

Missouri Western State College
School of Liberal Arts & Sciences
Department of English, Foreign Languages, and Journalism

English 400: Adolescent Literature (LAS Focus: Writing)

Dr. Mike Cadden

Spring, 2004

Class time and place: 4:00 - 6:30 pm W in 210 Eder Hall (SS/C)

Dr. Cadden's Office: 222-F Eder Hall (SS/C)

Office Hours: 11:00 am - 12:30 pm T/Th; 1:30 - 3:30 pm W; and by appointment.

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Web Page: <http://www.missouriwestern.edu/eflj/lg/faculty/cadden.html> (At which copy of this syllabus can be found.)

Course Description:

ENG 400 is an introduction to the genre of literature for the young adult ("YA" or "Adolescent" literature) that appeals to YA from middle school to high school and beyond. In this course we will discuss the specific nature of YA literature as a genre different from both "adult" and children's literature by both degree and kind.

As both an LAS Writing Focus course and an upper-division English course for majors, ENG 400 will involve writing in different forms. I will be drawing on your ability to summarize, analyze, critique and use language in clear and sophisticated ways. Be prepared for a course that will involve a great deal of both reading and writing.

Prerequisite: Junior standing. This course is required in the BSE program and serves as an elective for the childhood studies minor; however, *this class does not count as an English literature elective for English majors.*

Required Reading:

Chbosky, Stephen. The Perks of Being a Wallflower.

Cisneros, Sandra. The House on Mango Street.

Colfer, Eoin. Artemis Fowl.

Engdahl, Sylvia. Enchantress from The Stars.

Hesse, Karen. Out of the Dust.

Klauser, Annette. The Silver Kiss.

Lowry, Lois. A Summer to Die.

---. The Giver.

Nilsen, Alleen Pace and Kenneth L. Donelson. Literature for Today's Young Adults. 5th Ed.

Rennison, Louise. Angus, Thongs and Full Frontal Snogging.

Evaluation:

Participation: 10%

Midterm Exam: 20%

Final Exam: 20%

Researched Essay: 25%

Discussion list: 25%

Attendance:

The MWSC *Policy Guide* states that "each instructor will determine and make known to the class the requirement for attendance" (45). If you don't come to class you will obviously jeopardize your class participation grade. I will not quantify how much presence equals what grade. I will be judging your total participation performance, not just

presence. I can also tell you that the exams draw heavily from class work. Also, since you are responsible for all announcements in class, you run the risk of missing important information regarding requirements; I will not accept absence as an excuse for ignorance. In short, if you're not here, you're going to suffer through other assignments directly and indirectly.

Academic Dishonesty: All cases in which students pass off others' work as their own will be referred to the Dean of Student Affairs. Students also run the risk of failing the assignment as well as the course, depending on the magnitude and nature of the offense. If you are unsure about how you are using sources, please check with me.

Late and Missing Work: I reserve the right to refuse any late work.

Revision Policy: All written work may be revised any time up until the revision due date (please see calendar). I require that all revisions be accompanied by the original graded paper that contains my comments.

Policy on Students with Disabilities: Any student in this course who has a disability which requires different contexts for either evaluation or expression should contact me in the first few weeks of the course so that those needs can be considered.

Calendar (Subject to Constant and Inexplicable Change):

Jan. 21: Introduction to the course and critical approaches; issues of YA literature (Small; Gallo; Hunt; Campbell; N&D Ch. 1); explanation of assignments and WebCT.

Jan. 28: The House on Mango Street; N&D 52-53, 241, 296.

Feb. 4: Out of the Dust; N&D Ch. 8. (<http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/ALAN/fall98/brown.html>),

Feb. 11: Poetry for and by young adults: sharing and discussing what's out there; N&D 297-302.

Feb. 18: The Perks of Being a Wallflower; N&D Ch. 4.

Feb. 25: Artemis Fowl; N&D Ch. 7.

Mar. 3: Enchantress from the Stars; N&D Ch. 7.

