COURSE DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES
Welcome. Designed for Juniors and Seniors in the College of Arts and Sciences, Topics in Writing strives to improve students’ writing and critical thinking skills. Through sustained inquiry into a selected topic or issue, students will practice advanced forms of academic writing. The course emphasizes analysis, criticism, argument, and rhetorical knowledge, while also placing a premium on substantive, thoughtful revision.

Within the broad topic of Women Writers we will study adolescent literature, focusing mainly on works published within the past twenty years. This course defines adolescent literature as transcending genre categorizations (i.e. whether a novel is marketed as young adult or adult fiction) to mean literature representing adolescent protagonists. We will read works that are categorized as adult and young adult/teen fiction, short stories, poetry, memoirs, essays, parenting/self-help, adolescent psychology, field research, and historical, literary, feminist, and cultural criticism--and that also cross genres by blending fiction and autobiography, as well as aspects of realism, history, popular culture, comedy, myth, romance, mystery, fantasy, science fiction, horror/dystopia, survival/adventure tales, and the supernatural--to better understand what it means for adolescent protagonists--especially teenage girls--to negotiate their identities in-between childhood and adulthood (i.e. perceived notions of womanhood and manhood) as well as between other socially constructed indicators of identity. As we study constructions of girlhood and boyhood in literature and culture, we will analyze the ways in which adolescents assume a liminal and complex space in relation to the power relationships and institutions (i.e. government, family, school, organized religion, and identity politics) that both empower and repress them. Adolescent protagonists are often depicted as struggling with “in-betweenness” as they both adopt and rebel against/subvert traditional gender roles and indicators of adulthood.

As we read, we will address the following questions, among others: How do contemporary women writers represent adolescence in relation to other indicators of identity (gender, sex, sexuality, race, etc)? How do they construct being/becoming a girl? boy? young woman? young man? female/feminine or male/masculine adolescent? teenager? young adult? adult? woman? man? And how are such terms conceptualized (both internally and externally) in relation to one another and within various domestic, public, local, global, historical, cultural, ethnic/racial, geographical/national, political, psychological, physiological, gendered/sexual, and religious (non-religious) contexts?

Through a close examination of literary and theoretical texts, this course introduces and explores rhetorical issues relating to:

• The definitions, characterizations, stereotypes, conventions, and negative and positive connotations associated with adolescence and adolescent literature.
• The concept of adolescence as a socially constructed, historicized and “unstable” indicator of identity.
• The complex interrelationship between adolescence and other commonly accepted indicators of identity (such as gender, sex, sexuality, appearance, age, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, and cultural and/or religious traditions, expectations and ethics).
• The construction of gendered discourse and academic disciplines such as “girl,” “feminine,” “Girlhood Studies,” “Women Studies,” “Feminism,” and “boy,” “masculine,” and “Boyhood Studies.”
• The ways in which contemporary women writers construct girlhood and, to a lesser extent, boyhood.
• The late-twentieth and twenty-first century concepts of adolescence and adolescent literature compared to earlier notions of adolescence and adolescent literature.
• The explicit and implicit modes through which various gender roles and stereotypes are constructed, shaped and subverted by literary, historical, cultural, political, and ethical contexts/structures/institutions.
• The influence of Feminism and “Girl Power Media Culture” on representations of teens in literature and in other modes of communication and popular culture.
• The important narrative patterns, themes and issues in adolescent literature, including but not limited to: heroism; the significance of storytelling; anger, aggression, and self-inflicted violence; physical, sexual and psychological abuse; war, competition and athletics; love/romance/sexual awakening; depression/confusion/disillusionment as protagonist both “loses” and “finds” a sense of self; rebellion against institutions/institutional discourse; understanding “Self” in relation to Others; gaining independence while being dependent; experiencing death and the end of childhood innocence.
• The interrelationship between author, text and audiences and the question of whether women writers’ texts are in some ways gendered and appeal more to female/feminine audiences?
• The comparison of adolescent literature marketed for an adult audience and YA literature marketed for a predominantly teen audience.
• The increase in the number of (often young) women writers of YA/teen fiction; the growing popularity of novels featuring teen girls (often with supernatural powers) who both appropriate and subvert/rebel against traditional gender roles and norms; and the controversy/debate over whether such literary and pop culture representations of most-often beautiful girls with superpowers are feminist or allow culture to ignore real life gender inequalities and social problems because society is fixated on fantasy scenarios and representations of teen girls.
• Representations of teens in literature in relation to contemporary pre-teen, teen and adult identities and (sub)cultures.

