

Politics in Whoville: U.S. Politics in Children's Literature

Instructor: Joshua Meyer-Gutbrod
Email: jlm536@cornell.edu

Office Hours:
Office: B11 White Hall

Course Description:

Throughout modern history, children's literature has played a prominent role in shaping notions of citizenship and ideology. This course will examine how children's literature shaped and responded to major shifts in American political history in the 20th century, including industrialization, New Deal legislation, and the Civil Rights, Anti-War, Feminist and Environmental movements. Students will explore the relationship between these political shifts and the themes outlined by corresponding children's literature. Readings will include children's literary classics ranging from "The Little Engine that Could" to works by Dr. Seuss and corresponding academic sources pulled from diverse fields including political science, sociology, history and literary criticism. Writing assignments will require students to explore the relationship between literary themes and shifts in political culture culminating in a final project.

Learning Outcomes:

This First-Year Writing Seminar will encourage you to develop and demonstrate competency in the following areas:

- *Constructing Persuasive Arguments* including forming strong thesis statements and organizing and employing evidence to support your arguments.
- *Using Sources* including the ability to locate, clearly summarize the central argument of, and appropriately cite a text.
- *Writing with Style* including using proper mechanics, writing with clarity and concision, and employing the appropriate writing style for different academic and professional pieces.
- *Preparatory Writing Strategies* such as drafting, revision, and peer review.

In addition to improving your writing, mastery of the class material will prepare you to:

- Evaluate arguments from various fields within the social sciences.
- Understand the history of American political development and its impact on modern political arrangements in the United States.
- Appreciate the connection between cultural development and political development.

Course Requirements:

Attendance: Attendance is vital to learning the material presented in this course and to facilitating the writing process, and it is required. If you are unable to attend class due to an illness or emergency you must notify me **before class begins** to have your absence excused. Each unexcused absence will reduce your participation grade by one third of a letter.

Reading: The reading load for this class is scaled down to give you ample time to complete the writing assignments. As a result, the readings that are assigned are critical to class discussions and to the mastery of the core concepts. It is expected that you will complete **all** assigned reading before class **on the day for which it is assigned**. There will be two types of reading for this course.

- Classics in children's literature ranging from large-print picture books to chapters from notable novels. Full texts for all of these sources will be **available on Reserve in Uris Library (Denoted with an *)**. In addition, chapters selected from novels will be posted on blackboard.
- Scholarly literature that critiques, evaluates, or places the children's literature into historical and political context. These readings will be made **available on blackboard**.
- You are required to purchase one text for the course: "They Say / I Say": The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing (Third Edition). By Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein. I listed the third edition at the book store, but second or third is fine. It will be listed in the syllabus as TSIS.

The two types of readings are intended to complement each other so please read all assigned reading each week. Please bring the blackboard readings with you to class, in either paper or electronic form. It will be beneficial to be able to refer to specific pages when we discuss the respective texts.

Participation: Class participation will play a primary role in both assisting with the writing process and analyzing the concepts we discuss in class. Please come to class prepared to engage thoughtfully, listen attentively, and interact with your peers respectfully. We can only have a successful discussion if the classroom is a comfortable space for all participants. Confrontational or disrespectful behavior will not be tolerated. If for any reason you feel uncomfortable contributing in class, please visit my office hours so that we can discuss strategies for increasing your class participation.

Assignments and Grading:

As per the requirements of the Knight Institute this course will have six major writing assignments, and several of them will go through multiple stages of

development including outlining, drafting, and peer review. The assignments will require you to cultivate both academic and professional styles of writing commensurate with the products that might be required of a scholar and an engaged citizen.

Unless otherwise notified, all assignments should be handed in as a hard copy. If you are submitting an assignment via email it must be in Microsoft Word or PDF format. **Do not consider an emailed assignment turned in until you have received written confirmation from me.** Late assignments will be docked one third of a letter grade for each 24 hours or portion thereof after the deadline. If you feel that you will not be able to submit an assignment on time due to illness, emergency, or a conflict with work required for other courses please let me know as early as possible. I understand that your first year can be an incredibly stressful time and I am happy to work with you to make reasonable accommodations when necessary.