Mar. 10: **Midterm Exam.**

Spring Break

Mar. 24: Lois Lowry: The Giver and A Summer to Die; discussion of Lowry's work across age and genre.

Mar. 31: Censorship; Visit by Ms. Mindy Matter; N&D Ch. 12.

Apr. 7: The Silver Kiss; N&D 167-72, 187-93; midterm grades due.

Apr. 14: Picture books for a Young Adult Audience (<http://www.uiowa.edu/~crl/bibliographies/picbooks.htm>); **Essays Due for those who wish to be eligible to revise.**

Apr. 21: Angus and Full Frontal Snogging.

Apr. 28: YA Film: John Hughes and Beyond (<http://www.riverblue.com/hughes/films.html>). Current trends and parallels to print fiction; course evaluations; N&D Ch. 3's Appendix D; **Essays Due.**

Final Exam: Tuesday, May 11: 2:00 pm - 3:50 pm.

ENG 400: Adolescent Literature

Dr. Cadden

WebCT Postings & Discussions

Worth: 25%

A big part of this semester's course will be devoted to weekly WebCT discussions and postings. These postings will enable us to pursue threads, issues, and ideas that class time will not permit. The postings will also give us more valuable experience in written discourse beyond the essay and exam forms. The purpose of these postings is to get you generating ideas and tackling issues from a number of sources.

You will submit, each week, at least one substantial posting (~300 words, or the equivalent to one single-spaced page of text). This posting, which preferably is offered up in the early part of the week, will be in response to novels, class discussion, articles we'll be reading, others' postings, and/or any relevant experiences. They may be used, in turn, to develop ideas for your essay, future postings (you may end up developing a series of responses on a single issue), or class discussion.

If you end up offering up more than one response each week—or in any particular week, they all may not be of significant length; sometimes they may be brief qualifications or questions for others. I will take what I consider your "best" posting that week--the one in which you do what I describe below--to assess for a grade. A week will be measured from Monday to Sunday (so, they are due by midnight on Sunday); I'll assess weekly postings on Monday for the previous week. Week #1 ends on Sunday, January 25; Week #14, the last post, is due Sunday, May 2. There will be no post during Spring Break.

I ask that you do at least one of a number of things in any given posting as practice in critical thinking: advance a point/argument that is in reaction to a point made in class or in another person's weekly; speculate on a phenomenon--a tension between categories or ways of thinking (for example, reading for pleasure vs. reading to understand or to know something); offer an observation beyond the obvious or beyond rehashing class-time observations and comment on that observation's implications. You will avoid merely sharing what you "like" or "dislike" about something unless it leads somewhere, though we often begin with what we like or dislike, we shouldn't end there. Always consider the "so what?" question.

I wish to stress the difference between critique and attack, between analytic confrontation on a point and a personal confrontation. In short, we should settle for neither purely unconsidered gut responses nor whining about others' responses to your positions; here is your opportunity to hone your analysis, not engage in an extended, written equivalent of "*Oh yeah, Mr. Smarty trousers?!!, Well. . .*" Any point on any relevant subject is fine as long as it refrains from mere complaint. In other words, no bellyaching'.

Please remember that you are responsible for knowing what has been said. If, in week seven, you are interested in sharing your thoughts on censorship, you are responsible for knowing what has been said by others in their postings on that subject.

In light of the above, subject titles should reflect, as well as possible, the subject of the discussion. Save creative titles for the interior of the document; folks will be trying to use the subject postings to tell what has been discussed already, so be accurate. You should try to be specific in your allusions and citations to other postings, articles, class days, and people. It only serves you better in the point you are making if we know to whom and to what you're referring.

I think you will find that these will become easier and more interesting as the semester goes on and as postings accumulate! I look forward to the conversations!

You'll note that on the WebCT discussion board page that there are other categories of response other than the week's posting. You may submit suggestions and observations to us about the course anonymously if you like—what's bothering you, pleasing you, concerning you? You may also use the "Unrelated Chat" category to discuss matters of interest to you all, course related or not, that you'd like to share. I do ask that you do not use that space to critique other courses or instructors since it's inappropriate for me to have access to that sort of thing. You may also share ideas and ask questions about essays in that discussion area. Lastly, there is a site for you to paste your essays. We may decide, however, that we'd rather send attachments to each other. That's fine.

