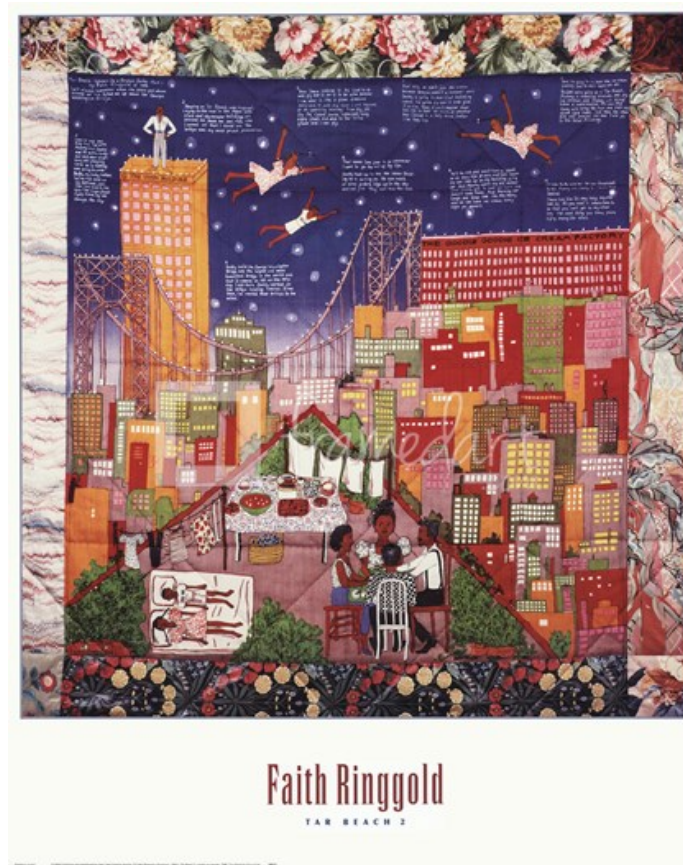


African-American Children's Literature



Course Description:

This course studies the conventions and history of African-American children's literature. We begin with the overarching question of what exactly is African-American children's literature: is it defined by its readership? by the race of its authors and illustrators? by its depictions and themes? We will consider the history of this literature and its expression in various genres including the picture book, poetry, historical fiction, realistic fiction, fantasy fiction, and the graphic novel. We will also discuss the position of African-American literature within the wider world of children's books, book publishing, and popular culture.

Course Information:

Course Number &

Title:

Semester:

Course Instructor: Dr. Danielle Price

Classroom & Time:

Contact Information:

Phone and Email: 540/568-2825 (during office hours); price2dx@jmu.edu

Office Location: Burruss 308

Office Hours:

Course Goals:

By the end of this course the successful student will be able to:

- Analyze African-American children's literature verbally and in writing with reference to their narrative conventions, context, themes, style, genre, and history
- Analyze verbally and in writing passages of and images from African-American children's literature through the lenses of gender, class, and race
- Evaluate arguments orally and in writing about the function and focus of African-American children's literature

Texts: Chosen from the following (texts would vary depending on what type of course is offered).

Textbook:

- Bishop, Rudine Sims. *Free Within Ourselves: The Development of African-American Children's Literature*. Heinemann, 2007.

Poetry:

- Hughes, Langston. *The Dream Keeper and Other Poems*. 1932. Knopf, 1996.

Verse Novels:

- Alexander, Kwame. *The Crossover*. (2014) Alexander, Kwame. *The Crossover*. HMH, 2014.

Verse Memoir:

- Woodson, Jacqueline. *Brown Girl Dreaming*. 2014. Puffin, 2016.

Historical Fiction:

- Curtis, Christopher Paul. *Elijah of Buxton*. 2007. Scholastic, 2009.
- Taylor, Mildred. *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. 1976. Puffin, 2004.
- Williams-Garcia, Rita. *One Crazy Summer*. 2010. Amistad, 2011.

Realistic Fiction:

- Moore, David Barclay. *The Stars Beneath Our Feet*. 2015. Knopf, 2017
- Reynolds, Jason. *As Brave as You*. 2016. Atheneum, 2017.

Graphic Novel

- Craft, Jerry. *New Kid*. HarperCollins, 2019.