In order to facilitate peer editing and review, as well as to learn from and about each other's academic interests, writing styles, and techniques, all writing assignments done for this class may be shared with and read by all members of the class.

Assignment 1: Critical Reflection (Ungraded)

Draft Due: February 4, 2016

In 5-6 pages, make an argument for/against the censorship of children's literature based upon the readings for the first week.

Assignment 2: Annotated Bibliography (10%)

Due: February 25, 2016; April 5, 2016; May 5, 2016

Summarize texts from the course in a running annotated bibliography.

Assignment 3: The politics of the common man (15%)

Draft Due: March 3, 2016 (5%)

Revision Due: March 10, 2016 (10%)

Use Baum, Alger and the readings on Industrialization and their corresponding scholarly literature to construct an essay that reviews the competing qualities that create potential for the common man to exert an influence in American politics. (6-8 Pages)

Assignment 4.X: Short Essays (10%)

Assignment 4.1: Engaging with Others Due: March 22, 2016

Assignment 4.2: Practicing Quotes Due: April 12, 2016

Assignment 4.3: Writing for Concision Due: April 26, 2016

This will involve three shorter essays, each graded, that will ask you to practice different writing styles and skills including critique, quotations and concision. (2-3 Pages each)

Assignment 5: (10%)

Draft Due: April 7, 2016 (5%)

Revision Due: April 19, 2016 (5%)

Use Grieve, Marx, Piven and Cloward, Brinkley and the associated children's literature to construct an essay that examines the problems that the average citizen faces when mobilizing politically and the resources that can be used to overcome those problems. (4-5 Pages)

Assignment 6: (25%)

Outline and Intro Due: April 21, 2016

Draft Due: April 28, 2016 (10%), May 5, 2016

Final Due: May 10, 2016 (15%)

Using the works of Dr. Seuss and other modern children's authors examine the role of the individual versus the collective in literature and in modern social movements. (6-8 Pages)

Assignment 7: Self-Assessment (5%)

Due: TBD

The course has two integrated goals: to improve students' understanding of the role of cultural images in developing and illustrating good citizenship and to develop skills for academic and professional writing. Assess how your approach to both American political development through literature and writing has changed over the course of the semester. (3-5 Pages)

Instructor Conferences: The final course requirement is your participation in two one-on-one meetings with the instructor about your progress. While I hope you will take advantage of my office hours more frequently, these two meetings are mandated by the Knight Institute and will contribute to your participation grade. The first conference will occur shortly after you submit your second assignment. During this conference we will discuss and brainstorm any necessary changes to the topic for your final essay. The second conference will take place after assignment four.

The goals of this class are to teach you the material and encourage you to develop and improve your ability to communicate through writing. As such, the grades for this class will reflect progress toward both goals. The breakdown will be as follows:

Papers – 75%

Participation – 10%

Activities – 10%

Conferences – 5%

Other Course Information:

Email Policy: Please feel free to email me with quick questions or to set up a meeting. Longer discussions and all discussions about grades must take place in person. Cornell policy prohibits providing specific information about grades via email. I will guarantee a response to emails within 24 hours during the school week and will check my email more frequently the day before assignments are due. However, please do not wait until the last minute. There is no guarantee that I will receive, read, and be able to respond to last minute requests or questions.

Campus Resources for Students:

Knight Institute's Walk-in Service:

The Writing Walk-In Service (WWIS) provides support for individuals at any stage of the writing process. It is a free resource designed for undergraduates working on nearly any kind of writing project: applications, presentations, lab reports, essays, papers, and more. Tutors (trained undergraduate and graduate students) serve as responsive listeners and readers who can address questions about the writing process or about particular pieces of writing. They can also consider questions of confidence, critical reading, analytic thought, and imagination. Many writing tutors also have experience working with non-native speakers of English.

