EXPOS 20
WIZARDS AND WILD THINGS:
THE SECRET HISTORY OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE
SPRING 2019 T&TH 1:30-2:45 ART MUSEUM 0600

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COURSE OVERVIEW

Once upon a time, there was no such thing as children's literature. When and if children learned to read, they read what grown-ups read. How then did writing for children as we now know it come of age? Why does the genre have such an enduring hold on our cultural imagination, even as it continues to provoke sharp debate over its greater purpose and value? Are classic children's books like *The Wizard of Oz, The Wind in the Willows*, and *The Cat in the Hat* instructive or subversive, manipulative or liberating? In this course we'll examine selections from three centuries of popular prose and verse written expressly for and about children as we investigate how this eclectic canon reflects evolving ideas about childhood, changing views about educating and enchanting young readers, and persistent disputes over what and how children should learn from books. In Unit 1 we'll survey landmark works in English for children from the Puritan through the Victorian eras, including the *New England Primer, Grimms' Tales*, and *Alice in Wonderland*, as we consider what these texts tell us about the origin and evolution of the genre. In Unit 2 we'll examine works by touchstone authors for younger readers including Mark Twain, Louisa May Alcott, Oscar Wilde, Rudyard Kipling, Beatrix Potter, E. B. White, C. S. Lewis, Maurice Sendak, and others, drawing on the critical perspectives of thinkers such as John Locke, Bruno Bettelheim, Alison Lurie, and Marina Warner to assess arguments about the essential function of imaginative literature from infancy through adolescence. In the final unit, students will conduct their own research to place a major children's author of their choice in a relevant cultural and historical context.

As with all Expos courses, the center of this course is the writing you will do. The primary objective is to develop your ability to write clear and engaging analytical essays of the kind you will frequently be asked to produce in other courses and across all disciplines. With that goal in mind, the course is structured to give you the opportunity to work in a sustained and systematic way on improving your writing. By the end of the term you will have written three distinct and recognizable kinds of academic essays that correspond with each of our three units. While the focus of each unit will be on the writing skills, we will develop those skills through investigating the ideas and questions that emerge from the course readings.

UNIT OVERVIEW

Unit 1

What is children's literature? How did changing philosophical and cultural ideas about childhood give rise to the prolific historical spectrum of books aimed at educating and entertaining young readers? For our first classes we'll read selections from an eclectic array of works published in English for children that reflect the emergence and evolution of the genre, including extracts from the New England Primer, Mother Goose, the Brothers Grimm, Edward Lear, and Lewis Carroll, among others. Our main primary text for this unit will be Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865). As we contemplate these case studies in all their variety and detail, we'll pay close attention to the significant questions they raise about what author Alison Lurie calls the "sacred texts of childhood" – how they shape our inner lives, why they have such staying power, and what they really teach us.

The central writing assignment for this unit asks you to develop a close reading of a single text, the building block for much of the writing you'll be doing in your other classes. Our focus will be on the steps and strategies that enable you to write an insightful and engaging essay based on a sound arguable thesis, as laid out in the Harvard Writing Program's "The Elements of Academic Argument."

Essay 1: Close reading essay (4-5 pp)

Unit 2

Down the rabbit-hole went Alice, and ever since the field of children's literature has grown curiouser and curiouser. What does the modern history of the genre reveal about its larger cultural influence and artistic significance? In Unit 2 we'll consider a number of critical and scholarly perspectives on the purpose and value of writing for children of all ages, ranging from Bruno Bettelheim's *The Uses of Enchantment* and Alison Lurie's *Don't Tell the Grown-ups* to essays on specific authors and issues by George Orwell, Ursula Le Guin, Harold Bloom, Marina Warner, and others. Primary texts for this unit will constellate mainly around classics from the proverbial "Golden Age" of children's books, including readings from Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*, Mark Twain's *Tom Sawyer*, L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, and Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows*, along with stories and verse by Robert Louis Stevenson, Beatrix Potter, Rudyard Kipling, E. B. White, and others.

For this unit, your main writing assignment will be to develop an essay in which one text is considered in relation to another (sometimes called a "lens" essay or a "testing a theory" essay). We will focus largely on the basic elements of comparative analysis, including argumentative structure, organization of evidence, and counter-argument. We will again look at diagnostic and model examples of this mode of argument in action, with an emphasis on methods of analytical comparison that provide the foundation for lucid critical thinking.