Colorado Commission on Higher Education Criteria & Program for Writing & Rhetoric Goals
This course subscribes to PWR goals (http://www.colorado.edu/ArtsSciences/PWR/) and meets the CCHE criteria for the general education requirement in communication for advanced writing courses (CO3) in the following ways:

Extend Rhetorical Knowledge: In this class you will read texts written by a number of different women writers covering several genres, including poetry, novels, short stories, essays, and memoir. Additional readings assigned will expose you to historical, cultural and literary criticism, biography, psychological theory, and feminist theory. You will develop sophisticated strategies for critical analysis and apply reflective strategies to the synthesis and communication of knowledge through your writing.

Extend Experience in the Writing Processes: In this course you will be exposed to a variety of research technologies, and you will learn to evaluate sources for accuracy, relevance, credibility, reliability and bias. Through the process of critical reading, writing and revision, you will learn to critique your own work as well as the work of your classmates as you develop multiple drafts of your major research essay assignment.

Extend Mastery of Writing Conventions: In this class you will extend your mastery of writing conventions, including structure and grammar as well as the correct use of Modern Language Association (MLA) citation format. You will also become comfortable using genre conventions and vocabulary related to specific disciplines.

Advance Content Knowledge: In this course you will be exposed to history, literature, psychology, and feminist theory. You will apply the content knowledge gained to write effectively for various audiences and purposes, adapting your content and style to respond to the needs of different audiences and rhetorical situations.
REQUIRED READINGS

The texts we will use in this class reflect the above-listed CCHE requirements. Your main reading material will consist of the following novels: Dorothy Allison’s *Bastard Out of Carolina*; Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus*; Laurie Hale Anderson’s *Speak*, Kristin Cashore’s *Graceling*; and Suzanne Collin’s *The Hunger Games*. You will also read theoretical and rhetorical texts relevant to your main reading material (available on e-reserves). You will receive a separate handout that lists and properly cites all the theoretical (i.e. scholarly essays) and rhetorical texts (i.e. writing/reference guides) used in this course.

**The above-listed novels are available at the CU Book Store as well as the Boulder Book Store. I encourage you to buy your books at the Boulder Book Store (1107 Pearl Street). Not only is it an independent book store that has been around for more than 35 year, but you’ll get a discount on your class orders. In the basement, in the room on the left and to the right of the Used Book Office, you will find a CLASS ORDERS shelf. Boulder Book Store also sells a lot of used books, so you may want to ask a bookseller whether any of those books are also available used.**

**Please note that for the purpose of characterization and/or realism, profanity, uncouth language, racially charged language, explicit sexual content (including discussions and description of rape and homosexuality), and violence/violent death, are featured in some of the texts that will be explored. If you are uncomfortable with such language or subject matter, please choose another course.**

ASSESSMENT

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<tr>
<th>Assessment Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Writing Portfolio A</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing Portfolio B</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peer Critiques/Workshops &amp; Conferences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance/Participation</td>
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**Final Grade Scale (%): 94-100=A, 90-93=A-, 87-89=B+, 84-86=B, 80-83=B-, 77-79=C+, 74-76=C, 70-73=C-, 67-69=D+, 64-66=D, 60-63+D-, 0-59=F.**

