TEACHING CHILDREN’S LITERATURE IN ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL CLASSROOMS

Instructor:  
Class Hours:  
Email:  
Office:  
Phone:  
Office Hours:  

TEXTS:  
• *Article Packet*  
• 30+ Children’s Literature Books of your own choosing  
• Copies of Focused Studies for Members of the Class  

COURSE DESCRIPTION:  
This course provides opportunities to read, enjoy, and discuss a wide variety of children’s books and to become familiar with various educational issues relating to the use of trade books in elementary classrooms. A variety of teaching strategies will be explored that will enhance the effective use of children’s literature in the classroom. Participants will also become familiar with the resources available to help them select, evaluate, and utilize books. Special emphasis will be placed on developing personal understandings of how children’s literature can be used to foster awareness, compassion, and insights into interpersonal relationships, cultural differences, and social justice. In addition to reading a wide variety of children’s literature, we will be reading about, discussing, and inquiring into:  

• The Benefits of Reading Aloud, Storytelling, Sustained Silent Reading  
• Choosing Books: Considerations and Criteria  
• Social Issues, Multicultural, and International Children’s Books  
• Exploring Literature through Drama  
• Censorship of Children’s Books  
• Literature-Rich Curriculum—Focused, Author, Genre, and Illustrator Studies  
• Strategies for Teaching Literature  
• The Relationship Between Literature, Cultural Representation, and Identity  
• Using Poetry and Shared Inquiry in the Classroom  
• Gender and Equity Issues in Children’s Literature
CLASS ENGAGEMENTS AND COURSE EVALUATION

**PARTICIPATION (28 POINTS):** To get the most out of this semester, be curious, questioning, and active in class and out. During class, this includes participating in discussions, demonstrations, curricular engagements, presentations, collaborative projects, and small group work. All class readings are to be completed by the dates listed on the schedule. You will be meeting in teams outside of class time and reading lots of children’s books. Your participation also includes attending all class sessions and promptness (both essential teacher behaviors). **It is required to bring the Packet Binder, other articles or books we are reading, and your literature journal to class. If an emergency arises and you must miss your own class, notify me ahead of time by phone or email and have your responsibility partner turn in your assignments.**

**You must** have a **responsibility partner** to collect handouts, turn in assignments, and take notes if you’re absent.

**WEB SEARCH (6 POINTS):** As an introduction to the field of children’s literature, conduct a search on the World Wide Web. Find 3 quality web sites that deal with some aspect of this course (see schedule) or other issues in the field that interest you. The kinds of pages you may want to seek out include:

- Award-winning books (Caldecott, Newbery, King, etc.)
- Children’s literature newsletters
- Multicultural books/books depicting diverse ethnicities/books by authors of specific cultural groups or ethnicities
- Books that are grouped thematically
- Banned or challenged books
- Chat rooms or mailing lists (LISTSERV)
- Information about authors and illustrators
- Recommended books (by children, organizations, etc.)
- Genres of children’s books (picture, science fiction, jokes, poetry, fantasy, folk tales, historical fiction, etc.)
- International children’s books

*Search Hints:* Use Google or your favorite search engine. When you search, remember to try different groups of words (i.e. children’s literature -or- children’s books with” science fiction”). Also, don’t get stuck on the first page of your search results. I’ve found some very interesting sites by going back three or four pages into the search results.

*For Class:* Bring in the printouts of the 3 **web sites** you think are worthy of sharing with the class (Most of these will be multiple pages; **bring in no more than the three best pages for each site**). For each site **write a short, critical review** (a couple of paragraphs) including (a) a summary of the site and (b) what it’s good for/what you like about it; how you would use it; what was surprising; and/or any other comments you have about the site including problems or questions. This is a great opportunity to gather resources for upcoming course assignments.
LITERATURE JOURNAL (Part of Participation Grade): Because of the wealth of valuable information and outstanding children’s books we will be exploring during the semester, please bring a journal (or use a special section of your notebook) that you have in class every week. This will be a place to record your thoughts and ideas about:
- Books to use in your classroom
- Curricular ideas for presenting and using books
- Ideas and books for your focused/genre/author/illustrator study project
- Authors or Illustrators you especially like

READER RESPONSE (16 POINTS): The class readings, your responses to the readings, and class discussions are at the core of this course. The purpose of reader response is to help you focus critically on the class readings and respond to them in an in-depth fashion. For the readings each week, come to class with important parts of chapters and articles highlighted or marked and make margin notes. Here are a few examples of what the in-depth margin notes can include:
- What you agree with in the article/chapter and why?
- What you disagree with and why?
- How do the author’s ideas relate to or conflict with your own experience?
- What surprised you and why?
- What aspects of the article/chapter will be useful in the future and why?
- What was unclear in the article and why?
- How does the article/chapter relate to other readings and/or class experiences?
- What new questions arise after reading the article?

