

**Course Title: TLS 385 Learning about Adolescence through Young Adult Literature**

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**Catalog Description-**

This course explores youth culture and adolescence as a social construct through reading young adult literature. Students will read young adult novels, examine social media, write self-reflections, and engage in scholarly inquiry. Writing emphasis course

**Prerequisite course:** None

**Expanded Course Description:**

This course explores the cultural, social and psychological needs and identities of adolescents through literature, experience, and scholarly inquiry. We will read and discuss young adult books and social media directed at youth between the ages of 12 and 18 as well as articles and book chapters on adolescent development and youth culture. Responses to materials will be personal, aesthetic, and intellectual in order to increase our understanding of the issues that surround this age group. Note that this is a writing emphasis class so you will do written reflections and narratives throughout the class.

**Course objectives:**

- Developing a conceptual understanding of the many dimensions and social worlds of youth culture
- Selecting and discussing a broad range of young adult literature representing a variety of time periods, diverse cultures, and types of authors.
- Responding critically, analytically and aesthetically to young adult literature.
- Applying critical theory and discussion strategies in response to young adult literature.
- Connecting scholarly research on youth culture with portrayals of adolescence in young adult literature.
- Reflecting on digital resources, such as blogs and discussion boards/webs, and media, such as movies, You Tube, and podcasts, to examine societal images of youth culture.
- Using writing to explore own perspectives and discuss interpretations of data gathered from multiple sources.

**Learning Outcomes**

- Students will identify and critique the psychosocial, emotional, political and cultural forces affecting and constructing the adolescent experience.
- Students will be familiar with current young adult literature books and trends.
- Students will critically evaluate young adult literature through literary and cultural criteria.
- Students will evaluate the role of young adult literature in encouraging adolescents to reflect on youth culture and their own identity development.
- Students will organize and discuss their perspectives and their own experiences as adolescents through a range of written reflections and narratives.
- Students will interpret information collected from a range of sources and organize that interpretation into a final project.

**Class experiences are based on the following beliefs about learning:**

- Learning is an active process.  
We will immerse ourselves in reading, writing, talking, and responding to professional readings and to young adult literature.

- Learning is a social process of collaborating with others.  
We will explore our thinking about our reading and experiences through dialogue.
- Learning occurs as we make connections to our own experiences and as we explore tensions with our current beliefs.  
Responses to our readings will focus on connections to our lives. We will also identify and explore tensions with our current beliefs and past experiences to interrogate our values. We will explore the tensions that arise from exploring alternative and oppositional interpretations of literature.
- Choice allows learners to connect to their experiences and feel ownership in their learning.  
We will have choices in the books we read, our responses to readings, and the specific focus of the final project.
- Learning is reflective as well as active.  
We will have many opportunities to reflect on what we are learning through writing, talking, sketching, and self-evaluations
- Learning occurs in a multicultural world with many ways of knowing.  
We will read professional and young adult literature that reflects diversity in experiences and ways of expressing those experiences. We will also explore the range of interpretations of literature that arise from our differing cultural and social experiences.
- Learning is a process of inquiry.  
As learners we need to search out the questions that matter in our lives and to develop strategies for exploring those questions and sharing our understandings with others.

## **Course Assignments:**

### **1. Participation and attendance**

In this course, we will discuss themes related to youth culture and read books related to each theme. We will further research each theme by conducting interviews and observations and by locating secondary sources such as videos, blogs, online chats and professional articles that support your understanding of the theme. Come to class prepared to present and discuss these secondary sources along with the book you have selected for that week.

This course is thus based in active participation. Attending class regularly and participating in discussions, sharing, small groups, written responses, and class activities is essential to your learning. In particular, you must read and prepare for discussions of the literature and professional readings and engage in informal and formal writing. Preparation and participation in class is significant, not only for your learning, but for the learning of others and not wasting their time because you are not prepared. More than one absence and/or chronic tardiness will lower your grade for the course. If you absolutely must miss a class session, leave a message in advance by email or in the TLS office (621-1311). Contact a class member so that you are fully prepared for the next class. Meet with the instructor at the next class session to determine how you will make up the work for the class.

