The Literature of Children and Adolescents
CAM-UA 191; 4 points

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Course Description

Children’s and teen literature constitutes a vibrant, many-faceted literary genre that presents students of psychology, child development, and related disciplines with opportunities for insight-harvesting thought and reflection. The field’s most gifted writers (and the illustrators with whom they often collaborate) share with the social scientists who study childhood and adolescence a dedication to understanding the basic dilemmas and conflicts of growing up. The unusually high degree of clarity and distillation required to connect effectively with a young readership impels these authors to create works that can be fairly described as paradigmatic statements of childhood and teenage experience. W. H. Auden once said, “There are no good children’s books which are only for children.” This course seizes upon the largely untapped potential of this literature as a resource for getting at the crux of child and adolescent development issues.

This course is unique in its presentation of children’s and teen literature from the dual perspective of a literary genre and representation of the pivotal issues of child and adolescent development. Following introductory lectures aimed at putting the literature in a historical/cultural context and providing an overview of the surprising range of work encompassed by the term children’s and teen literature, lectures and discussions explore six developmental/literary themes:

1. Learning to Trust – Making a Home in the World
2. Family Feelings and Family Relationships
3. Anger, Fear, and Confronting the Forbidden
4. Beyond Home – The Call to Adventure
5. Embracing the World of One’s Peers

Each of these six themes is considered twice – the first half of the semester in relation to books for children and the second half of semester, and in the same sequence, in relation to books for preteens and teens. The goal of this separation is to allow for an exploration of the same developmental themes while emphasizing the separate biological, psychological, and social factors unique to both childhood and adolescence. Furthermore, this arrangement is intended to highlight the salient differences and similarities between books published for different age groups and to give students the opportunity to think about developmental issues as ongoing concerns that we revisit at different stages of life, each time from a new perspective. The dynamic interplay between developmental issues of temperament, early parent-child relationships, attachment, learning, cognition, and language have profound implications for how we study and understand children and how children understand and interact in the world. By repeating these themes for adolescents, the topics of brain development and the development of executive functions is reviewed in light of metacognitive skills, social skills, identity formation and moral development

Required Texts

Students are encouraged to purchase those children books that are of particular interest to them for their personal libraries. All required children’s books are also available on reserve at the Bobst Undergraduate Library (2 copies of
each book). Students can go to the Reserve desk in LL2 of Bobst library and fill out a request card to check out any of the books. You will fill in the course ID # (CAMS-UA191) and the name of the book. You can find an entire list of the books for the class in the course catalog under the “Course Reserves” tab on the Bobst library site.

Course Syllabus: Spring Semester

Session 1 & 2  Course Topic

Introductory Lectures: The first two sessions provide a historical overview of the development of children’s literature; its intellectual underpinnings in the educational theories of Enlightenment philosopher John Locke; its twentieth-century development and refinement into age-graded subgenres; and the impact of the theoretical writings of Freud, Erikson, Jean Piaget and others on modern writers for young people.

FIELD TRIP/GUEST SPEAKER: Rebecca Schosha
Rebecca is the children’s librarian at the Jefferson Market Branch of the NY Public Library. She will demonstrate techniques of reading to children in different age groups and will discuss factors involved in determining age-appropriateness in books for younger children. She will also describe the children’s book-related resources available to you at the New York Public Library, and will answer all your questions.

NOTE: We will meet at 11:15 a.m. on the ground-floor children’s room at the Jefferson Market branch of the NY Public Library (Sixth Avenue and West 10th Street). Following Rebecca’s presentation, we will return to the NYU campus and complete the remainder of the Introductory Lectures.

Assigned Reading

Berk Chapter 1 - History, Theory, and Research Strategies and Chapter 3 - Prenatal Development and Developmental Milestone Checklist (Handouts found on NYU CLASSES in designated folder) and pages 286-287 in text book (Berk, Milestones)

*Brown, Margaret Wise. Goodnight Moon

Part 1: Children’s Literature

Session 3  Learning to Trust (Making a Home in the World)

These sessions explore the literature of preschool children from the perspective of Erik Erikson’s first of eight developmental stages (Trust vs. Mistrust). In Erikson’s view, if we pass successfully through this first stage (roughly birth to 18 months), we will learn to trust that life is essentially a safe endeavor, and we will have basic confidence in the future. If we fail to experience trust and are constantly frustrated because our needs are not met, we may end up with a deep-seated feeling of worthlessness and a mistrust in the world in general. The books selected for this week explore this theme and focus, not surprisingly, on children’s most significant early relationships and the notion of temperament and goodness of fit.

