**WRTG 3020: Topics in Writing**

WRTG 3020 sections: -042: MW 4:30-5:45 PM, HLMS 104; -048: MW 6-7:15 PM, HLMS 196

WRTG 1150 schedule: MW 3-4:15 PM; TR 3:30-4:45 PM

**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 focus on adolescent literature. This course defines adolescent literature as representing adolescent protagonists, whether marketed as “young adult” or “adult fiction.” Adolescent protagonists are often depicted as struggling with “in-betweenness” as they both adopt and rebel against traditional gender roles and indicators of adulthood. In addition to scholarly works, we will read “coming of age” novels that blend fiction and nonfiction, realism and fantasy, to better understand what it means for adolescent protagonists, especially girls, to establish their identities in the liminal space between childhood and adulthood. In particular, we will examine how adolescents cope with societal indicators of identity (age, gender, sex, sexuality, ethnicity, and class) while navigating among relationships and institutions (family, school, government, organized religion, and identity politics) that may empower and/or repress them.

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, ethnicity, etc)? And how are such terms constructed and 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, socioeconomic 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(s) and “Girl Power Media Culture” on representations of teens in literature and other modes of communication and popular culture.
• The important narrative patterns, themes and issues in adolescent literature, including but not limited to: power; transition; heroism; the significance of storytelling/fantasy; eating and hunger; physical, sexual and psychological abuse; anger and aggression; violence, war, competition, and athletics; love/romance/sexual awakening; depression, confusion and disillusionment; rebellion against institutions/institutional discourse; understanding of “Self” in relation to “Others”; developing a voice; gaining independence while being dependent; experiencing death and/or 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 versus YA audience.
• The growing popularity of novels featuring “strong” young adult females (sometimes 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 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 adolescents in literature in relation to contemporary young 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, and essays. Additional readings assigned will expose you to historical, cultural and literary criticism, biography, psychological theory, feminist theory, and Girlhood Studies. 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 assignments.

Extend Mastery of Writing Conventions: In this class you will extend your mastery of writing conventions, including structure and grammar. 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.

COURSE MATERIALS
The main reading for this course are the following novels: Dorothy Allison’s Bastard Out of Carolina, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s Purple Hibiscus and Suzanne Collins’ The Hunger Games. These novels are available at the CU Book Store and the Boulder Book Store (ask an employee for directions to the CLASS ORDERS shelf).

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/or 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.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

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. The grading scale is as follows: 0-2 absences/great participation=10%, 3-4 absences/good participation=5%, more than 4 absences/poor participation=0% and you risk 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.

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.

Workshops and Conferences: On the days designated as workshop, you will provide constructive criticism of your classmates’ work. Peer critique and draft preparation is extremely important, and both will count towards your final grade. Also, you will conference with me a few times in order to discuss your progress and receive constructive criticism to help you with further revision (more guidelines to follow).

Essays: You will complete three essays, 5-7 pages each (typed, double spaced), based on each novel read in this course. These essays will be analytical, argumentative and research-based. You will 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). In conjunction with drafting and revising your essays, you will free-write, outline, practice summarizing and analyzing your sources, etc. Rough drafts you submit to me and your peers will be critiqued, not graded, and you will have the opportunity to revise each essay multiple times. The portfolio you submit to me before Fall Break (which will include essay drafts, workshop comments, reflections, etc.) will be given a grade, but you will still have the opportunity to revise again for a higher final course grade (more details to follow).

GRADING SCALE:
- Attendance & Participation: 10%
- Workshops & Conferences: 30%
- Essays (3): 60% (20% each)

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.

GRADING SCALE FOR ESSAYS:
A Exceptional in content, organization, style, and mechanics; illuminates the topic through its depth of analysis or argument.
B Well above average both in development of the thesis and in style; command of mechanics.
C Meets the assignment without major mistakes; mixture of strengths and weaknesses; basically follows form.
D Fails to include all the elements of the form or doesn’t develop them adequately; poorly organized; contains many distracting mechanical errors.
F Incomplete, disastrously flawed, plagiarized or never turned in.

UNIVERSITY 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 may 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 frequently 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. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities (www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices).

Disclaimer: This syllabus and course schedule are works-in-progress and subject to change.
COURSE SCHEDULE (SUBJECT TO CHANGE): **Listed next to each date is what is due that day**

WEEK 1

M 8/22    Introduction to course
W 8/24    Discuss “Girl,” “Barbie Doll,” “Stalking,” “The Brat” (e-reserves); “Essentialism vs. Constructionism” & “What is it about 20-Somethings?” (email)

**RECOMMENDED READING: “Between ‘Girl Power’ and ‘Reviving Ophelia,’” & “Girl Power,” “Young Femininity,” “Disturbing the Universe” (e-reserves)

WEEK 2

M 8/29    Discuss Bastard Out of Carolina (Chapters 1-5)
W 8/31    Discuss BOC (Chapters 6-10)

WEEK 3

M 9/5     NO CLASS/LABOR DAY
W 9/7     Discuss BOC (Chapters 11-17)

WEEK 4

M 9/12    Discuss BOC (Chapters 18-22)
W 9/14    Discuss “A Question of Class,” “Coming of Age” & “New Southern Girl” (e-reserves)

**RECOMMENDED READING: “An Aching Lust,” “Hopeful Grief,” Two or Three Things I Know for Sure

WEEK 5

M 9/19    ESSAY 1 PREP; read Purple Hibiscus
W 9/21    LIBRARY SEMINAR; read PH

WEEK 6

M 9/26    CONFERENCES (ESSAY 1); read PH
W 9/28    WORKSHOP (ESSAY 1); read PH

WEEK 7

M 10/3    Discuss Purple Hibiscus
W 10/5    Discuss PH; ESSAY 1 DUE

WEEK 8

M 10/10   Discuss PH & additional readings (TBA)
W 10/12   ESSAY 2 PREP; CONFERENCES (ESSAYS 1 & 2)

WEEK 9

M 10/17   CONFERENCES (ESSAYS 1 & 2); read Hunger Games
W 10/19   WORKSHOP (ESSAY 2); read HG
WEEK 10
M 10/24  Discuss *The Hunger Games*; ESSAY 2 DUE
W 10/26  Discuss *HG*

WEEK 11
M 10/31  Discuss *HG* & additional readings; ESSAY 3 PREP
W 11/2   ESSAY 3 PREP

WEEK 12
M 11/7   CONFERENCES/WORKSHOP (ESSAYS 1-3)
W 11/9   CONFERENCES/WORKSHOP (ESSAYS 1-3)

WEEK 13
M 11/14  WORKSHOP (ESSAY 3)
W 11/16  WORKSHOP (ESSAYS 1-3)

**PORTFOLIO (ESSAYS 1-3) DUE BY 5 PM ON 11/19**

WEEK 14  FALL BREAK (NO CLASS)

WEEK 15
M 11/28 - F 12/2: CONFERENCES (ESSAYS 1-3); FCQs

WEEK 16
M 12/5   FINAL REVISIONS WORKSHOP
W 12/7   FINAL REVISIONS DUE (FINAL PORTFOLIO DUE)

NO FINAL EXAM! HAPPY WINTER BREAK!