Graphic Novel/Historical Fiction/Memoir:

- Lewis, John and Andrew Aydin *March: Book 1*. Top Shelf, 2013.

Picture Books:

- Crews, Donald. *Bigmama's*. HarperCollins, 1991.
- De La Pena, Matt and Christian Robinson. *Last Stop on Market Street*. Penguin, 2015.
- Keats, Ezra Jack. *The Snowy Day*. 1962. Puffin, 1976.
- Myers, Christopher. *Black Cat*. Scholastic, 1999.
- Raschka, Chris. *Charlie Parker Played Be Bop*. 1992. Scholastic, 1997.
- Ringgold, Faith. *Tar Beach*. 1991. Dragonfly, 1996. Weatherford, Carole Boston and Sean Qualls. *Before John was a Jazz Giant: A Song of John Coltrane*. Henry Holt, 2008.
- Weatherford, Carole Boston and R. Gregory Christie. *Freedom in Congo Square*. Little Bee Books, 2016.
- Woodson, Jacqueline and E.B. Lewis. *Each Kindness*. Nancy Paulsen, 2012.
- Woodson, Jacqueline and Rafael Lopez. *The Day you Begin*. Penguin, 2018.

Fantasy Fiction:

- Okorafor, Nnedi. *Akata Witch*. 2011. Speak, 2017.

Movie:

- *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*. Directed by Bob Persichetti, Peter Ramsey, and Rodney Rothman, Sony Pictures, 2018.

Evaluation: (depends on course offered)

Course Grade Breakdown and Due Dates		
Item	Date	Percentage of Grade
Midterm Exam		15%
Final Exam		20%
Image Analysis		15%
Final Paper		20%
In-Class Work		5%
Reading Quizzes		10%
Reading Responses		15% (3 X 5%)

*See final page for letter grade information. For final grades, percentages of .5% and above will be rounded up to the next whole grade.

Course Procedures and Grading:

1. Attendance and Preparation:



Do:

- Come to all classes
- Prepare in advance
- Bring your books in printed form
- Borrow notes from another student if you miss class
- Direct your observations to the class as whole
- Enter the dates for all your assignments/exams into your calendar

2. Technology:



Do:

- Turn off your phones and put them away
- Take notes! Preferably with pen and paper (laptop computers allowed for note-taking only)

3. Contacting the Instructor:



Do:

- Visit me in my office hours to introduce yourself
- Master the basic courtesies of academic/professional email
 - check the syllabus, Canvas, Google, and a classmate before emailing me
 - give the course number and subject of the email in the subject line
 - address me by my title (Dear Dr. Price)
 - note that I will respond Monday to Friday, 9 to 5
- Discuss any questions about your assignments in person

4. Course Assignments and Exams:



Do:

- Check Canvas for detailed assignment instructions and note that all assignments must be
 - typed
 - submitted on time (will lose 10% per day and will not be graded after a week)
 - submitted electronically to Turn-it-in (Canvas), as well as in hardcopy to the instructor
 - your own work; papers with any plagiarism will receive no points and will be sent to the Dean
- Prepare for exams and tests that may include of a variety of questions; such as
 - short answers
 - short/long essays
 - brief objective responses (e.g. fill in the blank)

For other class and university policies, please see the last page of the syllabus.

Record the names and contact info for two other students in the course:

Schedule

Readings must be completed by the date below. Bring books to class. Print out Canvas readings, read them ahead of time, and bring them to class on the day assigned.

Introduction to African-American Children's Literature

Week One: What is African-American children's literature?

- Bishop, "Introduction" to *Free Within Ourselves: The Development of African-American Children's Literature*
- Read these entries (Canvas)
 - Martin, Michelle H. "African American Literature" in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Children's Literature*
 - Clark, Beverly Lyon. "Audience" in *Keywords for Children's Literature*
 - Hunt, Peter. "Children's Literature" in *Keywords for Children's Literature*
- Discussion of a selection of picture books

Early African-American Children's Literature

Week Two: *The Brownies Book*

- Bishop, "Chapter 2: For the Children of the Sun: African American Children's Literature Begins to Bloom" (p, 22-34) in *Free Within Ourselves: The Development of African-American Children's Literature*
- Excerpts from *The Brownies Book* (Library of Congress): <https://www.loc.gov/item/22001351/>
- Visit JMU Special Collections

