

English 405 Fall (2014) - Fiction for Adolescents (CRN 85605 - section W01)

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COURSE GOALS:

- \$ to introduce students to a type of fiction called adolescent literature or young adult literature (YAL)
- \$ to experience the variety of this literature, its literary aspects, and its cultural significance
- \$ to provide an opportunity for students to respond to their reading of young adult literature
- \$ to understand various issues, such as 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
Tears of a Tiger by Sharon M. Draper
Burning Blue by Paul Griffin
Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone by J K Rowling
BZRK by Michael Grant
A Northern Light by Jennifer Donnelly
Esperanza Rising by Pam Muñoz Ryan
Desire Lines by Jack Gantos (**NOTE NAME OF AUTHOR!**)
Boy 21 by Matthew Quick

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 assignment site (E-campus) for each chapter and each novel.

In addition to the weekly units, there are as many as six **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 shoot 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 electronic gradebook which you will be able to view, all assignments will be marked with "1" for pass or "0" for no pass. Your instructor expects that you will redo unsatisfactory (0) work until it is considered satisfactory. If an activity is incomplete or needs further thought, your instructor will indicate so, ask you to work some more on the assignment, and then require you to resubmit. Your assignment might end up with a .5, which is a pass but not a strong one.

Your lack of participation will affect your course grade since we want to create a community of readers and sharers in this class. You will need to come to those class periods which are scheduled in order to participate in class discussion. And you can't participate in discussions without having read the novel and chapter for the week. If you are not here, your participation and attendance grade will reduce your course grade a letter.

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. Often the class also meets on Fridays. Generally, Dr. Almsy will be in his office in Colson Hall on those Fridays during the class time when the class is not meeting as a group. However, there may be class activities scheduled or open hours or writing conferences on some Fridays (and other days of the week).

WHO IS YOUR INSTRUCTOR?

My name is Rudolph Paul Almas, 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. 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. For academic year 2011/2012, I served as interim dean of the Davis College.

I believe I developed as a young reader because, for one thing, my 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 (a first for Washington Irving Junior High), 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 what a great adventure reading can be when you pick up something that looks interesting and you read it for the pleasure of reading. Writers of 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 person 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, more than 25 years ago, I started teaching future teachers about fiction for adolescents, and I'm still doing it.

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SCHEDULE:

WEEK 1 – August 18 and 20 and 22

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Question: What are the various ways a teenage reader might approach a piece of literature?
What is literature anyway? Why read? Why read literature? Who cares?

Text - Chapter 5 “Navigating by the Stars: A Writer’s Journey”

WEEK 2 – August 25 and 27

Question: How do you personally begin interpreting or responding to a piece of literature? Why—and how—did you become interested in reading? How can we get teens excited about reading?

Text - Chapter 3 “Interpreting the Young Adult Novel”

Novel - *Spite Fences*

Week 2 Activities due no later than September 4

WEEK 3 – September 3 and 5

Questions: How important is the theme of a novel? What do you personally read for? Maybe the teenager is only interested in the “problem novel” and its main theme? Do you know what a “problem novel” is?

Text - Chapter 1 “With Themes for All”

Novel – *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian*

Week 3 Activities due no later than September 11

WEEK 4 – September 8 and 10 and 12

Questions: What really went on in your high school literature classes and when did you learn about the elements of fiction? In high school, were you inspired to read? Anything turn you off?

Text - Chapter 8 “Time and Tradition”

Novel – *Tears of a Tiger*

Week 4 Activities due no later than September 18

WEEK 5 – September 15 and 17 and 19

Question: Do you like to read all types of novels? Historical novels? Romance? Science fiction? Or do you have a favorite, and why?

Text - Chapter 7 “Seeing Ourselves in the Mirror”

Novel – *Burning Blue*

Week 5 Activities due no later September 25

WEEK 6 -- September 22 and 24 and 26

Question: Is young adult literature really only fundamentally, truly about relationships?
What are some of the main preoccupations of a teen?

Text - Chapter 4 “Creating a Bond Between Writer and Reader” and Chapter 6 “Choices and Challenges”

Novel - *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*

Week 6 Activities due no later than October 2

WEEK 7 – September 29 and October 1

October 3 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”

Novel – *BZRK*

Week 7 Activities due no later than October 9

WEEK 8 – October 6 and 8 and 10

Questions: Can we ever get boys to read books about girls? And should a teacher force anyone to read a particular book? Does historical fiction turn you on?

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

Novel – *A Northern Light*

Week 8 Activities due no later than October 16

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 (HARDCOPY PLEASE) OF THIS PAPER IS DUE TO ALMASY NO LATER THAN NOVEMBER 5. SEE WRITING INTENSIVE ASSIGNMENTS DESCRIPTION.

WEEK 9 – October 13 - 18

Fall Break is October 13 and 14.

No class meeting for this week.

Can Almasy assume you are going to make good use of this week?

Work on Writing Intensive Assignment One.

Be sure your activities are up to date.

NB - BE SURE YOU HAVE STARTED TO PLAN AHEAD FOR WRITING INTENSIVE ASSIGNMENT TWO, YOUR READER RESPONSE PAPER FOR *DESIRE LINES*. SHOULD YOU READ THIS NOVEL NOW? THIS ASSIGNMENT IS REQUIRED IF YOU ARE STRIVING FOR A “B” GRADE. IT IS DUE NO LATER THAN NOVEMBER 8.

