



500 Wilcox Street
Joliet, IL 60435
www.stfrancis.edu

Course: ENGL-291A—CRN 20816—Adolescent Literature

Semester: Spring, 2020
Time: MW 1:00-2:15
Location: Tower Hall, N-315

Prerequisite: ACAF 102 or ENGL 112 or its equivalent.

Materials: Elizabeth Acevedo, *The Poet X* (2018)
William Alexander, *Goblin Secrets* (2012)
Laurie Halse Anderson, *Speak* (1999)
Kathi Appelt, *The True Blue Scouts of Sugar Man Swamp* (2013)
Elana K. Arnold, *What Girls Are Made Of* (2017)
Ali Benjamin, *The Thing about Jellyfish* (2015)
Kate Dicamillo, *Raymie Nightingale* (2016)
Louise Erdrich, *The Birchbark House* (1999)
Pete Hautman, *Godless* (2004)
Benjamin Alire Sáenz, *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe* (2012)
Erika L. Sanchez, *I am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter* (2017)
Neal Shusterman, *Challenger Deep* (2015)
Catherynne M. Valente, *The Girl Who Circumnavigated Fairyland in a Ship of Her Own Making (Fairyland Series #1)* (2011)
Nancy Werlin, *The Rules of Survival* (2006)
Jacqueline Woodson, *Brown Girl Dreaming* (2014)
Nicola Yoon, *Everything, Everything* (2015)
Other Secondary Readings available on Canvas.

Professor: Dr. Kevin Andrew Spicer
Assistant Professor

Office: Tower Hall, S-306
Office Hours: MWF 8:00-8:45, 10:00-2:00, T: 9:00-2:00 and by appt.
Phone: 815.740.3852
Email: kspicer@stfrancis.edu

As a Catholic university rooted in the liberal arts, we are a welcoming community of learners challenged by Franciscan values and charism, engaged in a continuous pursuit of knowledge, faith, wisdom, and justice, and ever mindful of a tradition that emphasizes reverence for creation, compassion, and peacemaking. We strive for academic excellence in all programs, preparing women and men to contribute to the world through service and leadership.

Course Description:

“Provides an introduction to the wide variety of diverse literature targeted for adolescent/young adult readers. Surveying the field, the course highlights and analyzes recent publications as it acknowledges significant, earlier texts and their distinguishing features. It requires extensive reading of books, practice in selecting and evaluating books as well as development of a set of resources for use in teaching.”

Course Objectives/Outcomes:

Our first goal for this course is to familiarize you with some of the outstanding books written for young adults within the last two decades or so (most of what we will read comes from the Long List of Nominees for the National Book Award in YA Lit). Because the genre of YA Lit is *humongous* (and *enormously* lucrative [in addition to “creatively lucrative” as well, to be sure]), the books selected are a good beginning, but they are *only* a beginning (this is a gross understatement, of course). You will find other, equally wonderful books on your own. I am also asking you to read varied types of books; the titles span the genres and often vary as to type within the genre. This fulfills our second goal, which is to demonstrate the breadth and richness of young adult literature in terms of form, style, and cultural diversity. Most important is the third goal, which is to have you fall in love with young adult literature so that you won’t want to stop reading, even when the course is over. If we succeed in this together, then you will pass on your love of reading to your students, spreading the web ever wider each year that you teach. We will attain these goals only if you read thoughtfully, explore your thinking in your written responses, share that thinking in class, and expand your ideas through conversations with others.

Course Requirements:

Students will be expected to complete all of the following:

- 1.) **Class Participation** (see “Class Participation/Attendance Policy” below)
- 2.) **Daily Free-writes:** More about this will be explained in class.
- 3.) **Weekly Writing Responses:** You are free to respond before (prediction), during, and/or after your reading, whatever you choose. Please don’t, however, make the mistake of finishing a book and then waiting to respond to it. The immediacy of your response is lost when you wait. There are essentially two good ways to respond—personally and critically. When you do the former, here are some guidelines: write anything you’d like to say about your reading experience. What was the book about? What did it remind you of? How did it make you feel? Is there anything in your life that helped you to connect (or not connect) with the book? Is there anything in the book that helped you to think about your own life? Does the book reflect the world as you know it or something different? When you respond critically, you might ask yourself what makes the book memorable as a piece of literature? Or, if you feel less judgmental, you could talk about how the text might be seen to exemplify qualities that define the genre that it belongs to.

