**Overview**

Education 535 is a graduate-level study of literature for children and adolescents, with emphasis on selecting, interpreting, critiquing, and using quality literature with children. Although techniques for introducing literature for children, finding ways to deepen and broaden children’s understanding of literature, and extending children’s interest in literature are included, the course is primarily intended to help teachers develop, extend, and refine their own literary understanding, as well as to recognize and value good children’s literature for its literary and social merits. Emphasis is placed on the sensitive and informed reading of books in a variety of genres, as well as the general and genre-specific issues in children’s literature. Students who will learn most from the course are those who (1) want to extend and refine their own love of (and passion for) literature, and who also (2) are not afraid to take a critical and scholarly approach to it.

**Course Objectives**

1. To broaden and deepen knowledge and enjoyment of children’s books.
2. To develop understanding of the characteristics of the various genres of children’s literature, and of the issues relating to those genres.
3. To develop ability in interpreting and critically evaluating children’s literature.
4. To explore ways of bringing children and books together and making literature an integral part of the school curriculum.
5. To develop an awareness of the issues and trends in the field of contemporary children’s literature.

**Texts**


   Galda, Cullinan, and Sipe (GCS) is both a textbook and a reference book. It is a tool you will use now as a framework for this course; but you will also find it valuable as a source of teaching ideas and of suggestions of books that you can use in your classroom teaching. Chapters 2, 11, and 12 discuss children as readers and the ways in which teachers can integrate literature into the curriculum. These will be useful as you do your child response assignment and as you plan your web (see below) and later when you are faced with the specifics of your classroom. In the chapters that deal with the different genres, you should read with close attention the main sections and subsections, but you skim over the specific examples once you understand the main points being made.

2. The bulkpack of readings is available from Campus Copy Center. The readings are arranged in the sequence in which they will be read each week, and there is a list of them at the beginning of the bulkpack.
3. You will need to commit yourself to reading a great deal of children’s literature in this course. Paperback versions of some of the books you will read—the books the whole class will read and books small groups of students will read—have been ordered from the campus bookstore for your convenience. As you will see from the assignments, however, you will need to make use of the public library or the children’s section of a bookstore to obtain some of them.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

**Participation:**
1. Assigned readings in textbook, bulkpack, and children’s literature
2. Participation in large and small group discussions and individual presentations
3. Weekly attendance. I’d appreciate an email or a phone message if you know in advance that you’re going to be absent. Excessive absences will result in lowering of your grade.

**Graded Assignments:**
1. *Author presentations.* Choose one author/illustrator of picturebooks or one author of novels, from the list provided. Read at least five books by the author/illustrator or two books by the novel author. Then prepare a one-page handout (one copy for each class member, and two copies for the instructor), where you provide (1) biographical information, (2) an annotated [one sentence description] list of books with publishing information, (3) some critical commentary, including common themes and style; and (4) a bibliography citing the sources you used. Cite web sites by their URL. The handout should be on both sides of one page. Present this to the class in *no more than five minutes.* It is not acceptable merely to read sections of your handout, and if you do, you will not receive full marks; tell us something different and new in your talk. You will probably want to bring some of the books to pass around and briefly mention. You will sign up for this; no more than 3 presentations per class, **beginning with the third session of class.** The object is for us to hear about as many authors or illustrators as there are members of the class, and to accumulate an equal number of “fact sheets” about these authors/illustrators. Van Pelt reserve has a series of books (like an encyclopedia series) called *Something About the Author,* which may be of use to you in doing this assignment. Also, if you go to Dr. Lawrence Sipe’s web page, there are links to a number of important children’s literature web sites which may also be useful.