Assigned Reading

Berk Chapter 7 - Emotional and Social Development in Infancy and Toddlerhood

Brown, Margaret Wise. Mister Dog
Eastman, P. D. Are You My Mother?
Henkes, Kevin. Owen
Hoban, Russell. Bread and Jam for Frances
Krauss, Ruth. The Carrot Seed
Minarik, Else. Little Bear
Opie, Iona and Peter. *The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes* (selections)

Willems, Mo. *Knuffle Bunny*

Williams, Vera B. “More, More, More,” *Said the Baby*

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### Session 4

**Family Feelings and Family Relationships**

**GROUP PRESENTATIONS BEGIN**

These sessions provide an examination of separation, individuation, sibling rivalry, and other classic dilemmas faced by children in their first experiences as social beings. In addition, we will discuss Ainsworth’s theory on attachment and the implications attachment styles have on the formation of relationships.

**Assigned Reading**

Berk Chapters 5, 8, 11 – *Physical/Motor Development*

Grimm, J. and W., *The Juniper Tree and Other Tales from Grimm* (selected stories)

Harris, Robie H., *Don’t Forget to Come Back*

Henkes, Kevin. *Julius the Baby of the World*

Lesser, Rika. *Hansel and Gretel* (ill. by Paul O. Zelinsky)

Marshall, James. *Cinderella*

McCloskey, Robert. *Make Way for Ducklings*

__________. *One Morning in Maine*

Williams, Vera B. *A Chair for My Mother*

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### Session 5

**WRITTEN OBSERVATION #1 DUE** (Topic: Physical/motor development)

**Anger, Fear, and Confronting the Forbidden**

During these sessions, we consider the role that books can play in helping children come to terms with the more difficult, disturbing aspects of their lives. Fear of loss, abandonment, and envelopment frequently lead to anger, even in the earliest years of life, and much of children’s literature is devoted to helping children learn to identify these emotions and subsequently “live” with them. In addition, developmental issues of effortful control, motivation and emotion are considered. We will also spend some time during this class reviewing key brain areas and discussing their connections to behavior.

**Assigned Reading**

*From Neurons to Neighborhoods* Chapter 8 - *The Developing Brain* – Chapter is on NYU CLASSES

Bang, Molly. *When Sophie Gets Angry—Really, Really Angry*

Frame, Jeron Ashford. *Yesterday I Had the Blues*

Rosen, Michael. *Michael Rosen’s Sad Book*

Sendak, Maurice. *In the Night Kitchen*

__________. *Outside Over There*

__________. *Where the Wild Things Are*

Viorst, Judith. *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*

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### Session 6

**Embracing the World of One’s Peers**

Friendship, sharing, cooperation, jealousy, ostracism and other aspects of the child’s first forays into the larger social world are explored.

**Assigned Reading**

Berk Chapters 6, 9, 12 – *Language Development*

Henkes, Kevin. *A Weekend with Wendell*
Keats, Ezra Jack. *A Letter for Amy*
Lionni, Leo. *Frederick*
__________. *Pezzettino*
__________. *Swimmy*
__________. *Tico and the Golden Wings*
Marshall, James. *George and Martha*
Paley, Vivian. *The Girl with the Brown Crayon*
Raschka, Chris. *Yo? Yes!*
Willems, Mo. *Knuffle Bunny Too*

**GUEST SPEAKER:** Melissa Nishawala, MD – Medical Director of the Autism Spectrum Disorders Clinical and Research Program at the NYU Child Study Center
Dr. Melissa Nishawala is a nationally-recognized authority in the assessment and treatment of autism spectrum disorders. She also specializes in the diagnosis of psychiatric disorders and psychopharmacology.

**Session 7**

**Beyond Home: The Call to Adventure**
These classes focus upon the awakening of curiosity with the first recognition of interests and needs that cannot be fully satisfied within the world of the home and family.

**Assigned Reading**
Brown, Margaret Wise. *The Runaway Bunny*
Carle, Eric. *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*
Henkes, Kevin. *Kitten’s First Full Moon*
Keats, Ezra Jack. *The Trip*
Myers, Christopher. *Black Cat*
Rosen, Michael. *We’re Going on a Bear Hunt*
Say, Allen. *Grandfather’s Journey*
Sis, Peter. *Madlenka*
Steig, William. *Brave Irene*
__________. *Doctor De Soto*
__________. *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble*
Williams, Vera B. *Cherries and Cherry Pits*
__________. *Three Days on a River in a Red Canoe*

**JEOPARDY COUNTED AS “QUIZ” GRADE:** Identifying Theorists and Stages. Teams play against one another in a game of Jeopardy reviewing Piaget, Erikson, and Ainsworth’s stages as well as other aspects of psychology and development. Kohlberg will be introduced as well! *Be sure to REVIEW your notes!*

**Session 8**

**MIDTERM EXAMINATION**
*Note: Students who miss an exam without notifying the instructors in writing in advance will automatically be penalized one letter grade on the relevant makeup exam.*

**Questioning Reality: Asking “What if?”**
During these sessions we will study the developmental changes heralded as children begin to reckon with the real world and to think abstractly – How does life change when a child gains a deepening sense of self? What changes in a child’s world with the growing ability to contemplate multiple views of a given situation, and does their moral treatment of others
alter? As children become able to appreciate irony and paradox, how does their world view change?