The Harlem Renaissance

- Excerpts from Bontemps, Arna, ed. *Golden Slippers: An Anthology of Negro Poetry for Young Readers* (1941). <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.165894/page/n63>
- Hughes, Langston. *The Dream Keeper and Other Poems*.
- Bishop, Chapter 2: For the Children of the Sun: African American Children's Literature Begins to Bloom" (p, 37-41) in *Free Within Ourselves: The Development of African-American Children's Literature*
-

Week Three: *Early Picture Books*

- The Case of *Little Black Sambo*
 - Bannerman, Helen. *Little Black Sambo*. (1889) <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/17824/17824-h/17824-h.htm>
 - Martin, Michelle. Chapter 1 ("Hey, Who's the Kid with the Green Umbrella?") from *Brown Gold: Milestones of African American Children's Picture Books*
 - Lester, Julius and Jerry Pinkney. *Sam and the Tigers* (1996)
 - Bannerman, Helen. *Little Black Sambo*. Illus by Christopher Bing. Afterword by Christopher Franceschelli. (2003)
- Tarry, Ellen. *My Dog Rinty* (1946) and *Janie Bell* (1940)

Picture Books—Illustrations and Childhood

Week Four: *The Development of African-American Picture Books*

Terms: Picture Books, Picture Book Vocabulary

- Molly Bang on how pictures work (synopsis-Canvas)
- Keats, Ezra Jack. *The Snowy Day*. (1962)
- Crews, Donald. *Bigmama's*. (1991)
- Ringgold, Faith. *Tar Beach*. (1991)
- Myers, Christopher. *Black Cat*. (1999)
- Raschka, Chris. *Charlie Parker Played Be Bop*. (1992)
- De La Pena, Matt. *Last Stop on Market Street*. Illus. by Christian Robinson. (2015)

Historical Fiction: Choose two of *Roll of Thunder, Elijah of Buxton*, and *One Crazy Summer*

Weeks Five to Eight:

Terms: historical fiction, coming of age; signifying; double consciousness; doppelganger

- Curtis, Christopher Paul. *Elijah of Buxton*. (2007)
- Taylor, Mildred. *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. (1976)
- Williams-Garcia, Rita. *One Crazy Summer*. (2011)

Personal and National History: The Verse Memoir and the Graphic Novel Memoir

Weeks Nine to Ten:

Terms: “mirrors, windows, sliding glass doors”; verse novel; memoir; *Künstlerroman*; haiku; coming of age; graphic novel

- Lewis, John. *March: Book 1*. (2013)
 - Nashville Sit-ins: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kzp7GOcIMfI>
 - Selma to Montgomery: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BFhcR362RyE>
 - The Art and Discipline of Nonviolence: (*On Being* with Krista Tippett) <https://onbeing.org/programs/john-lewis-the-art-discipline-of-nonviolence/>
- Woodson, Jacqueline. *Brown Girl Dreaming*. (2014)

School and Sports in The Graphic Novel and the Verse Novel

Weeks Eleven and Twelve:

- Craft, Jerry. *New Kid*. (2019)
- Alexander, Kwame. *The Crossover*. (2014)

Fantasy Fiction

Week Thirteen:

Terms: Fantasy fiction”; “endings in fantasy fiction”

- Thomas, Ebony Elizabeth. “Toward a Theory of the Dark Fantastic.” From *The Dark Fantastic: Race and the imagination from Harry Potter to the Hunger Games*.”
- Okorafor, Nnedi. *Akata Witch*. (2011)

On the Screen

Week Fourteen

- *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*.