Please respond with in-depth margin notes to at least 6 different quotes or sections of the articles/chapters assigned for a class session. Reader Responses are due on the week the readings are assigned. You will turn in the articles with your notes (or copies of your responses on book chapters) and receive them back (to put back in your binders) at the beginning of the following class session.

Exemplary reader response shows evidence of active reading which includes: bringing all materials and readings to class; making extensive, thoughtful notes in the margins; and making connections to other class readings, discussions, or other classes.

There are nine weeks of readings that require a reader response during the semester. Some weeks you will be asked to complete additional types of reader responses based on your margin notes. These responses will be assigned the week before they are due. There will be two weeks that you make margin notes on the novels we are reading.

One time during the semester (based on your regular reader response margin notes), respond to the articles for the week with an ARTISTIC READER RESPONSE using a sign system other than writing such as sketches, posters, plays, poetry, dance, etc. These artistic responses will be presented to the class and then turned in. You choose the week for the artistic response. Along with presenting the artistic response, write a paragraph or two that explains your creation. Your artistic response needs to include all of the articles assigned for the week (so you will be making connections between the readings).
BOOK CIRCLES (18 POINTS): Three times during the semester, bring three books to class that you feel are exemplary of the category of children’s literature we are exploring for that week (one chapter book and two picture books). **These should be books that you think may be “new” to other students in the class.** Try for copyright dates after 2006. You will have the opportunity to join different Book Circles to browse, read, and record reflections and ideas. For each of the three books you bring into class, type a short Book Circle Brochure that contains:

- **Reference notations** (title, author, illustrator, publisher, copyright date, type of book--easy picture, sophisticated picture, easy novel, non-fiction, etc.)
- **Short synopsis**
- **Insights** (why you chose this books to share, what made it memorable, why is it exemplary of the category we are exploring)
- **Ideas** (specific ideas on how you might use the book in a classroom including related web sites)
- **Questions** (issues, concerns, or possible problems with this book)

Don’t forget to put your name and date somewhere on the brochure.

**Use your literature journal to record books you want to use in the future.**

START LOOKING FOR & READING BOOK CIRCLE BOOKS EARLY

ORAL INTERPRETATION (6 POINTS): Once during the semester you will present an oral interpretation of a piece of children’s literature. This piece should represent an exemplary piece of children’s literature that your classmates probably haven’t read before (search out unusual or new books). You will have up to **8 minutes** for your presentation which means you most likely will read only parts of the book and use storytelling or a book talk to fill in details and plot—or use storytelling for the entire presentation. The goals of your presentation are: a) presenting a compelling introduction to your piece; b) communicating meaning through the use of voice, gesture, pacing, etc.; c) building rapport and connection with your audience and/or having some type of audience participation.

Audience participation can take the form of having the class: join in on a repeated refrain, act out the story as you read, receive some token or memento of the story, act out the story with puppets, make something as the story is being read that relates to the book, etc, etc. Or—you might want to use props. Be creative!! Books on storytelling will be helpful in planning your presentation. The Education Library has lots of these. **See optional articles in Week 2 on Oncourse.**

**As an audience member, use your literature journal to record books you want to use in the future.**
**FOCUSED, AUTHOR, GENRE, OR ILLUSTRATOR STUDY PROJECT (26%)**: In teams of four or five, create a *focused study* project around a broad theme or topic that highlights an interpersonal issue, social justice concern, or an issue that has a direct connection to the lives of students, families, or the community. You can choose to do an *author study* if the author has written 20 or more books that are connected thematically. The same goes for an *illustrator study*. A *genre study* focuses on a specific genre of children’s literature (poetry, science fiction, etc.).

Components of the project include:

- Background -- Significance of the Topic/Genre/Author/Illustrator
- Focusing Questions
- Initiating Experiences
- Devices for Organizing and Sharing
- Learning Center Invitations
- Shared Reading Experiences
- Conceptually Related Texts and Media
- Exploring “Real-Life” Critical Issues/Taking Action
- Assessment
- Culminating Experiences
- Bibliography of Children’s Literature, Media, etc.

**You will receive a detailed explanation of this assignment and a sample Focused Study.**

Make copies of your focused/genre/author/illustrator study for other class members. This project will also include an individual personal reflection piece that covers what you learned, how your team worked together, what you would do differently next time, etc.