**Assigned Reading**
Berk Chapters 6, 9, 12 – *Cognitive Development* (Piaget and Erikson)

Anno, Mitsumasa, *Anno’s Alphabet*
__________, *Anno’s Counting Book*
__________, *Anno’s Journey*

Brown, Margaret Wise. *The Important Book*

**Dr. Seuss, The Cat in the Hat**

Johnson, Crockett. *Harold and the Purple Crayon*

**Muth, Jon J, Zen Shorts**

Schwartz, Amy. *Bea and Mr. Jones*

Shaw, Charles G. *It Looked Like Spilt Milk*

Van Allsburg, Chris. *The Mysteries of Harris Burdick*

Wiesner, David. *Flotsam*

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**Part II: Adolescent Literature**
Recent developmental brain research shows for the first time that there is a wave of growth and change in the adolescent brain. What teens do during their adolescent years affects how their brains develop and how they understand relationships. Teens' brains actually work differently than adults' when processing emotional information from external stimuli. During this second half of the course, we explore these same literary themes but now in the context of adolescent physical and emotional development. As we revisit Erikson, Bettelheim, Mahler, and Piaget, we ask ourselves what is different this time around – how is the adolescent developing? Why is children’s literature much less relevant to teens, and what are the unique aspects of teen literature that speak so clearly to adolescents? We also reflect back upon the “critical periods of development” hypothesis and view the literature we are studying itself along a developmental trajectory, now looking ahead toward adulthood.

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**Session 9**  
**WRITTEN OBSERVATION #2 DUE** (Topic: Language development)

Learning to Trust (Making a Home in the World)

**Assigned Reading**
Berk Chapters 10, 13- *Emotional, Social & Moral Development* (Kohlberg)

White, E.B. *Charlotte’s Web* (2 GROUP PRESENTATIONS)

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**Session 10**  
**Family Feelings and Family Relationships**

**Assigned Reading**
Berk Chapter 14- *Physical Development in Adolescence*

Blume, Judy. *Tales of a Fourth-Grade Nothing* (2 GROUP PRESENTATIONS)

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**Session 11**  
**Anger, Fear, and Confronting the Forbidden**

**Assigned Reading**
Berk Chapter 15- *Cognitive Development in Adolescence*

Fitzhugh, Louise. *Harriet the Spy* (2 GROUP PRESENTATIONS)

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**Session 12**  
**Beyond Home: The Call to Adventure**

**GUEST SPEAKER: CARRIE SPINDEL, Psy.D.** Clinical Assistant Professor at the NYU Child Study Center’s Institute for Anxiety and Mood Disorders. Dr. Spindel has advanced level training in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) for anxiety and depression, and has special interests in the treatment of Generalized Anxiety Disorder, childhood maltreatment, and Panic Disorder. She is also intensively trained in Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) for suicidal and self-
injurious behavior, and has worked specifically as a DBT therapist with multi-
problem adolescents. She is a co-author of *Child Maltreatment: Advances in
Psychotherapy – Evidenced Based Practice* and of the book chapter "Disaster
Trauma" in *Cognitive Behavioral Strategies for Crisis Intervention*.

**Assigned Reading**
Berk  Chapter 16- *Emotional and Social Development in Adolescence*
Academics and Stages of Reading Development (article on NYU CLASSES)
Paulsen, Gary. *Hatchet*

**Session 13**
**WRITTEN OBSERVATION #3 DUE** (Topic: Cognitive development)
Embracing the World of One’s Peers
**Assigned Reading**
Cormier, Robert. *The Chocolate War*

**Session 14**
**Questioning Reality, Asking “What if?”** (Last Class)
**Assigned Reading**
Berk Chapter 17- *Emerging Adulthood*
Juster, Norton. *The Phantom Tollbooth*

**Session 15**
**FINAL EXAMINATION (12pm-1:50pm)**
Students who miss an exam without notifying the instructors in writing in advance
will automatically be penalized one letter grade on the relevant makeup exam.