2. *Genre assignment.* Choose one of the genres we will be dealing with in class: picturebooks; fairy/folk tales; historical fiction; contemporary realistic fiction; fantasy; or poetry. Read widely in that genre—at least 20 picturebooks or 4 novels/anthologies. These books may *not* be the same as the ones for your author assignment, although you can use these books for the Web assignment (see below). If you read 4 novels, provide a reading response of no more than ½ page for each novel, for a total of 2 pages. If you read 20 picturebooks, provide a brief response for each picturebook for a total of no more than 3 pages. Provide a complete bibliographic citation for each book. In your response, evaluate the texts in terms of the criteria for that genre; the chapter on your chosen genre in GCS will help you here, as well as bulkpack readings. If you choose picturebooks, you must describe and evaluate some of the formal and structural features; in other words, you must evaluate them as examples of the picturebook format. **DUE the 6th class session.**
3. **Child response assignment.** Share a picturebook or an excerpt from a longer book with a child or small group of children. Your own child or a friend’s child will be all right if you cannot work with a small group in a classroom. Reading the same book with children at different age levels is particularly interesting if you can arrange it. You will probably want to tape record this. Note children’s spontaneous responses—verbal and nonverbal. Invite more response through discussion (ask general and open-ended questions) and, if you wish, follow up with a planned “extension” activity. Then write an account of this experience (around 5 pages) that includes what you did and what the child(ren) did, and make sure to include direct quotes from the children. Use GCS chapter two, and/or other references (bulkpack readings) to provide perspective. Articles that are especially useful include Hancock (2000) near the beginning of the bulkpack and Sipe (1997) in the readings for Class 6. You must cite sources; otherwise you will lose marks. Analyze the responses. In what ways can you see the children creating their own meanings? Can you account for any of the responses by relating them to the situation? What was interesting or unexpected about the children’s responses? Cite your sources in APA style (most of the bulkpack readings are in APA). **DUE on the 10th session of class.**

4. **Web assignment.** I will be giving you several handouts and showing you examples of what I mean by a literature web. These examples will give you an idea of the possibilities. Your web can be for a book; a genre; an author; or a theme/topic. We will be discussing this in class; but you need to begin thinking about this soon, so that you can begin to gather books and ideas. In general, a web consists of a major topic, divided into subtopics, with selections of related books for each of the subtopics and a list of briefly noted activities that could be done with the books. **DUE the last class session.** In addition, if your web is 8 ½ x 11, please prepare enough copies to hand out to the class. If your web is on poster board, please prepare an 8 ½ x 11 handout which summarizes your web with enough copies for the class. Please put your name on the web you hand in.

**Note that any late assignments will lose half a grade or more and will not receive comments.**

**Alternative project:**

The four papers/presentations described above are the standard assignments for this course. However, I will consider proposals for a longer paper (between 15 and 20 pages) to be done instead of #2 (the child response assignment), #3 (the genre assignment), and #4 (the web assignment). Because it substitutes for three assignments, it must be a well-considered and thoughtful examination of a topic/issue in children’s literature of your own choosing, and you must schedule a time early in the semester to speak to me about it. Come able to articulately outline what you’re interested in, and I will gladly consider it. This alternative project is for people who want to explore an issue or topic in depth, and who may even want to think about producing a rough draft of something they could eventually publish. It will be due the last session of class. If you choose this alternative, you must still do assignment #1 (the author presentation).

**Grading:**
Author presentation: 20%
Child response paper 25%
Genre paper 20%
Web 25%
Attendance, class participation 10%

The GSE faculty has agreed that the modal grade for courses that are not doctoral seminars is B+. Grades of A- and A are reserved for exceptional work. Therefore I will not entertain any complaints about grades of B+.

**Statement about Plagiarism:**

After some unfortunate incidents involving plagiarism, I have added this statement to all my course syllabi. Plagiarism (described completely in the University guidelines and the GSE guidelines) is an extremely serious academic offence. The way it will be dealt with in this class is this: If I suspect a student’s work of being plagiarized, I will take the matter and the evidence immediately to the Office of Student Conduct, and let that Office determine if it is in fact plagiarism. The Office of Student Conduct will also determine the consequence, other than grading, which is up to me as the instructor. Consequences generally involve suspension for at least one semester at a minimum, and expulsion from the program at the maximum. Since grading is up to the instructor, in this class, any assignment that is found to be plagiarized will be given a zero, and the final grade for the course will be no more than a B- or C, no matter how good the other work is. **Warning:** It is especially easy to plagiarize the author/illustrator assignment, because sections of a website can be simply copied and presented as your own. Therefore, spot checks will be done on these papers, in particular. It is very easy to spot plagiarism; no sophisticated software is needed; all I need to do is to google a few phrases from your assignment. Consider the severe consequences, and avoid this temptation. If you **paraphrase** any source, including websites, you must cite the website (or the book/article) immediately after the paraphrase. If you **quote**, you must include quotation marks and cite the paragraph of the website immediately after the quote (or the date and *page number* of the book/article). It is not worth it to plagiarize; don’t even think about doing it. You will not only get a bad grade and (at a minimum a suspension); I will not write a recommendation letter for you. I will also inform my colleagues in RWL and the GSE administration.