**CODE OF CONDUCT**

If you are not already familiar with the *Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct*, especially the section on plagiarism, please read this *School of Education* web page:

https://www.indiana.edu/~istd/definition.html

**HELP WITH WRITING—WRITING TUTORIAL SERVICES**

For free help in any phase of the writing process--from brainstorming to polishing the final draft--call Writing Tutorial Services [WTS, pronounced "wits"] at **855-6738** for an appointment. When you visit WTS, you'll find a tutor who is a sympathetic and helpful reader of your prose. To be assured of an appointment with the tutor who will know most about your class, please call in advance. For schedules see http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/
# Tentative Schedule

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<th>WK</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Engagements</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>January 11</td>
<td>Course Introduction</td>
<td>Who We Are?&lt;br&gt;What this class is about?&lt;br&gt;Review Syllabus and Assignments&lt;br&gt;Sign up for Read Aloud/Storytelling&lt;br&gt;Getting into Books</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>January 18</td>
<td>Read Aloud&lt;br&gt;Storytelling&lt;br&gt;Sustained Silent Reading&lt;br&gt;Books for Every Occasion</td>
<td>• Leland, Lewison, &amp; Harste: Chapter 2—<em>Why Reading Aloud is Crucial</em>&lt;br&gt;• Krashen: <em>Free Reading</em>&lt;br&gt;Optional Resources:&lt;br&gt;• <em>Hints on How to Read Aloud to a group</em>&lt;br&gt;• <em>Preparing &amp; Telling Your Story/Storytelling Tips</em>&lt;br&gt;• Collins &amp; Cooper-The Story is in the Telling</td>
<td>WWW Search Due&lt;br&gt;Book Introductions</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>January 25</td>
<td>Choosing Books&lt;br&gt;Social Issues Books</td>
<td>• Leland et al.: Chapter 4—<em>Choosing Books: Diversity Counts</em>&lt;br&gt;• Leland et. al.—<em>You Can Hear a Pin Drop</em></td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>February 1</td>
<td>Focused Study</td>
<td>• Bird et. al.: <em>Plan for Making Meaning</em>&lt;br&gt;• Burke: <em>A Focused Study</em>&lt;br&gt;• Leland et al.: Chapter 6—<em>Inquiry into the World through Focused Studies</em>&lt;br&gt;Optional Resources:&lt;br&gt;• Collier: <em>Social Studies Facilitation Plan</em></td>
<td>Oral Interpretation</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>February 8</td>
<td>Multicultural and International&lt;br&gt;Children’s Literature</td>
<td>• Re-read multicultural and international sections of Chapter 4—<em>Choosing Books: (Week 3-no RR)</em>&lt;br&gt;• Louie: <em>Guiding Principles for teaching Multicultural Literature</em>&lt;br&gt;• Short: Critically Reading the Word “and the World”</td>
<td>Book Circles&lt;br&gt;Social Issues, Multicultural, and International Literature</td>
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| 6  | February 15| Exploring Literature Through Drama | • Galda & West: *Exploring Literature through Drama*  
• Adomat: Actively *Engaging with Stories through Drama*  
• Hertzberg: *Engaging Critical Reader Response through Process Drama* | Oral Interpretation               |
| 7  | February 22| Censorship                    | • Leland, Lewison, & Harste: *Chapter 9--Challenging the Challengers*  
You may be assigned one other censorship article in the Packet | Book Circles Censored or Challenged Books (K-8) |
| 8  | February 29| Literature Groups             | • Leland, Lewison, & Harste: *Chapter 5--Supporting Literature Discussions* (Read, but no RR)  
• Spinelli--Maniac Magee  
Make margin notes in chapter book (Bring to class) | Oral Interpretation  
Have chapter book read with margin notes |
| 9  | March 7    | Literary Comparisons          | • Curtis—*The Watsons Go to Birmingham-1963*  
Make margin notes in chapter book *(Bring both chapter books to class)* | Oral Interpretation  
Have both chapter books read with margin notes |
|    | March 14   | Spring Break                  |                                                                                       |                                  |
| 10 | March 21   | Shared Inquiry Reading Challenging Text | *Leland et. al: Chapter 8--Language Study: Lingering in Text*  
• Villaume & Worden: *Developing Literate Voices*  
*Jack and the Beanstalk (No RR)* | Oral Interpretation               |
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| 11 | March 28 | Gender Issues in Children’s Literature          | • Ernst: Gender Issues *And Choose one:*  
• Fox: *Men Who Weep, Boys Who Dance*  
• Tsao: *Gender Issues in Young Children's Literature*  
• Swartz: *Bringing Sexual Orientation into the Classroom* | Book Circles  
*Books that depict non-stereotypical gender roles* |
| 12 | April 4  | Poetry                                          | Siemens: *Going Places with Poetry*  
Damico: *Evoking Hearts and Heads* | Oral Interpretation |
| 13 | April 11 | Focused Study Presentations                     |                                                                                           | Focused Studies Due                               |
| 14 | April 18 | Focused Study Presentations                     |                                                                                           | Focused Studies Due                               |
| 15 | April 25 | Focused Study Presentations                     | Final Issues Discussion  
*Course Evaluation* | Focused Studies Due                               |