In order for an absence to be excused, it must be documented and meet one of the following requirements: serious illness or injury, family emergency and University-sponsored travel. The official documents concerning your absence should be handed in within 2 weeks from the date you are absent. All holidays or special events observed by organized religions will be honored as excused for those students who show affiliation with that particular religion. Absences pre-approved by the UA Dean of Students (or Dean's designee) will be honored as excused.

The UA's policy concerning Class Attendance, Participation, and Administrative Drops is available at: <http://catalog.arizona.edu/policy/class-attendance-participation-and-administrative-drop>

The UA policy regarding absences for any sincerely held religious belief, observance or practice will be accommodated where reasonable, <http://policy.arizona.edu/human-resources/religious-accommodation-policy>.

Absences pre-approved by the UA Dean of Students (or Dean Designee) will be honored. See: <https://deanofstudents.arizona.edu/absences>

## **2. Weekly Reading Reflections**

The purpose of the weekly reflections is to reflect on your readings of the literature and the articles/chapters which we discuss in class. Record your understandings, questions, and connections to these readings. Write about your response and perspectives on the readings, not summaries of the readings. These reflections are a vehicle to reflect on important and difficult ideas and issues raised by our reading. Hand in your written reflections each week on d2l and bring a copy to class for discussion.

If you are unsure what to write, consider the following questions as prompts to guide your thinking: How does the professional reading relate to the novel? What current events or issues can you connect to these readings? How do you think a teen reading the novel would respond? How will these readings inform your work with adolescents? Are these readings missing anything, making assumptions you disagree with, illuminating something you never thought about, or saying something you don't understand?

Reflect on your response to the book and always include connections from the professional readings to the book.

## **2. Personal Narrative on your adolescence**

Reflect on your past experiences and choose something that was particularly significant for you as an adolescent. Write a narrative about that particular event—tell the story about the context in which you came to experience this, who was involved, and how you thought about that particular moment. Also reflect on how that experience connects to your own history as a teen. What is the experience of revisiting this time like for you? What kinds of connections, ideas, issues, and thoughts come to your mind during this revisit? Bring this response with you to class as well as post to d2l.

## **3. Media Watch**

Bring a 3-5 minutes audio or video clip that represents something about the adolescent experience, show it to the class, and explain why you chose it, and then answer questions. You will sign up for a presentation slot in class. Whenever possible, choose media with close captioning/subtitles available or send the instructor the link ahead of time so captions can be made/found before class. At the next class session, turn in a short written reflection indicating what you selected and why and how the class responded.

## **4. Class Memes**

Social media is a major part of teen life. Over the course of the semester, submit at least two images for our class Instagram that take your understanding of contemporary meme culture to create a post that relates to the topics, books, or themes about youth culture that we are discussing in class. Submit your post and hashtag suggestion to the instructor along with a short explanation of the meme. Note, you are not being asked to post to your personal social accounts to share our social media information with each other. The posts will be shared on d2l and our class account.

### **5. Interview with a teen**

Interview a young person between the ages of 12 and 18. Because many of you have only recently left the teen years, a younger adolescent might illuminate adolescent experience. Record this interview, so think about the technology required to do that (most smartphones have recording apps that are sufficient). You will develop a list of 10-15 questions to discuss, with the intention of learning more about that individual youth's lived experience, hopes, fears, etc. Weave the reflection and quotes from the interview with the teen together into a narrative essay regarding this youth, 1500-1800 words, approx. **Bring this response with you to class as well as post to d2l.**

### **6. Analytical essay**

This longer paper gives you the opportunity to delve deeper into a topic related to adolescence and young adult literature, such as teenagers writing novels, adolescence around the world, or adapting work for adults into books for teenagers. You can also propose your own topic for this essay that relates to our class discussions and readings, but it must connect young adult literature to adolescence in some way.