ENG 400: Adolescent Literature Researched Essay

Dr. Cadden

You will have a term paper due by the end of the semester that will be worth 25% of your final grade. The topic is open, though it must be relevant to adolescent literature in some important way—not simply to literature in general, or children's literature, or teaching literature. This may *seem* obvious, but sometimes the obvious must be stated. Any paper submitted by class time on April 14 will be eligible for revision. I will return it to you no later than the following class period of April 21. If you are not interested in revision you may submit the paper any time between April 14 and our last class meeting on April 28. You should submit one copy of your paper to me as a Microsoft Word attachment (for grading) and post one copy on the course discussion board under "Essays and Essay Ideas."

You should discuss primary material we've read as a group, but you may also draw in other titles about which you're

familiar. Any course material is fair game as a subject. WebCT and class time discussions are good resources for ideas. If your paper subject is about adolescent literature but not about any one or few books in particular, you should use our common readings as your examples whenever appropriate.

Secondary, researched support is required. **In addition to** using academic journals or books as resources, consider also including WebCT posts, films, web information, interviews, and class discussions as quotable material. The goal here is to find anything that helps you make your point(s) in the most convincing manner possible. You will include a works cited page in MLA form listing both primary and secondary materials cited in the paper.

MLA Citation information provided by Diana Hacker and Bedford/St.Martins Press:

Hacker, Diana. Research and Documentation Online. Bedford/St. Martins. 20 Dec. 2003.

<<http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/humanities/sample.html>>

The key here, as with any writing exercise, is to develop a focused argument appropriate to the scope of the assignment. You should shoot for a page range from **between ten and fifteen pages**.

I will be happy to discuss ideas and drafts (in part or whole) at any time. Come by to throw ideas at me and get ideas from me about resources or other primary materials relevant to your project. You should consider me available for brainstorming and helping you to refine your idea. Please use the WebCT discussion board "Essays and Essay Ideas" to share ideas with your peers and get feedback on topics.

Grading Criteria for Writing in Dr. Cadden's English Courses:

A: 90-100 pts.

B: 80-89 pts.

C: 70-79 pts.

D: 60-69 pts.

F: 59 pts. and below

The high end of each range (~7-10) should be considered "plus"; for example, 88 is in the B+ range. The middle of each range (~4-6) should be considered a solid letter grade; for example, 75 is a solid C. The low end of each range (~0-3) should be considered "minus"; for example, 92 is in the A- range.

"A":

General Qualitative Description: Excellent, Superior, Outstanding.

Conception: Your idea should contain some new, perhaps surprising, element, some angle that is uncommonly thoughtful and insightful. You are not rehearsing other people's ideas, and you are going beyond an average reading. You expose and challenge the explicit and implicit assumptions of the text. If you are incorporating research, you will have WORKED your sources--using what supports your argument, and acknowledging and dealing with what challenges it.

Organization: Your organization should be flawless and should match your content. You should anticipate, address, and work through opposition to your argument and build a strong case for your own. You should employ evidence with regularity and in appropriate circumstances. If you are incorporating research, you will spend some time positioning your argument in the context of the larger conversation.

Style: Your presentation should be artful. You have obviously paid attention to the way your language sounds as well as what it says. You have found a way to make your presentation style match the content of your paper (other than a groovy font style!), perhaps through a sustained metaphor, or a particularly apt example that you carry through and refer to in the entire paper.

Grammar and Mechanics: Your paper should be absolutely clean and free of grammatical and mechanical errors of a rudimentary nature, though you may have a few problems with complex functions of grammar. You should never avoid complex language in order to avoid errors, in other words.

“B”:

General Qualitative Description: Above average, Good, Commendable.

Conception: Your idea will be better than average, but you may have overlooked or not acknowledged or interrogated the assumptions that inform it. The claim/idea is ambitious and, for that reason, may have gotten away from you. You will be rewarded for being ambitious even if you fall a bit short.