The WWIS operates out of several campus locations. During the academic year, the WWIS is open Sunday through Thursday from 3:30 – 5:30pm and from 7:00 – 10:00pm. Writers can schedule appointments or drop in at a convenient time. For more information or to schedule an appointment:

<http://www.arts.cornell.edu/writing>.

Cornell University Learning Strategies Center: The Learning Strategies Center offers students a variety of resources for improving basic study skills, learning time management strategies, and managing the academic experience at Cornell. You can find more information online at <http://lsc.cornell.edu/aboutLSC.html>.

Student Disability Services: Students with disabilities may contact Student Disability Services, Cornell University, 420 CCC, 254-4545. Cornell University is committed to assisting those persons with disabilities who have special needs. You can find more information online at <http://sds.cornell.edu/>.

Statement of Nondiscrimination:

It is the policy of Cornell University to actively support equality of educational and employment opportunity. No person shall be denied admission to any educational program or activity or be denied employment on the basis of any

legally prohibited discrimination involving, but not limited to, such factors as race, color, creed, religion, national or ethnic origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, or disability. The University is committed to the maintenance of affirmative-action programs that will assure the continuation of such equality of opportunity. Sexual harassment is an act of discrimination and, as such, will not be tolerated.

Academic Integrity:

A Cornell student assumes responsibility for the content and integrity of her or his academic work in any course or lab. Students are guilty of violating the Cornell Code of Academic Integrity and are subject to proceedings under it if, for example, they:

1. Knowingly represent the work of others as their own.
2. Use, obtain, or provide unauthorized assistance in any academic work.
3. Fabricate data in support of laboratory or field work.
4. Force a signature to certify completion of a course assignment or recommendation to graduate school.
5. Unfairly advance their academic position by hoarding or damaging library materials.
6. Misrepresent their academic accomplishments.

Course Schedule

*****Note that the syllabus is a living document, subject to changes. The most up-to-date version can always be found in the "Course Info" folder on blackboard.**

Week 1: Background: Literature and Politics

Thursday, January 28: Why Children's Literature

No Assigned Reading

Week 2: Children's Literature and Citizenship

Tuesday, February 2:

Readings:

- Jalongo, Mary Renck, and Anne Drolett Creany. "Censorship in children's literature: What every educator should know." *Childhood Education* 67.3 (1991): 143-148.
- Waterfield, R. (1998). *Republic* (Vol. 237). Oxford University Press. Book IV

Thursday, February 4

Assignment 1 Due

Readings:

- Sutherland, R. D. (1985). Hidden persuaders: Political ideologies in literature for children. *Children's Literature in Education*, 16(3), 143-157.
- TSIS Preface, Introduction

Week 3: The Gilded Age

Tuesday, February 9

Readings:

- Alger, Horatio. (1867). *Ragged Dick, or Street Life in New York with the Boot-Blacks*. Chapters 1, 6, 22, and 26
 - <http://genius.com/albums/Horatio-alger/Ragged-dick>
- Zuckerman, M. (1972). The nursery tales of Horatio Alger. *American Quarterly*, 191-209.

Thursday, February 11

Readings:

- TSIS. Part 1: One, Part 2: Four
- Nugent, W. (2009). *Progressivism: A very short introduction*. Oxford University Press, USA. Chapter 1, pg 6-15

Week 4: The Library

Tuesday, February 16 --- NO CLASS, FEBRUARY BREAK

Thursday, February 18

Readings:

- The Little Engine That Could (*)
- Kramnick, I. (1983). Children's literature and bourgeois ideology: observations on culture and industrial capitalism in the later eighteenth century. *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 12, 11.
- TSIS, Part 1: Two
- Review: Purdue OWL "Paraphrasing and Summary"
 - Quoting, Paraphrasing and Summarizing, <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/563/01/>
 - Paraphrase: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/976/02/>
 - Summary: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/engagement/3/8/101/>

Week 5: Industrialization

Tuesday February 23, 2016

Readings:

- Baum, Frank L. *The Wizard of Oz*. Chapter 1 and 2 (<http://www.kancoll.org/books/baum/ozcont.htm>)
- Ritter, G. (1997). Silver slippers and a golden cap: L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* and historical memory in American politics. *Journal of American Studies*, 31(02), 171-202.