IF YOU ARE STRIVING FOR A “B” GRADE, YOU WILL ALSO NEED TO DO WRITING INTENSIVE ASSIGNMENT FOUR, A PIECE OF WRITING WHICH RESPONDS TO THE GRAPHIC NOVEL *FAHRENHEIT 451*. THIS ASSIGNMENT IS DUE DECEMBER 5. SEE WRITING INTENSIVE ASSIGNMENTS DESCRIPTION.

FINALLY, IF YOU ARE STRIVING FOR A “B” GRADE, YOU MUST ALSO DO AN IN-CLASS WRITING ACTIVITY DECEMBER 8, THE LAST DAY OF OUR CLASS. THIS ACTIVITY WILL BE BASED ON MONSEAU’S NOTION OF A COMMUNITY OF READERS. THIS IS WRITING INTENSIVE ASSIGNMENT FIVE.

WEEK 10 – October 20 and 22

Question: 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? How are you part of a rainbow or a salad bowl or aren’t you? Have you melted into the pot?

Text – Chapter 9 “Who Am I? Who Are You?”
 Novel – *Esperanza Rising*
 Week 10 Activities due no later than October 30.

WEEK 11 – October 27 and 29 and October 31

Question: What are some of the ways of dealing with censorship? Should teachers be worried about censorship?

Text - Chapter 13 “The Young Adult Novel Under Fire”
 Novel – *Desire Lines*
 Week 11 Activities due no later than November 6

WRITING ASSIGNMENT TWO DUE NOVEMBER 8.

IF YOU ARE SHOOTING FOR AN “A” YOU NEED TO DO ALL THE WORK FOR THE “B” GRADE AS WELL AS WRITING ASSIGNMENTS THREE AND SIX. ASSIGNMENT THREE, WHICH IS DUE NOVEMBER 19, HAS TO DO WITH HOW TYPICAL A PIECE OF YAL THE NOVEL *BOY 21* OR *THE COMENT’S CURSE* IS. WRITING ASSIGNMENT SIX IS YOUR REPORT ON THE EXTRA ADOLESCENT NOVEL YOU WILL HAVE READ FOR THE COURSE. THIS REPORT IS DUE NO LATER THAN DECEMBER 8.

WEEK 12 – November 3 and 5 and 7

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

Text - Chapter 11 “Playing the Game”

Novel – *Boy 21*

Week 12 Activities due no later than November 13

DRAFT OF WRITING ASSIGNMENT ONE DUE TO ALMASY NO LATER THAN NOVEMBER 5 (HARDCOPY PLEASE)

WRITING ASSIGNMENT TWO IS DUE BY NOVEMBER 8.

WEEK 13 – November 10 and 12 and 14

Writing conferences during class time.

WEEK 14 – November 17 and 19

Writing Conferences during class time.

WRITING ASSIGNMENT THREE IS DUE NO LATER THAN NOVEMBER 19.

WEEK 15 – December 1 and 3 and 5

Questions: Are you or your friends readers of graphic novels? Why do you think people read graphic novels? Is there a place for them in the high school English classroom?

Novel – *Fahrenheit 451- The Graphic Novel*

WRITING ASSIGNMENT ONE IS DUE NO LATER THAN DECEMBER 5.

WRITING ASSIGNMENT FOUR IS DUE NO LATER THAN DECEMBER 6.

WEEK 16 – December 8

Questions: Do you think you will continue to read novels written specifically for teens? Why or why not?

Last class meeting – **WRITING INTENSIVE ASSIGNMENT FIVE WILL BE DONE IN CLASS DECEMBER 8.**

WRITING ASSIGNMENT SIX IS DUE NO LATER THAN DECEMBER 8 IF YOU ARE STRIVING FOR A GRADE OF “A”.

PROBABLY NO FINAL “EXAM” DURING FINALS WEEK. But don’t rule it out.

Section 1 December 11 from 7:00 PM to 900 PM

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 advise your instructor and make appropriate arrangements with the Office of Accessibility Services now located on VanVoorhis Road next to Applebee’s. The number there is 304-293-6700; email is access2@mail.wvu.edu.

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. Almasy 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.

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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 and supported
is virtually without errors in punctuation and spelling, grammar and usage

- To be eligible for a grade of “C”
 - You will read 11 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.
 - You will complete all activities satisfactorily.
 - You must complete **Writing Assignment one AND two AND four AND five** 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 AND six** 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 activities which your instructor deems incomplete or unsatisfactory until the work has been completed successfully

- completing the **Intensive Writing Assignments** satisfactorily that 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 on all assignments and activities that you are capable of consistently 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 “1” for satisfactory or with “0” for unsatisfactory. Your instructor expects you to continue working on assignments deemed unsatisfactory or incomplete 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 (and you) 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. Remember the pattern: textbook chapter on Mondays, the novel on Wednesdays and Fridays. 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. You will be given separate grades for participation and attendance. A record of poor participation and poor attendance will most likely lower your final grade by one grade.