### **7. Final inquiry**

Your final project for the class involves researching a topic of your choice via professional and scholarly sources as well as young adult novels. You will do a presentation and question and answer with your classmates during the last few class sessions. A 1-2-page project proposal will be after mid-semester and should describe your project in as much detail as possible, including your rationale for undertaking the project, your theoretical framework, your methods of researching your question or issue, etc. The inquiry projects will be presented to class members during the last two class sessions.

### **8. Mid-Term and Final Exam**

The mid-term consists of a number of questions that allow you to reflect on your learning in class and the structure of the class itself. The final exam consists of written questions and will take place during our scheduled final time. Plan to be there for the entire two hours.

### **Methods of Evaluation**

For each major project, you will turn in a self-evaluation in which you state your goals for that project and evaluate the process you went through in reaching those goals. I will add my evaluative comments based on your goals. You will also write a mid-term evaluation of your learning and the course that includes your goals for the rest of the semester as well as a final self-evaluation at the end of the semester.

Your final grade will be based holistically on both your and our evaluation of your growth and learning, the quality of your written work, and your attendance, participation, and preparation for class sessions. Note that participation is an integral part of this course.

While you can negotiate the ways in which you define and complete class projects, you must complete all of these projects to fulfill course requirements and your final grade for the course will be based on the thoughtfulness and quality of this work with a B reflecting the completion of all course projects at a satisfactory level. To receive an A, two or more of the projects must be completed in ways that go beyond minimum requirements or you can propose an extra project. Incompletes will not be given for the course except in extreme situations and only with prior approval by the instructor.

A - Complete all assignments for the course at a satisfactory level and meet attendance and class participation requirements. In addition, complete two or more projects in ways that go beyond the minimum requirements in quality and thought or complete an additional project.

B - Complete all assignments for the course at a satisfactory level and meet attendance and class participation requirements.

C – Issues with several missing or incomplete assignments or attendance, tardiness, leaving class early, or participation in class sessions

D – Unsatisfactory in multiple areas related to assignments, attendance and participation.

E – Failure to complete multiple assignments at a satisfactory level and/or multiple absences from class.

**Course Readings:**

Articles and chapters on D2L

Young adult novels

**Course Outline (order of the themes varies depending on availability of texts and guest speakers)**

Introduction to the class

Introduction to adolescence as a social construct

Stereotypes vs reality in views of adolescents and Youth Lens

Due: Personal narrative on your experiences as an adolescent

Read: Erika Packard, *That Teenage Feeling*

Michael Cart, *From Sue Barton to the Sixties (Young Adult Literature)*

Robert Petrone, *The Youth Lens: Analyzing Adolescence/ts in Literary Texts*

Influence of family relationships on adolescence

Due: “Where I’m From” poems and collages

Read: *Far from the Tree*, Robin Benway or *All This and Heaven Too*, by Angela Johnson

Katie M. Hrapczynski, *Engagement in Racial Socialization Among Transracial Adoptive Families with White Parents*

Paula Y. Mullineaux, *Genetic Influences on Peer and Family Relationships Across Adolescent Development*

Kate Taylor Harcourt, *Examining Family Structure and Half-Sibling Influence on Adolescent Well-Being* (choose one of the three articles)

Race and ethnicity within adolescence and youth culture

Panel discussion with diverse YA authors

Read: *Dreaming in Indian*, *Mexican WhiteBoy*, *Born Confused*, or *All American Boys*

Rudine Sims Bishop, *Mirrors, Windows and Sliding Glass Doors*

Sarah Park Dahlen, *Picture This: Diversity in Children’s Book Publishing*

Interview or essay from each panelist on their work

Gender identity and sexuality within adolescence and youth culture

Guest speaker

Read: *More Happy than Not*, Adam Silvera

Mollie Blackburn, *Talking Together for Change*

Lauren Barack, *LGBTQ and College Bound*

Jonah Weiner, *The rise of no homo and the changing face of hip-hop homophobia*

Socioeconomic status and the influence on adolescence

Read: *If I Ever Get Out of Here, We Were Liars, The Secret Side of Empty, or Piecing Me Together*  
Steven Roberts, Young People and Social Class  
C. Bussani, Young People and Social Capital  
Explore - <http://playspent.org/>

