"

Chapter 1 "With Themes for All: The Universality of the Young Adult Novel"

WEEK 2 – January 19

Question: How do you personally begin interpreting or responding to a piece of literature?

Novel - *Spite Fences*

Week 1 Activities due no later than January 21.

WEEK 3 – January 24 and 26 and 28

Questions: How important is the theme of a novel and do you really care? Maybe the teenager is only interested in the “problem novel”?

Text - Chapter 3 “Interpreting the Young Adult Novel”
Novel – *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian*
Week 3 Activities due no later than January 28

WEEK 4 – January 31 and February 2

Questions: What really went on in your high school literature classes and when did you learn about the elements of fiction?

Text - Chapter 8 “Time and Tradition”
Novel – *The Pigman*
Week 4 Activities due no later than February 4

WEEK 5 – February 7 and 9

Question: Do you like to read all types of novels? Historical novels? Romance? Science fiction?

Text - Chapter 7 “Seeing Ourselves in the Mirror”
Novel - *Killing Mr. Griffin*
Week 5 Activities due no later than February 11

WEEK 6 – February 16 and 16 and 18

Question: Is young adult literature really only fundamentally, truly about relationships?

Text - Chapter 4 “Creating a Bond Between Writer and Reader” and Chapter 5 “Navigating by the Starts” and Chapter 6 “Choices and Challenges”
Novel - *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*
Week 6 Activities due no later than February 18

WEEK 7 – February 21

February 25 is mid-semester

Questions: If you were a high school teacher, how would you conduct a literature classroom? And can you share your impressions of your favorite English teacher?

Text - Chapter 2 “Natural, Necessary, and Workable”
Week 7 Activities due no later than February 25

Use this week for reading and writing.

NB - BE SURE YOU HAVE STARTED TO PLAN AHEAD FOR WRITING INTENSIVE ASSIGNMENT ONE, THE THEMATIC PAPER WHICH EVERYONE IN THE COURSE MUST DO, A DRAFT OF WHICH IS DUE TO ALMASY NO LATER THAN MARCH 30. SEE WRITING INTENSIVE ASSIGNMENTS DESCRIPTION.

WEEK 8 – February 28 and March 2 and 4

Questions: How can the literature classroom demonstrate that it values the diversity in the United States, and do you really care? Do you, in fact, value diversity?

Text - Chapter 9 “Who Am I? Who Are You?”

Novel - *Esperanza Rising*

Text – Chapter 10 “Gender Issues and the Young Adult Novel”

Week 8 Activities due no later March 11

WEEK 9 – March 7 and 9 and 11

Questions: Can we ever get boys to read books about girls? And should a teacher force anyone to read a particular book?

Novel - *Sarah Bishop*

Novel – *Ender’s Game*

Week 9 Activities no later than March 18

NB - BE SURE YOU HAVE STARTED TO PLAN AHEAD FOR WRITING INTENSIVE ASSIGNMENT TWO, YOUR READER RESPONSE PAPER FOR *THE CHOCOLATE WAR*. SHOULD YOU READ THIS NOVEL NOW? THIS ASSIGNMENT IS REQUIRED IF YOU ARE STRIVING FOR A “B” GRADE. IT IS DUE NO LATER THAN APRIL 4. SEE WRITING INTENSIVE ASSIGNMENTS DESCRIPTION.

IF YOU ARE STRIVING FOR A “B” GRADE, YOU MUST ALSO DO AN IN-CLASS WRITING ACTIVITY APRIL 29. THIS ACTIVITY WILL BE BASED ON MONSEAU’S NOTION OF A COMMUNITY OF READERS.

AND FINALLY IF YOU ARE STRIVING FOR A “B” GRADE, YOU WILL READ AN 11TH NOVEL WHICH IS A GRAPHIC NOVEL OF YOUR CHOICE AND MAKE A CLASS PRESENTATION ON THE NOVEL IN APRIL.

WEEK 10 –

Reading and writing week. Almasy will be in his office during class time.
March 21-25 is Spring Break

WEEK 12 – March 28 and 30

Question: What are some of the ways of dealing with censorship?

Text - Chapter 13 “The Young Adult Novel Under Fire”

Novel - *The Chocolate War*

Week 12 Activities due no later than April 8

DRAFT OF WRITING ASSIGNMENT ONE DUE TO ALMASY NO LATER THAN MARCH 30

WRITING ASSIGNMENT TWO DUE APRIL 4

IF YOU ARE SHOOTING FOR AN “A” YOU NEED TO DO ALL THE WORK FOR THE “B” GRADE AS WELL AS WRITING ASSIGNMENT 4 (DUE APRIL 21) AND THEN WRITING ASSIGNMENT 5 WHICH WILL BE BASED ON A 12TH NOVEL TO READ AND DESCRIBING THAT NOVEL AS A TYPICAL PIECE OF ADOLESCENT LITERATURE. THIS IS WRITING ASSIGNMENT FIVE AND IT IS DUE NO LATER THAN APRIL 27. SEE WRITING INTENSIVE ASSIGNMENTS DESCRIPTION.