Your personal response should constitute at least half of your writing, which should be 2 (full) - 3 pages typed, double-spaced (and stapled). **This is not a formal paper** and will not be graded on the quality of the writing. It is meant to encourage you to think deeply about what you read and to explore interesting ideas. For those of you doing the “Critical Theory” course with Dr. Ioanes this semester, feel free to bring any “theory” you learn there to be bear on the texts we are doing here in this seminar. (They will be due every Monday so that we can use them for discussion

- purposes (in other words, be sure to upload it to Canvas and bring a copy in some form to class with you as well.)
- 4.) **Leading Class Discussion:** Just like it sounds, you'll lead, guide, facilitate, etc. discussion on the reading for the day.
 - 5.) **Standard Academic Mid-Term Essay (5-7 pages in length):** Exactly like it sounds—no great frills or spectacles—just an essay that has an argument. In other words, in these essays, *you have to make a critical or analytical point*; it is not an OpEd piece; is not a summary; it is not a personal reflection on your impressions of the work you are investigating. One of the best places to start research-wise is *The Assembly on Literature for Adolescents* available [here](#) (*The ALAN Review* is their well-known publication and also accessible from their web site).
 - 6.) **Final Project Options:**
 - a. **Be(come) a Booktuber:** Have a read of “Booktubing: Reader Response Meets 21st Century Literacies” by Peggy Semingson, Raul Alberto Mora and Tatiana Chiquito available [here](#) and create your own *Booktube* videos for some of the books we read this semester (or others you're just dying to tell everyone about).
 - b. **Chapter Book Response/Reader Response Essay (5-7 pages in length):** For those thinking of being future teachers, try the following: Re-read a book you read as a child or young adolescent. Consider the difference between your two reading experiences. In what ways did your level of enjoyment change? Why? What literary elements seemed most striking to you this time? Write a paper (first person is fine) describing the difference between your two readings.
 - c. **Another project idea** you have designed on your own (in consultation with the instructor, of course).

Course Schedule/Outline:¹

WEEK 1 (1.8.17)—Introductory Week ... Getting Our Bearings, etc. (have a quick read of Louise Erdrich's *The Birchbark House* (1999))
 WEEK 2—Laurie Halse Anderson, *Speak* (1999)
 WEEK 3—Pete Hautman, *Godless* (2004)
 WEEK 4—Nancy Werlin, *The Rules of Survival* (2006)
 WEEK 5—Catherynne M. Valente, *The Girl Who Circumnavigated Fairyland in a Ship of Her Own Making (Fairyland Series #1)* (2011)
 WEEK 6—Benjamin Alire Sáenz, *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe* (2012)
 WEEK 7—William Alexander, *Goblin Secrets* (2012)
 WEEK 8—Kathi Appelt, *The True Blue Scouts of Sugar Man Swamp* (2013)
 WEEK 9—Jacqueline Woodson, *Brown Girl Dreaming* (2014)
 WEEK 10—Neal Shusterman, *Challenger Deep* (2015)
 WEEK 11—Nicola Yoon, *Everything, Everything* (2015)
 WEEK 12—Ali Benjamin, *The Thing about Jellyfish* (2015)
 WEEK 13—Kate Dicamillo, *Raymie Nightingale* (2016)
 WEEK 14—Erika L. Sanchez, *I am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter* (2017)
 WEEK 15—Elana K. Arnold, *What Girls Are Made Of* (2017)
 WEEK 16—Elizabeth Acevedo, *The Poet X* (2018)
 WEEK 17—FINAL EXAM WEEK

¹ Schedule is of course subject to possible revision at the discretion of the instructor (and students, in consultation with the instructor).