#### Fitting in, bullying, and the status quo

Due: Teen interview and narrative

Read: *None of the Above*, I. W. Gregorio  
Alexandra Robbins, *The Geeks Share Inherit the Earth* (excerpt)  
Excerpts from teen magazines and self-help books

#### Health, illness, disability, and bodies

Guest speaker

Read: *Marcelo in the Real World, The Fault in Our Stars, Akata Witch, or Gabi, a Girl in Pieces*  
Suggested article from guest speaker  
DSM or medical dictionary definitions of illness(es) depicted in texts

#### Analytical essay

Draft of analytical essay to share with a response group

#### Love, sex, and romance

Read: *Street Love, Purity, Grasshopper Jungle, or So Hard to Say*  
Fiona MacDonald, Genre Films as Cultural Pedagogy: The Enduring Myth of Star-crossed Lovers  
Emma Pearse, Smithsonian magazine, Why Can't Romance Novels Get Any Love?

#### Teens on screen

View classic and recent teen movies or TV episodes (e.g. Moonlight, Veronica Mars, Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Smoke Signals, Real Women Have Curves, Aquamarine, Dangerous Lives of Altar Boys, Freaks and Geeks, The To Do List, Pen15)  
Read: Jesse Gainer, Critical Media Literacy in Middle School: Exploring the Politics of Representation

#### So-called "adult issues" (trauma, abuse, addiction, etc)

Guest speaker (counselor/therapist)

Read: *Speak, Hush (Chayil), Charm and Strange, or Miseducation of Cameron Post*  
Meghan Cox Gurdon, Darkness Too Visible  
Sherman Alexie, Why the Best Kids' Books Are Written in Blood  
Ashley Hope Perez, Embracing Discomfort OR Michael DiCicco and Paula Greathouse, The Moral of the Story

#### Power, agency and defiance

Read: *Monster, I Love I Hate I Miss My Sister, The Walls Around Us, or The House of the Scorpion*  
Excerpts from *Girls in Justice* by Richard Ross  
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Recommended reading from guest speaker (youth public defender)

Locate: Articles, podcasts, and videos relating to student/teen-led social movements, such as #NoDAPL, #NoCopAcademy, TUSD ethnic studies, March for Our Lives, DACA, etc. and bring to share and discuss with lit circle group

Historically speaking

Read: *Audacity*, *Seventeenth Summer*, *Code Name Verity*, or *Two Boys Kissing*  
Adolescence and Youth, *Encyclopedia of Children and Childhood*  
Other readings are historical newspapers, photographs, and documents from whichever time period of your book, use UA databases and other resources

Adolescence in global contexts

Read: *Now is the Time for Running*, *This Thing Called the Future*, *Driving by Starlight*, *In a Perfect World*, *Darius the Great is Not Okay*, or *Patron Saints of Nothing*.

UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth #YouthStats:

<https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/youth-statistics/>

Final inquiry presentations

**The information contained in the course syllabus, other than the grade and absence policies, may be subject to change with reasonable advance notice, as deemed appropriate by the instructor.**

## **University Policies**

### **Classroom Behavior Policy**

To foster a positive learning environment, students and instructors have a shared responsibility. We want a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment where all of us feel comfortable with each other and where we can challenge ourselves to succeed. To that end, our focus is on the tasks at hand and not on extraneous activities (e.g., texting, chatting, reading a newspaper, making phone calls, web surfing, etc.).

### **Threatening Behavior Policy**

The UA Threatening Behavior by Students Policy prohibits threats of physical harm to any member of the University community, including to oneself. See <http://policy.arizona.edu/education-and-student-affairs/threatening-behavior-students>.

### **Notification of Objectionable Materials**

This course will contain material of a mature nature, which may include explicit language, depictions of nudity, sexual situations, and/or violence. The instructor will provide advance notice when such materials will be used. Students are not automatically excused from interacting with such materials, but they are encouraged to speak with the instructor to voice concerns and to provide feedback.

