

English 405 Fall (2011) - Fiction for Adolescents (CRN 84947 - section W01)

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Dr. Almasy is currently serving as interim dean of the Davis College of Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Design. His office is on the Evansdale campus, and most days he is in his office because of his administrative responsibilities. If you need to see him outside the normal classroom hours, it is best to make an appointment by calling 304-293-2395.

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 provide 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
Desire Lines by Jack Gantos (**NOTE NAME OF AUTHOR!**)
Slam! by Walter Dean Myers

A graphic novel of your own choosing **WHICH YOU HAVE NOT READ FOR SOME OTHER CLASS**. Your selection has to be relevant for the goals of this course.

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 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 (NP) work until it is considered satisfactory.

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. If you are not here, your participation grade will reduce your course grade a letter. You will also be graded for attendance.

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, Almsy will be in his office in the ag sciences building on Fridays during the class time. However, there may be class activities scheduled or open hours or writing conferences on some Fridays.

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. For academic year 2011/2012 I am serving as interim dean of the Davis College.

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 order 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 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 teenager 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 like 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 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.

ENGLISH 405 FALL 2011

SCHEDULE:

WEEK 1 – August 22 and 26

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

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

WEEK 2 – August 29 and 31

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

Text - Chapter 3 “Interpreting the Young Adult Novel”

Novel - *Spite Fences*

Week 2 Activities due no later than September 3

WEEK 3 – September 7 and 9

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”?

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 10

WEEK 4 – September 12 and 14 and 16

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 September 17

WEEK 5 – September 19 and 21

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 September 24

WEEK 6 -- September 28 and September 30

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

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 3

WEEK 7 – October 5 and 7

October 7 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 – *Ender's Game*

Week 7 Activities due no later than October 8

WEEK 8 – October 10 and 12

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*

Week 8 Activities due no later than October 15

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 WHICH IS DUE TO ALMASY NO LATER THAN NOVEMBER 9. SEE WRITING INTENSIVE ASSIGNMENTS DESCRIPTION.

WEEK 9 – October 17 and 19 AND 21

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

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

Novel - *Sarah Bishop*

Week 9 Activities no later than October 23

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 5. SEE WRITING INTENSIVE ASSIGNMENTS DESCRIPTION.

IF YOU ARE STRIVING FOR A “B” GRADE, YOU MUST ALSO DO AN IN-CLASS WRITING ACTIVITY DECEMBER 9, THE LAST DAY OF CLASSES. 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 DECEMBER.

WEEK 10 – October 24 and 26 and 28

Reading and writing week. Almsy will be in his office (in Ag Sciences on Evansdale) during class time.

WEEK 11 – October 31 and November 2 and 4

Question: What are some of the ways of dealing with 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 5 (a Saturday)

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 NOVEMBER 19) AND THEN WRITING ASSIGNMENT 5 WHICH WILL BE BASED ON A 12TH NOVEL YOU READ AND DESCRIBING THAT NOVEL AS A TYPICAL PIECE OF ADOLESCENT LITERATURE. THIS IS WRITING ASSIGNMENT FIVE AND IT IS DUE NO LATER THAN DECEMBER 9. SEE WRITING INTENSIVE ASSIGNMENTS DESCRIPTION.

WEEK 12 – November 7 and 9

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 12 Activities due no later than November 12

Writing conferences November 11

DRAFT OF WRITING ASSIGNMENT ONE DUE TO ALMASY NO LATER THAN NOVEMBER 9 (HARDCOPY PLEASE)

WEEK 13 – November 14 and 16

Writing conferences November 14 and 15 and 16

Writing assignment 4 is due no later than November 19 (for those striving for an “A”)

WEEK 14 – November 28 and 30 and December 2

Writing Conferences November 28 or graphic novel presentations

November 30 and December 2 student presentations on graphic novel

Writing Assignment 1 due no later than December 2 (Hardcopy please)

WEEK 15 – December 5 and 7 and 9 (last day of classes)

December 5 and 7 student presentations on graphic novel

December 9 in-class writing activity for those striving for a grade of “B”.

December 9 is also the due date for writing assignment 5 for those striving for a grade of “A”.

PROBABLY NO FINAL EXAM DURING FINALS WEEK

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 journal 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 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. You will be given separate grades for participation and attendance.