Essay 2: Comparative analysis essay (6-8 pp)

Unit 3

Wonderland. Neverland. Oz. Narnia. Middle Earth. Dictionopolis. Hogwarts. Now more than ever, exploring the realm of children's literature inescapably leads us to where the wild things are. In our third and final unit, we'll consider the broad impact of its masterworks in fantasy and adventure, social realism and dystopian allegory, zany humor and iconoclastic satire on social history and popular culture, which continue to prompt extensive discourse and debate over what such books tell us about our times and ourselves. As the curators of a current exhibit at the New York Public Library called "The ABC of It: Why Children's Books Matter" propose in the show catalogue, taking children's literature seriously reveals that "books for young people have stories to tell us about ourselves, and are rarely as simple as they seem."

The primary writing assignment for our culminating unit will be for you to produce a research essay based on an original question, making appropriate use of primary and secondary sources. Primary sources for generating your research proposal may include texts from course readings as well as literary texts from books and anthologies; secondary sources can range from works of criticism and theory to reference manuals and interviews. Our principal resource for much of this unit will be the *Harvard Guide to Using Sources*, which spells out the academic procedures and standards for proper attribution and citation of multiple sources. We will also be consulting the Widener Library staff for guidance on conducting efficient online searches and locating various kinds of academic research material.

Essay 3: Multiple-source research essay (10-12 pp)

Required Texts

Course Reader: Most of the assigned reading for the course will be posted in PDF form on the course website. Unless otherwise stated, please print out all assigned reading material for class discussions and conferences.
Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* & *Through the Looking Glass*
Seth Lerer, *Children's Literature: A Reader's History, from Aesop to Harry Potter*
Maria Tatar, *The Classic Fairy Tales* (Norton Critical Editions)
Harvard Guide to Using Sources: usingsources.fas.harvard.edu

Required Writing

The principal work requirement for the course is for you to complete an original and analytically sound essay for each of our three units. I will be giving you detailed instructions for these assignments early on in each unit. The Expos Program asks you to write and revise each essay in stages designed to provide you with the tools and skills for constructing proficient academic papers. You will therefore be writing your essays in the structured progression outlined here:

Response Papers: Before you compose an initial draft of each essay, you'll complete one or more preliminary response papers that will frame your thesis topic and focus on the specific writing skills we'll be covering in each unit. The response papers will generally run to about a page, and should aim at articulating the core idea your essay will address and the key components of your argument.

Drafts: You will submit a complete draft of each essay. On each draft you'll receive my detailed comments, in writing and in conferences.

Draft Cover Letters: With each draft, you'll attach a cover letter that will succinctly address specific questions and problems you feel you need to tackle when you revise your essay. I'll post specific instructions about writing these draft cover letters in the weeks ahead, along with a few samples.

Revised Essays: You should expect to revise each of your drafts extensively before submitting a final version for a grade. I
will provide written comments on your essay revisions.

Draft Workshops: In each unit we will hold a class workshop in which we work through two student drafts and offer the writers constructive criticism for improving their essays. I will e-mail you the essays I have chosen before each workshop, and you will be expected to come to class with written comments (in the form of a short letter) on each draft we workshop together. I'll be handing our detailed guidelines on draft workshops later in the semester.

Conferences

I will be meeting individually with each of you a minimum of three times over the course of semester to discuss your drafts for each unit. The main objective of our conferences is to focus on your revision process as well as your overall progress as a writer. Conferences will generally be scheduled for 30 minutes in my office, Room 230 at One Bow Street. Because of our tight timetable, I will not be able to reschedule missed conferences, so make sure to be on time and well prepared.

Writing Center

At any stage of the writing process -- while brainstorming ideas, reviewing drafts, or approaching revisions -- you may find yourself wanting help with your essays above and beyond your conferences with me and our in-class peer workshops. The Writing Center (located on the garden level of the Barker Center, offers hour-long appointments with trained tutors, and is an invaluable resource. Visit the Writing Center's website at http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~wricntr to make an appointment. Tutors also hold drop-in hours on Sunday

evenings in Winthrop House and Cabot House. You'll find more information on their website.

COURSE POLICIES

Grading

I will grade your coursework in accordance with the following formula: Essay 1, 20%; Essay 2, 25%; Essay 35%; constructive and consistent class participation (in discussion, workshops, conferences), 15%. This grading scale reflects the course emphasis on the discipline of writing and the expectation that you will be developing as a thinker and writer as the semester progresses. Keep in mind too that mechanics matter: I will expect you to make a scrupulous effort not to hobble your essays with grammatical, spelling, and formatting errors. You will receive a grade only for your revised essays, not the drafts or response papers.