### **Accessibility and Accommodations**

At the University of Arizona, we strive to make learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience barriers based on disability or pregnancy, please contact the Disability Resource Center (520-621-3268, <https://drc.arizona.edu/>) to establish reasonable accommodations.

## **Code of Academic Integrity**

Students are encouraged to share intellectual views and discuss freely the principles and applications of course materials. However, graded work/exercises must be the product of independent effort unless otherwise instructed. Students are expected to adhere to the UA Code of Academic Integrity as described in the UA General Catalog. See: <http://deanofstudents.arizona.edu/academic-integrity/students/academic-integrity>.

The University Libraries have some excellent tips for avoiding plagiarism, available at <http://new.library.arizona.edu/research/citing/plagiarism>.

## **UA Nondiscrimination and Anti-harassment Policy**

The University is committed to creating and maintaining an environment free of discrimination; see <http://policy.arizona.edu/human-resources/nondiscrimination-and-anti-harassment-policy>

Our classroom is a place where everyone is encouraged to express well-formed opinions and their reasons for those opinions. We also want to create a tolerant and open environment where such opinions can be expressed without resorting to bullying or discrimination of others.

## **Additional Resources for Students**

UA Academic policies and procedures are available at <http://catalog.arizona.edu/policies>

Student Assistance and Advocacy information is available at

<http://deanofstudents.arizona.edu/student-assistance/students/student-assistance>

## **Confidentiality of Student Records**

<http://www.registrar.arizona.edu/personal-information/family-educational-rights-and-privacy-act-1974-ferpa?topic=ferpa>

### **TLS Position Statement on Social Justice (3/25/2014)**

The members of the TLS community are committed to providing equal opportunity and nurturing an academic climate dedicated to social justice. Injustice takes many forms. Oppressive acts are sometimes overt, but most are subtle, and are difficult to document. These hidden forms of discrimination are identified in the literature as microaggressions, often resulting from unexamined attitudes and beliefs. Macroaggressions are expressions of both the overt and systemic forms of injustice.

Our commitment to social justice reflects an orientation to our goals and practices in education and ultimately, an orientation to life that values a diversity and inclusion of viewpoints and experiences of all people as valuable contributors to the experience of schooling and society. This stance recognizes that individuals bring a variety of linguistic, social, and cognitive strengths from their families and communities into the classroom; we view these strengths as assets.

- We value and honor human diversity.
- We recognize that all relationships include dynamics of power. We are committed to relating to each other with conscious awareness and sensitivity to these power dynamics.
- We pledge to contribute to expanding the linguistic and cognitive strengths that learners possess and bring with them to the classroom.
- We understand that systemic policies, traditions, and laws along with personal beliefs, experiences and attitudes affect personal relationships and equitable treatment and opportunity for all.

- We strive to provide a context where we all have the venue, the opportunity, and the confidence to express our experiences and that these experiences will be heard constructively, critically, and with sensitivity.
- Hence, we are not color blind. We will not erase who someone is in the name of equality, nor deny the historical, material and emotional impacts of racialized and gendered identities, and colonial legacies.

We stand alongside and speak out with our colleagues, staff, students, and community members when any of us or others experience micro- or macroaggressions. We recognize that those of us who enjoy privileged status due to our racialized, gendered, heteronormative, or otherwise privileged aspects of our identities may be unaware of the ways this privileged status marginalizes others. We pledge to listen to our colleagues, students, staff, and community members when any of us make efforts to remain diligent in maintaining awareness of micro, macro aggressions, and raise our awareness around issues of invisibility, marginalization, normativity, power, and privilege.

We view these goals as both crucial and ambitious. The entrenched nature of oppression requires both institutional restructuring and new social discourses. Therefore, our stance on disrupting existing and persisting inequities requires attention to micro and macro level interactions. Every interaction is an opportunity for disrupting processes of marginalization, whether overt or subtle, both through person-to-person exchange and through resisting oppressive structures and systems. We commit to holding one other and ourselves accountable, through our research and practice, to rejecting entrenched inequalities, and to cultivating new discourses as groundwork for imagining new social worlds.