**Writing Portfolio A (due 11/3)**

This Writing Portfolio (WPA) component of assessment will be comprised of various short writing assignments based upon the readings. While the portfolio will not be formally submitted to me until 11/3, you will have a short writing assignment due every class period. You will be expected to bring your latest written response to class every day and refer to it during discussion. Similar to keeping a reading journal, you should take notes, close read/refer to important textual passages, and critically analyze the readings. Most assignments will ask you to apply the ideas garnered from theoretical or rhetorical texts to literary ones. You will write both formally in the 3rd person and compose 1st person informal reflective pieces. Also, you will be asked to keep a glossary of critical terms, concepts, and their attending definitions and associations relative to our course topic based on your own interpretations (stated in your own words) and those garnered from literary and theoretical texts. This list will grow each week as you are introduced to new terms and their critical application. Basically, this writing portfolio will serve as a ‘low stakes’ collection of assignments that will help you compose your Major Research Essay (see Writing Portfolio B). Unless told otherwise, all assignments submitted must be clearly typed, dated and labeled (for example, “Writing Assignment 1: Response to “What Is It About 20-Somethings?””). Your attendance/participation grade will depend substantially on your contribution to class discussion based upon your reading responses. In terms of grading your writing assignments for this portfolio: strong emphasis is placed on your ability to demonstrate excellent critical thinking and reading skills; low emphasis is placed on your ability to demonstrate sentence level clarity and mastery of grammar and mechanics. Further submission guidelines will follow (i.e. whether the portfolio will be submitted to me electronically or as hardcopy and collected in a binder).
Writing Portfolio B (due 12/10)
This Writing Portfolio (WPB) component of assessment will contain all work pertaining to the drafting, workshopping, and revising of the Major Research Essay (MRE). The MRE (8-10 pages) will require you to pose an argument related to our course topic and then support that argument through research and analysis of theoretical (scholarly), sociocultural, and literary texts (more guidelines to follow).

Peer Critiques/Workshops & Conferences
The purpose of peer critiques/workshops is to help you and your classmates successfully draft, revise and edit your drafts. To better provide and receive constructive criticism, you will read, comment on and discuss each other’s drafts and write peer review critiques. You will participate in a variety of workshop styles throughout the semester (more guidelines to follow). For workshops you are expected to have printed out one or more copies of your latest draft for peer group members (unless otherwise notified), offer constructive feedback, and write or type up adequate, if not excellent, critiques, according to the workshop guidelines, when required. Your comments should address the questions provided by the workshop guidelines and Knowing Words as well as your peers’ own concerns. Your responses should be thoughtful, respectful and helpful. It is very important that you attend and are prepared for every workshop! If you must miss a workshop because of serious illness or an emergency, contact me ASAP to discuss making up your workshop by attending the Writing Center and then writing a reflection letter about your experience meeting with a consultant. Also, a couple of times during the semester (for roughly half an hour), I will meet with you individually to discuss your work so far and how you might revise for your next draft based on verbal and written feedback. Please, do not miss a conference and if you have to reschedule please email me at least 4 hours in advance.

Attendance and Participation
The seminar style of this class demands your active involvement. You have a responsibility to me, yourself and your classmates to show up for class on time, prepared, with your course work, and with your cell phones off (NO TEXTING). Noticeable and unexcused lateness as well as failure to be prepared for class will likely be counted as an absence. You are allowed 2 absences before your grade drops in percentage points (see grading scale below). Also, if you miss more than 2 weeks of class you are at risk of failing the course. If you are seriously ill or another emergency prevents you from attending class, email me ASAP. Students who miss two classes during the drop/add period may be administratively dropped from the course.

Grading Scale: 0-2 absences, excellent participation=20%; 3-4 absences, good participation=10%; 5 or more absences, poor participation=0%

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort reasonably and fairly to deal with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. If you will be missing class for a religious holiday, please inform me as soon as possible so that we may make appropriate arrangements.

OTHER POLICIES AND RESOURCES:
Respectful Classroom Behavior: Students and faculty are responsible for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Students who fail to adhere to behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Faculty has the professional responsibility to treat students with understanding, dignity and respect, to guide classroom discussion, and to set reasonable limits on the manner in which students express opinions. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender variance, and nationalities.

The University of Colorado at Boulder’s policies on Discrimination and Harassment, Sexual Harassment, and Amorous Relationships apply to all students, staff and faculty. Any student, staff or faculty member who believes s/he has been the subject of discrimination or harassment based upon race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status should contact the Office of
Discrimination and Harassment at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550. Go to http://www.colorado.edu/odh for more information about the ODH.

Plagiarism and the Honor Code: This course is designed to help you avoid plagiarism. However, plagiarism is an extremely serious offense that can result in failing an individual assignment or failing the course. Plagiarism includes not only copying or paraphrasing from a published source or using Internet materials without appropriate acknowledgment, but also presenting another student’s work as your own. If you have questions about how to properly acknowledge a source, please consult with me. All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu; 303-725-2273). Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions and non-academic sanctions (including university probation, suspension, or expulsion). More information is available at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html.