- Slevin, J. (2007). A Letter to Maggie. *Teaching Composition: Background Readings*, 59-64.

Thursday, February 25

Assignment 2.1 Due

Readings:

- Baum, Frank L. *The Wizard of Oz*. Chapter 15, Chapter 22, Chapter 23 (<http://www.kancoll.org/books/baum/ozcont.htm>)
- Sanders, E. (1999). *Roots of reform: farmers, workers, and the American state, 1877-1917*. University of Chicago Press. Introduction, Chapter 1, pg 1-29

Week 6: Populism and Progressivism

Tuesday, March 1

Readings:

- Hollows, Clara. (1946) The Story of your Coat. in Nel, Philip. *Tales for little rebels: a collection of radical children's literature*. NYU Press, 2008.
- Marx, Karl. *Estranged Labor and The Communist Manifesto* (selections)

Thursday, March 3

Assignment 3 Draft Due

Readings:

- Piven, F. F., & Cloward, R. A. (1979). *Poor people's movements: Why they succeed, how they fail* (Vol. 697). Vintage books., xv-xvi, 1-17
- Kay, Helen. (1932). *The Battle of the Barn Yard*. in Nel, Philip. *Tales for little rebels: a collection of radical children's literature*. NYU Press, 2008.

Week 7: The Great Depression and the New Deal

Tuesday, March 8

Readings:

- Jenkins, H. (2002). "NO MATTER HOW SMALL": THE DEMOCRATIC IMAGINATION OF DR. SEUSS. *Hop on pop: The politics and pleasures of popular culture*, 187-208.
- *Writing Physics*, N. David Mermin
- Dr. Seuss. (1954). *Horton hears a Who!*. Random House Books for Young Readers. (*)

Thursday, March 10

Readings:

- Grieve, V. (2013). The Visual Production of Citizenship: Children's Literature of the Works Progress Administration, 1937-1942. *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, 38(1), 26-47..
- TSIS Part 1: Three
- Quotations: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/577/01/>

Week 8: The Great Depression and Political Movements

Tuesday, March 15

Assignment 3 Final Due (Bring two copies)

Readings:

- Jerry of the East River
<http://digitalarchives.broward.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/WPACchildren/id/1075/rec/1>
- Royal Red Ants
<http://digitalarchives.broward.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/WPACchildren/id/1556/rec/1>
- The Old Captain and his Ship,
<http://digitalarchives.broward.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/WPACchildren/id/737/rec/7>

Thursday, March 17

Meet at the Johnson Museum for a Visit to the New WPA Mural Exhibits

Readings:

- TBD

Week 9: Appealing to the Common Citizen

Tuesday March 22

Due: Assignment 4.1: Engaging with Others

Readings:

- Dr. Seuss. (1938). *The 500 Hats of Bartholemew McCubbins*. Random House.
- Burton, Virginia Lee. *Mike Mulligan and his Steam Shovel*. Houghton Mifflin.
- Brinkley, A. (1983). *Voices of Protest: Huey Long, Father Coughlin, and the Great Depression*. Vintage. (36-37, 141-160)

Thursday March 24

Readings:

- Brinkley, A. (1983). *Voices of Protest: Huey Long, Father Coughlin, and the Great Depression*. Vintage. (160-168, 179-182, 192-193)
- Rauchway, E. (2008). *The Great Depression and the New Deal: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press. pg 38-54

Week 10: SPRING BREAK

Week 11: The Civil Rights Movement

April 5, 2016

Due: Assignment 2.2

Readings:

- Cummins, J. (1997). The Resisting Monkey: "Curious George" Slave Captivity Narratives, and the Postcolonial Condition. *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature*, 28(1).
- Rey, H. A. (1941) Curious George. *André Deutsch Classics* (*)

April 7, 2016

Due: Assignment 5 Draft

Readings:

- Hughes, Langston. (1952) "A Little Boy in the Big City" in in Nel, Philip. *Tales for little rebels: a collection of radical children's literature*. NYU Press, 2008.
- Dr. Seuss. (1961) *The Sneetches and Other Stories*. Random House. (*)
- Larrick, N. (1965). The all-white world of children's books. *Saturday Review*, 48(11), 63-65.
- TSIS Part 3: Eight and Nine

Week 12: Expanding Protest

April 12, 2016

Due: Assignment 4.2: Practicing Quotes

Readings:

- Elkin, Benjamin. (1954). *The Loudest Noise in the World*. Viking Press (*)
- McAdam, D. (2010). *Political process and the development of black insurgency, 1930-1970*. University of Chicago Press. Chapter 3, pgs 36-59

April 14, 2016

Readings:

- Dr. Seuss. (1958) *Yertle the Turtle and other stories*. Random House. (*)
- Dr. Seuss. (1949) *Bartholomew and the Oobleck*. Random House. (*)
- Cook, T. E. (1983). Another perspective on political authority in children's literature: The fallible leader in L. Frank Baum and Dr. Seuss. *The Western Political Quarterly*, 326-336.
- Landorf, H., & Lowenstein, E. (2004). The Rosa Parks" Myth": A Third Grade Historical Investigation. *Social Studies and the Young Learner*, 16(3), 5-9.

Week 13: The Environmental Movement

April 19, 2016

Due: Assignment 5 Final

Readings:

- Pomerantz, C. (1971). *The Day the Parachuted Cats on Borneo: A Drama of Ecology*. in Nel, Philip. *Tales for little rebels: a collection of radical children's literature*. NYU Press, 2008.
- Sale, K., & Foner, E. (1993). *The Green Revolution: The Environmental Movement 1962-1992* (Vol. 1). Macmillan. Chapter 2

April 21, 2016

Due: Assignment 6 Outline and Intro

Readings:

- Dr. Seuss. (1971) *The Lorax*, Random House. (*)
- Sale, K., & Foner, E. (1993). *The Green Revolution: The Environmental Movement 1962-1992* (Vol. 1). Macmillan. Chapter 3

Week 14 - The Modern Women's Movement

April 26, 2016

Due: Assignment 4.3: Writing for Concision

Readings:

- Munsch, R. N., Martchenko, M., & Dann, S. (1980). *The paper bag princess*. Toronto: Annick Press. (*)
- McCabe, J., Fairchild, E., Grauerholz, L., Pescosolido, B. A., & Tope, D. (2011). Gender in Twentieth-Century Children's Books Patterns of Disparity in Titles and Central Characters. *Gender & Society*, 25(2), 197-226.

April 28, 2016

Due: Assignment 6 Draft

Readings:

- Klein, N. (1973). "Girls Can be Anything". in Nel, Philip. *Tales for little rebels: a collection of radical children's literature*. NYU Press, 2008.
- Costain, A. N. (1992). Inviting women's rebellion. *Baltimore: Johns Hopkins*. pg 26-45

Week 15: The Anti-war Movement

May 3, 2016

Readings:

- Dr. Seuss. (1984). *The Butter Battle*. Random House. (*)
- Hayden, T. (1962). The port Huron statement. *The New Radicals: A Report with Documents*. New York: Random House, 138.

May 5, 2016

Due: Assignment 2.3

Due: Assignment 6 Draft 2

Readings:

- Cohn, C. (1987). Sex and death in the rational world of defense intellectuals. *Signs*, 687-718. pg 1-7

Week 16: Wrap Up

May 10, 2016

Due: Assignment 6 Final

Readings in Class:

- Of Thee I Sing: A Letter to My Daughters, Barack Obama
- My Senator and Me: A Dog's Eye View of Washington, D.C., Ted Kennedy
- The little baby Snoogle-Fleejer, Jimmy Carter
- Ted Cruz to the Future - Comic Coloring Activity Book

Assignment 7 Due: TBD