WEEK 13 – April 11 and 13 and 15

Questions: Is the sports novel the key to getting boys to read? And are girls interested in girl sport novels? Do you personally like to read sports novels?

Text - Chapter 11 “Playing the Game
Novel – *Slam!*

Week 13 Activities due no later than April 22

April 15 Graphic novel presentations

WEEK 14 – April 18 and 20

Graphic novel presentations

Writing assignment 4 is due no later than April 21 (Thursday) for those striving for an “A.”

WEEK 15 – April 25 and 27 and 29 (last day of classes)

Graphic novel presentations

Writing Assignment 1 due no later than April 25

FINAL EXAM WEEK ACTIVITY DURING FINAL EXAM TIME

10:30 class – May 4 (Wednesday) at 11:00 am

12:30 class – May 4 at 8:00 am.

THIS IS HOW YOU EARN YOUR GRADE IN THIS COURSE:

- Regardless of the grade you are shooting for, in all your writing there should be evidence that demonstrates your consistent ability to produce college level prose which
 - reflects a thoughtful, complete and relevant response to the assignment or activity
 - is well organized and coherent and makes its points clearly
 - has sentences and paragraphs which are well crafted and readable
 - uses words or diction which is precise and clear
 - has ideas or opinions or observations which are well developed
 - is virtually without errors in punctuation and spelling, grammar and usage
- To be eligible for a grade of “C”
 - You will read 10 novels for the course.
 - You will complete all activities satisfactorily.
 - You must complete **Writing Assignment one** satisfactorily.
- To be eligible for a grade of ”B”

You will read 11 novels for the course.
The 11th novel will be a graphic novel plus class presentation
You will complete all activities satisfactorily.
You must complete **Writing Assignment one AND two AND three** satisfactorily.

- To be eligible for a grade of “A”

You will read 12 novels for the course, the 12th of your own choosing.
You will complete all activities satisfactorily.
You must complete **Intensive Writing Assignment one AND two AND three AND four and five** satisfactorily.

IF YOU DO NOT DO THE WORK SATISFACTORILY TO EARN A “C” AS DESCRIBED ABOVE,
YOU WILL NOT PASS THE COURSE.

COMPLETING WORK SATISFACTORILY MEANS THAT THROUGHOUT THE SEMESTER YOU ARE

- demonstrating through your writing and class participation that you have read and absorbed the basic concepts in the course textbook chapters
- demonstrating through your writing and class participation that you have read and can respond as a reader to the course novels
- making connections, especially in class participation, between the content of the chapters in the course textbook and your own responses to the novels you read
- completing all writing activities with responses which are full, informative, insightful, clear, accurate, and free of grammatical and/or mechanical errors
- responding satisfactorily to activities that will require you to do some Internet research and peruse material other than the textbook and the course novels
- redoing work in your course activities which your instructor deems incomplete or unsatisfactory until the work has been completed successfully
- completing the **Intensive Writing Assignments** satisfactorily you have contracted for as you have determined whether to strive for a C or a B or an A, particularly in terms of consistently writing college level prose
- demonstrating that you are capable of writing college level prose (see above)

SATISFACTORY VS UNSATISFACTORY

In the gradebook, you will be able to see whether a unit activity or assignment is graded with “P” for satisfactory or with “NP” for unsatisfactory. Your instructor expects you to continue working on assignments deemed unsatisfactory or incomplete or “no pass” until they are satisfactory.

A WRITING INTENSIVE COURSE

This section of English 405 is a writing intensive course which means three things:

- you will do a substantial amount of writing, generating something like 9000 words throughout the term if you are shooting for an A.
- your instructor will ask you to redo pieces of writing if they do not reflect college level prose.
- by the end of the term you will have produced a portfolio of work—your activities writing and your intensive writing assignments—which will give your instructor a complete picture of your work for assessment purposes.

A WORD ABOUT ATTENDANCE

You will need to come to those class periods which are scheduled in order to participate in class discussions. If you are not there, your participation grade will be affected and could very well reduce your course grade a letter. Plan illnesses, emergencies, and special travel for those days of the week when the class does not meet as a group. Participation and attendance will be one grade.