Computer access: You are encouraged to use your laptop in class as long as you ONLY use it for-course related purposes. Also, email access is integral to this course. I use email throughout the semester for updates, clarification about assignments and schedule, and to address any questions or concerns you may have. Please check your University of Colorado email at least once a day.

Writing Center: If you want additional help with your writing, go to the Writing Center (view its website for information on location, hours and services: http://www.colorado.edu/pwr.writingcenter.html). Make an appointment well in advance.

English as a Second Language: If you speak English as a second language you should contact me during the first couple weeks of the semester so that I can better assist you in the course, advise you about special ESL courses, and/or refer you to appropriate services on campus.

Disabilities Assistance: If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit a letter to me from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs may be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Contact: 303-492-8671, Willard 322, or www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices.

Disclaimer: I consider this syllabus and schedule works-in-progress. Updated information will be communicated via email.
COURSE SCHEDULE:

**WEEK ONE**
M 8/23  Introduction to Course
W 8/25

**WEEK TWO**
M 8/30  WPA Writing Assignment 1 due
W 9/1  WPA Writing Assignment 2 due
Reading (R): “Stalking” (Oates), “The Brat” (Thompson) & selections from Disturbing the Universe, Girl Power, and Young Femininity

**WEEK THREE**
M 9/6 NO CLASS (LABOR DAY)
W 9/8  WPA Writing Assignment 3 due
Reading: Bastard Out of Carolina (Chapters 1-7)

**WEEK FOUR**
M 9/13  WPA Writing Assignment 4 due
Reading: Bastard Out of Carolina (Chapters 8-17) & “Essentialism” (R).
W 9/15  WPA Writing Assignment 5 due
Reading: Bastard Out of Carolina (Chapters 18-21); selections from Coming of Age (R), The New Southern Girl (R) & Skin (“A Question of Class”) & “The Women Who Hate Me” (R).

**WEEK FIVE**
M 9/20  WPA Writing Assignment 6 due
Reading: Purple Hibiscus (3-88)
W 9/22  WPA Writing Assignment 7 due
Reading: Purple Hibiscus (89-161)

**WEEK SIX**
M 9/27  WPA Writing Assignment 8 due
Reading: Purple Hibiscus (162-239)
W 9/29  WPA Writing Assignment 9 due
Reading: Purple Hibiscus (240-307) & “Papa’s Love Sip” (R)

**WEEK SEVEN**
M 10/4  WPA Writing Assignment 10 due
Reading: Speak
W 10/6  WPA Writing Assignment 11 due
Reading: Speak (also discuss academic writing/MRE)

**WEEK EIGHT**
M 10/11  WPA Writing Assignment 12 due
Reading: Graceling (3-170) & selections from See Jane Hit (R) & Tomboys (R) & “Feminization of the Superhero” (R).
W 10/13  WPA Writing Assignment 13 due
Reading: Graceling (171-276)

**WEEK NINE**
M 10/18  WPA Writing Assignment 14 due
Reading: *Graceling* (277-357)
W 10/20 WPA Writing Assignment 15 due
Reading: *Graceling* (358-471)

**WEEK TEN**
M 10/25 WPA Writing Assignment 16 due
Reading: *The Hunger Games* (3-130)
W 10/27 WPA Writing Assignment 17 due
Reading: *The Hunger Games* (133-244)

**WEEK ELEVEN**
M 11/1 WPA Writing Assignment 18 due
Reading: *The Hunger Games* (247-374)
W 11/3 WPA due/MRE discussion (Writing Assignments 19 & 20 due)

**WEEK TWELVE**
M 11/8 Conferences/No class
W 11/10 Conferences/No class

**WEEK THIRTEEN**
M 11/15 MRE Workshop
W 11/17 MRE Workshop

**MRE (rough drafts) due Friday 11/19 in my office box**

**WEEK FOURTEEN - THANKSGIVING BREAK**

**WEEK FIFTEEN**
M 11/29 Conferences/No class
W 12/1 Conferences/No class

**WEEK SIXTEEN**
M 12/6 MRE Workshop
W 12/8 MRE Workshop

**WPB due Friday 12/10 in my office box**