Methods of Evaluation:

See “Course Requirements” Section *supra*. Only *Nota bene* here is the policy on “late work”: “Late work will lose a point for each day that it is late. After one week, the work is a zero. In-class work will not be accepted late.”

Academic Integrity:

Academic integrity requires that all academic work be wholly the product of an identified individual or individuals. Collaboration is only acceptable when it is explicitly acknowledged. Ethical conduct is the obligation of every member of the University community, and breaches of academic integrity constitute serious offenses. Since a lack of integrity hinders the student’s academic development, it cannot be tolerated under any circumstances. Violations include but are not limited to: cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and denying others access to information or material. See USF Catalog for further clarification and information on grievance procedures.

American Disability Act:

The University of St. Francis is committed to ensuring the full participation of all students in its programs, regardless of the course format. If you have a documented disability and need a reasonable accommodation to participate in this course, complete course requirements, or benefit from the University’s programs or services, please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) as soon as possible at 815-740-3204. The Office of Disability Services is located on the second floor of the LaVerne and Dorothy Brown Library building room L214. Consultations are also available please contact ODS for an appointment.

Class Participation/Class Discussion/Attendance Policy:

This course, like many others at USF, is modeled on the ancient Socratic dialogues of Plato, which were completely discussion-oriented in nature. This means that one of the major ways we learn is in collaboration with others through dialogue, conversation, simple talking about things, etc. In order to learn this way, everyone needs to be ready to be a part of the discussion. “Being ready” means having closely read, in many cases thoroughly annotated, and thought about the reading for the day. Since this course focuses not just on course content but also on a particular way of doing things (a particular way of reading texts, etc.), everyone should have their copy of the text under discussion every single day. ***(As many teachers in the humanities have no doubt told you before, not bringing your text to class is like trying to do science experiments without the equipment—no one can do chemistry experiments without chemicals, test tubes, Bunsen burners, and so forth. If you don’t have the test tubes, you can’t do the lab.)*** More often than not, our discussions will arise out of our attending carefully and closely to the language the texts use, so we all need to have those texts in front of us when we talk about them. (Note, you need to have the text in front of you even if you’ve read the assignment.)

In terms of the kinds of conversations we will more than likely have, feel free to always and often be asking questions, both of the texts and of what we are discussing in class. Don’t be afraid to be inquisitive. If you’ve taken courses in the past—in high school, at community college, or even at USF—where teachers have been hard on you for having a different position on something than they do, that will not be the case in this course. Divergent and different opinions are always welcome, assuming that one can present them in a respectful and courteous manner, etc. Of course, this is not to say that every opinion is equally valid, but only that differences of position are often good for growing conversation. Given that this course will be much more like a “seminar”/Socratic dialogue—in the sense that the instructor will not be

lecturing at you, but will instead be trying to utilize all of your own responses to what we're reading—the necessity of being prepared by having thoughts of your own on the material is absolutely necessary. A good seminar cannot do without participants contributing heavily to how a class discussion goes, ultimately. ***Your participation in class discussion will therefore be graded and included in the final grade for this course.***

Academic Support Services:

Various types of academic services offered by the Academic Resource Center (ARC) 815-740-5060 located in Room L214 in the Library. Online and distance learning students can contact ARC for appropriate resources. ARC serves students who need tutoring in many areas of study including writing and math. Library services include a number of online services and full text databases. Call the Library at 815-740-5041 for additional information.

Academic Honesty and Integrity Statement:

All students are expected to strictly follow the guidelines of academic integrity, which are outlined in the University Catalog. All assignments turned-in by an individual will be assumed to be that individual's own original work. It is the responsibility of the student to inform the instructor if there are exceptions to this assumption.

The instructor reserves the right to adjust the syllabus and class schedule as circumstances may warrant during the semester.

Students are expected to follow all policies in the USF Catalog and Student Handbook.