Primary Texts

- Alexander, Kwame. *The Crossover*. HMH, 2014.
- Craft, Jerry. *New Kid*. HarperCollins, 2019.
- Crews, Donald. *Bigmama's*. HarperCollins, 1991.
- . *Freight Train*. Greenwillow, 1979.
- Curtis, Christopher Paul. *Elijah of Buxton*. 2007. Scholastic, 2009.
- . *The Watsons Go to Birmingham*. Yearling, 1997.
- De La Pena. *Last Stop on Market Street*. Illus. by Christian Robinson. (2015)
- Hughes, Langston. *The Dream Keeper and Other Poems*. 1932. Knopf, 1996.
- Keats, Ezra Jack. *The Snowy Day*. 1962. Puffin, 1976.
- Moore, David Barclay. *The Stars Beneath Our Feet*. 2015. Knopf, 2017.
- Lewis, John and Andrew Aydin *March: Book 1*. Top Shelf, 2013.
- . *March: Book 2*. Top Shelf, 2015.
- . *March: Book 3*. Top Shelf, 2016.
- Magoon, Kekla. *How It Went Down*. Square Fish, 2015.
- Myers, Christopher. *Black Cat*. Scholastic, 1999.
- Okorafor, Nnedi. *Akata Witch*. 2011. Speak, 2017.
- Raschka, Chris. *Charlie Parker Played Be Bop*. 1992. Scholastic, 1997.
- Reynolds, Jason. *As Brave as You*. 2016. Atheneum, 2017.
- . *The Boy in the Black Suit* Atheneum, 2015.
- Ringgold, Faith. *Tar Beach*. 1991. Dragonfly, 1996.
- Russell-Brown, Katheryn and Frank Morrison. *Little Melba and Her Big Trombone*. Lee and Low, 2014.
- Smith, Ronald L. *Hoodoo*. 2015. Clarion, 2017.
- Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*. Directed by Bob Persichetti, Peter Ramsey, and Rodney Rothman, Sony Pictures, 2018.
- Taylor, Mildred. *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. 1976. Puffin, 2004.
- Weatherford, Carole Boston and Sean Qualls. *Before John was a Jazz Giant: A Song of John Coltrane*. Henry Holt, 2008.
- Weatherford, Carole Boston and R. Gregory Christie. *Freedom in Congo Square*. Little Bee Books, 2016.

Williams-Garcia, Rita. *One Crazy Summer*. 2010. Amistad, 2011.

---. *P.S. Be Eleven*. 2013. Amistad, 2015.

Woodson, Jacqueline. *Brown Girl Dreaming*. 2014. Puffin, 2016.

Woodson, Jacqueline and E.B. Lewis. *Each Kindness*. Nancy Paulsen, 2012.

Woodson, Jacqueline and Rafael Lopez. *The Day you Begin*. 2018.

Secondary Texts

Alexander, Joy. "The Verse Novel: A New Genre." *Children's Literature in Education*, vol. 36, no. 3, September 2005, pp. 269-283.

Anatol, Giselle Liza. "Brown Girl Dreaming: A Ghost Story in the Postcolonial Gothic Tradition." *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, vol. 41, no. 1, Winter 2016, pp. 403-419.

Baker, Augusta. *The Black Experience in Children's Literature*. New York Public Library, 1971.

Bernstein, Robin. *Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood and Race from Slavery to Civil Rights*. NYU P, 2011.

Bishop, Rudine Sims. *Free Within Ourselves: The Development of African-American Children's Literature*. Heinemann, 2007.

Bosmajian, Hamida. "Mildred Taylor's Story of Cassie Logan: A Search for Law and Justice in a Racist Society." *Children's Literature: Annual of The Modern Language Association Division on Children's Literature and The Children's Literature Association*, vol. 24, 1996, pp. 141-60.

Davis-McElligatt, Joanna C. "'Walk Together, Children': the Function and Interplay of Comics, History, and Memory in *Martin Luther King and the Montgomery Story* and *John Lewis's March: Book One*." *Graphic Novels for Children and Young Adults*, edited by Michelle Ann Abate and Gwen Tarbox, UP of Mississippi, 2017, pp. 298-311.

Hinton, KaaVonia. "Following Tradition: Young Adult Literature as Neo-slave Narrative." *Embracing, Evaluating, and Examining African American Children's and Young Adult Literature*, edited by Wanda M. Brooks and Jonda C. McNair, Scarecrow, 2008, pp. 50-65.

Howard, Krystal. "Collage, Confession, and Crisis in Jacqueline Woodson's *Brown Girl Dreaming*." *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, vol. 42, no. 3, Fall 2017, pp. 326-44.

---. "Influence Poetry and Found Poetry: The Reflection of Creative Writing Pedagogy in the Verse Novel for Young Readers." *Lion and the Unicorn*, vol. 42, no. 2, Apr. 2018, pp. 218-237.