Participation

In a course like this, which involves a lot of small-group work and student-led discussion, you have a responsibility not only to yourself but also to your classmates to show up for class, to show up on time, and to show up prepared. When you work in small groups I expect you to be as prepared and articulate as you are in general class discussions. Class starts punctually at ten minutes past the hour. If you're more than ten minutes late to class, you'll be counted absent.

Deadlines

All deadlines in this course are firm, but I do recognize that sometimes the press of work during a semester can become overwhelming. Thus each of you is entitled to one 24-hour extension for a draft or final draft of an essay, provided you tell me that you're taking your extension. (If a deadline is on a Friday, your "24-hour" extension is until noon Sunday. You choose if and when you're taking an extension.) Except in the case of medical or family emergency (in which case I need a notice from a doctor or a dean), I give no other extensions. If, due to such an emergency, you cannot meet a deadline, please contact me as soon as possible so that we may work out an alternative schedule of due dates and times.
There are serious consequences to missing deadlines. If you've already taken your 24-hour extension and you hand in a draft or final version of an essay late, your final essay grade will be lowered by 1/3 of a grade per day.

EXPOSITORY WRITING PROGRAM POLICIES

Attendance

Because Expos has a shorter semester and fewer class hours than other courses, and because instruction in Expos proceeds by sequential writing activities, your consistent attendance is essential. If you are absent without medical excuse more than twice, you are eligible to be officially excluded from the course and given a failing grade. On the occasion of your second unexcused absence, you will receive a letter warning you of your situation. This letter will also be sent to your Freshman Dean and to the Dean of the College, so the college can give you whatever supervision and support you need to
complete the course.

Apart from religious holidays, only medical absences can be excused. In the case of a medical problem, you should contact your preceptor before the class to explain, but in any event within 24 hours: otherwise you will be required to provide a note from UHS or another medical official, or your Freshman Dean, as you will also be required in the case of protracted or repeated illness. Absences because of special events such as athletic meets, debates, conferences, and concerts are not excusable absences. If such an event is very important to you, you may decide to take one of your two allowable unexcused absences; but again, you are expected to contact your preceptor beforehand if you will miss a class, or at least within 24 hours. If you wish to attend an event that will put you over the two-absence limit, you should contact your Freshman Dean and you must directly petition the Expository Writing Senior Preceptor, who will grant such petitions only in extraordinary circumstances and only when your work in the class has been exemplary.

Completion of Work

Because your Expos course is a planned sequence of writing, you must write all of the assigned essays to pass the course, and you must write them within the schedule of the course—not in the last few days of the semester after you have fallen behind. You will receive a letter reminding you of these requirements, therefore, if you fail to submit at least a substantial draft of an essay by the final due date in that essay unit. The letter will also specify the new date by which you must submit the late work, and be copied to your Freshman Dean and the Dean of the College. If you fail to submit at least a substantial draft of the essay by this new date, and you have not documented a medical problem, you are eligible to be officially excluded from the course and given a failing grade.

Collaboration

The following kinds of collaboration are permitted in this course: developing or refining ideas in conversation with other students, and through peer review of written work (including feedback from Writing Center tutors). If you would like to acknowledge the impact someone had on your essay, it is customary to do this in a footnote at the beginning of the paper. As stated in the Student Handbook, "Students need not acknowledge discussion with others of general approaches to the assignment or assistance with proofreading." However, all work submitted for this course must be your own: in other words, writing response papers, drafts or revisions with other students is expressly forbidden.

Academic Honesty

All the work that you submit for this course must be your own, and that work should not make use of outside sources unless that is explicitly part of the assignment. Plagiarism – which includes quoting or borrowing ideas from a source without proper attribution, handing in a paper written for another class, or written by someone else, or taken from the internet – is illegal. If you are quoting the work of others, you must indicate that you are doing so by naming your sources, using quotation marks, and giving the proper bibliographic reference to your material. You must also note when you are summarizing or referring to the ideas of another person in your own writing; unattributed paraphrasing is not acceptable. We will discuss the proper use of sources throughout the semester, but you should also consult the *Guide to Using Sources* or ask me whenever you have questions.

Harvard College Honor Code

Harvard now requires all students to affirm the Harvard College Honor Code on completion of your coursework. The Writing Program asks students to do so twice during the academic semester: when you submit your **draft of Essay 1** and when you submit your **revision of Essay 3**. Please include the following sentence when you submit these two papers:

"I affirm my awareness of the standards of the Harvard College Honor Code"

You may submit your affirmation as part of your cover letter, or attach it as a separate page along with your essay.