**GUIDE TO THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY BRANCHES**
Children’s books are available at several local public libraries. In addition, several of the libraries have reading time for babies, toddlers and preschoolers so that you can make some observations of young children. Below are a few options for you to consider, other options are also acceptable upon approval.

**Jefferson Market Library**  425 Avenue of the Americas (at 10th St.)  (212) 243-4334
**Mulberry Street Library**  10 Jersey Street (212) 966-3424
**Kips Bay Library**  446 Third Avenue (at E. 31st St.)  (212) 683-2520
**Ottendorfer Library**  135 Second Avenue (near E. 8th St. - St. Marks Place)  (212) 674-0947
**Tompkins Square Library**  331 East 10th Street (near Avenue B)  (212) 228-4747

**NYPL on 42nd and 5th ave** - There are story times on Thursday at 10:15 and 11:15 a.m. as well as “Family Read Aloud” which is Saturday at 11:30 a.m. and Sunday at 3:00 p.m. Also in that room at the main branch are the original Winnie the Pooh toys so that alone is worth the trip.

**The Epiphany Library** (228 east 23rd) - Tuesdays at 11 am.
**FAO Schwartz** (767 Fifth Ave at 58th) - 11am and 3 pm Monday through Friday and at 1pm and 3pm on weekends.
**The Strand** (12th Street and Broadway) - 3:30 every Thursday on the second floor.
**The Scholastic Store** (557 Broadway at Prince Street) – Story time Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday at 11am
**Books of Wonder** (18 West 18th Street)- Story time Fridays at 4pm and Sundays at 11:30am

**EXAMINATIONS AND GRADES**
Grades are based upon
Class participation (10%)
  o reading to the class
o participation in class discussions

Jeopardy Game Participation and 3 ONE PAGE written observations (see description below; 15%)
Midterm examination (25%)
Final examination (25%)
Group presentation (25%).

ONE PAGE Observations: WRITE UPS ARE TO BE ONE PAGE DOUBLE SPACED (with 1” margins and 12-point font). Developmental checklists can be found in COURSE DOCUMENTS on NYU CLASSES.

Become familiar with the developmental milestones PRIOR to attending the observation. Remember to bring a copy of the checklist with you. You will be required to attend 3 reading times at the public library or other venue that you have approved with Professors Marcus and Montalto.

Spend time doing two things:
1. Watch the librarian read to the children and observe the interactions.
2. Spend 5-10 minutes watching one child - take notes and use your developmental checklists.

Type a one page double spaced formal observation that includes the following three elements
1. LOCATION of your observation with SPECIFIC REMARKS about the physical setting and the activities that are occurring
2. FACTS - what did you see the child do or say (e.g., Sara marched around the room, hopped, pointed, etc.)
3. ASSUMPTIONS/PREDICTIONS – based on the developmental milestones checklist and course lectures what does your observation lead you to know about the child's development, including age, readiness, activity level, temperament, etc.
   In Observation #1 carefully document physical/motor development
   In Observation #2 carefully document language development
   In Observation #3 carefully document cognitive development

Midterm and Final Examinations: Multiple choice, short answer questions and choice of essays based upon material covered in the first half (midterm) or last half (final) of the course.

Group Presentation: Students will work together in small groups of no more than four students each on a 10-12 minute presentation bridging developmental psychology (developmental milestones and other theory-based observations) and children’s literature. Each group will sign up for either a picture book or a novel chapter chosen from the required readings listed in the syllabus. Groups will begin their presentation by reading a brief representative passage from the book to the class (or a complete picture book if short enough). The main portion of the presentation will focus on an application of concepts learned in class, and conclude by posing up to THREE related questions for class discussion. Background information on the author and the story will be covered by Professor Marcus and should not be repeated during the group presentation. It is very important that you remain within the 12 minute time period for your presentation; a five minute warning will be issued. Sign-up for the groups will be made available electronically and during the Feb. 5th class. The following format is offered as a guide for presentations:

Format of Group Presentation
3 minutes Introduce book. Cite THREE special aspects of its writing and/or illustration that make it distinctive. Be specific!
3 minutes Reading from book
3 minutes Application of THREE developmental milestones and THREE connections to developmental theory* (see note below)
3 minutes Discussion questions

* For groups that choose a chapter book, due to length one group will be assigned the developmental milestones for the book and the other will focus on the books’ connection to the said theorists work.
Presentation must be submitted via email to Teaching Assistant TWO days before actual presentation.

To minimize distractions to professors and fellow students, NO SCREENS (e.g., LAPTOPS, CELL PHONES, iPADS) are permitted in class. Exceptions will be made only with a doctor’s note.