- Johnson, Dianne. *Telling Tales: The Pedagogy and Promise of African American Literature for Youth*. Greenwood, 1990.
- Martin, Michelle. *Brown Gold: Milestones of African-American Children's Picture Books*. Routledge, 2004.
- Price, Danielle. "Heterotopic Nightmares and Coming of Age in *Elijah of Buxton*: Mobility and Maturation." *Jeunesse: Young People, Texts, Cultures*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2016, pp. 202-226.
- Raynaud, Claudine. "Coming of Age in the African American Novel." *The Cambridge Companion to the African American Novel*, edited by Maryemma Graham, 2004, pp. 106-121.
- Smith, Katharine Capshaw. *Children's Literature of the Harlem Renaissance*. Indiana UP, 2006.
- . "From Bank Street to Harlem: A Conversation with Ellen Tarry." *The Lion and the Unicorn*, vol. 23, April 1999, pp. 271-285.
- Sweeney, Meghan. "Making Good Trouble: John Lewis, Andrew Aydin, and Nate Powell's *March* Trilogy and the Lessons of the Civil Rights Movement." *Contending with Gun Violence in the English Language Classroom*, edited by Shelly Shaffer et al, Routledge, 2019, pp. 88-96.
- Thomas, Ebony Elizabeth. "African American Children's Literature: Liminal Terrains and Strategies for Selfhood." *Diversity in Youth Literature: Opening Doors through Reading*, edited by Jamie Campbell Naidoo and Sarah Park Dahlen, ALA, 2013, pp. 33-43.
- . *The Dark Fantastic: Race and the imagination from Harry Potter to the Hunger Games*. NYU P, 2019.

GRADE	PERCENTAGE	DESCRIPTION
A A-	94-100% 90-93%	Excellent: Consistent evidence that the student’s work exceeds all of the performance expectations associated with each learning outcome in the course
B+ B B-	88–89% 84–87% 80–83%	Good: Consistent evidence that the student’s work meets, and in some cases exceeds the performance expectations associated with the learning outcomes in course
C+ C C-	78–79% 74–77% 70–73%	Fair: Consistent evidence that the student’s work meets the performance expectations associated with the learning outcomes in the course at a basic level
D+ D D-	68–69% 64–67% 61–63%	Barely passed: Some evidence that the student’s work meets the performance expectations associated with the learning outcomes in the course at a minimally acceptable level
F	< 60%	Failed

University and Course Policies

Academic Honesty:

- “Making references to the work of others strengthens your own work by granting you greater authority and by showing that you are part of a discussion located within an intellectual community. When you make references to the ideas of others, it is essential to provide proper attribution and citation. Failing to do so is considered academically dishonest, as is copying or paraphrasing someone else’s work. The consequences of such behavior will lead to consequences ranging from failure on an assignment to failure in the course to dismissal from the university. Because the disciplines of the Humanities value collaborative work, you will be encouraged to share ideas and to include the ideas of others in our papers. Please ask if you are in doubt about the use of a citation. Honest mistakes can always be corrected or prevented” (JMU sample syllabus).
- Students are expected to know and adhere to the JMU honor code: <http://www.jmu.edu/honor/code.shtml>.
- Writing assignments will be submitted through Canvas and Turnitin (as well as in hard copy). For more information about Turnitin see <http://www.jmu.edu/academicintegrity>.

Adding/ Dropping Classes: Students are responsible for registering for courses, verifying their schedule, and knowing the deadlines for adding and dropping courses.

Disability Accommodations: “If you need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability, you should contact the Office of Disability Services (Wilson Hall, Room 107, www.jmu.edu/ods, 540-568-6705) . . . Disability Services will provide you with an Access Plan Letter that will verify your need for services and make recommendations for accommodations to be used in the classroom. Once you have presented me with this letter, you and I will sit down and review the course requirements . . . and your requested accommodations to develop an individualized plan, appropriate for [this course]” (JMU sample syllabus).

Inclement Weather Policies: See JMU’s cancellation policy (<http://www.jmu.edu/JMUpolicy/1309.shtml>).

Religious Observation Accommodations: “All faculty are required to give reasonable and appropriate accommodations to students requesting them on grounds of religious observation. The faculty member determines what accommodations are appropriate for his/her course. Students should notify the faculty by no later than the end of the Drop-Add period the first week of the semester of potential scheduled absences and determine with the instructor if mutually acceptable alternative methods exist for completing the missed classroom time, lab or activity” (JMU sample syllabus).