Organization: Your organization will be strong, but the signaling might still be a bit awkward; you may find yourself using a lot of directional phrases because your argument doesn't flow naturally. (Ex. "As I said earlier..." "Firstly, secondly, thirdly...") Here too the organization will match the content rather than being formulaic.

Style: It's clean, readable, there's a consistent sense of voice, and there aren't any places where a reader has to go back and reread a sentence just to understand its structure.

Grammar/Mechanics: Very few (almost no) errors of a rudimentary nature.

“C”:

General Qualitative Description: Competent, Average, Fine.

Conception: Your idea for your paper should reflect that you have read, thought about, and paid attention to the way we have talked in class about similar issues. Your main point should be clearly stated and defended with appropriate evidence. You should remain focused on your topic throughout your paper, and you should have thoroughly examined the aspects of your topic from your perspective. Your ideas should be internally consistent. There won't be anything terribly surprising, daring, or unusual here.

Organization: Your paper should have a logical, clearly identifiable organization. Each paragraph should address only one aspect of your topic, and when you change aspects, you start a new paragraph. Transitions between paragraphs should be competently handled. Your strategy, that is, how you manage the interweaving of your idea and your organization, should be standard and straightforward. For instance, if you follow a traditional pattern of an introduction that includes a flagged thesis statement ("in this paper I will..."), then proceed with evidence and close with a restatement of the initial problem. That's a standard, straightforward organization--a C strategy.

Style: Your style should be clear and readable.

Grammar and Mechanics: Your paper should not contain many distracting errors in grammar or mechanics. Minimally, you should have run a spell-check program, and you should know the difference between a complete sentence, a fragment, and a run-on.

“D”:

General Qualitative Description: Incompetent, Inadequate, Below Average.

Conception: Your idea will be immediately obvious to a casual reader--a no-brainer—yet it will be presented as news. It will likely also be not quite clear what it is that you are really saying. Split focus on more than one thesis or issue is likely.

Organization: Perhaps you split your focus (which means you start out talking about one thing and shift to another)

which means that you are covering several or many issues in short paragraphs. You jump from one idea to the next with no logical strategy or transitions. If there is no plan, or if you don't stick to the plan, this is faulty organization. It may be evident that there wasn't ever really a structural strategy at all.

Style: Unclear language, usually. This may also be a matter of using the wrong words for your ideas. Simply put, the language is in bad shape.

Grammar/Mechanics: Consistent problems in sentence structure with little sign of proof-reading.

“F”:

General Qualitative Description: Unacceptable.

(The most common cause of an F is a failure to adequately address the assignment. For instance, if I specify that this assignment is to be researched, or if it is to address a certain topic in a certain way, you have to at least complete the assignment.)

Conception: No clear idea governs the words on the page.

Organization: No plan is evident, much less achieved.

Style: Incomprehensible most or all of the time.

Grammar/Mechanics: Consistent problems with rudimentary mechanical matters.

The four major areas of concern discussed above (conception, organization, style, and mechanics) will be considered separately, when that is possible. I may find that it is difficult or even impossible to assess conception if the style and mechanics are at the “F” or “D” levels. It may well be the case that your organization is a real problem while conception, style, and mechanics are all quite good. The ultimate assessment, then, will be the combined consideration of all four areas. Any challenges to my assessments need to employ the above issues in those challenges.

I cannot assess effort. Note that I do not say that I *will* not assess effort; nobody can assess effort unless, perhaps, he or she is there watching you work. I assume that you *all* work very hard on your writing. I can only assess the final product.

I do not give grades based on your perceived needs. If you need a “B” in the course to keep your GPA up for a scholarship, loans, or admittance into a program, then be sure you perform at a “B” level.

I do not give grades on the basis of your sense of identity or personal academic history. I assess each piece of work on its own merits. Just because you consider yourself an “A” student does not mean that you will do “A” work each time; just because you consider yourself a “C” student doesn't mean that you won't do “A” work. Try to separate your performance from your identity.