**Special Topics: Exploring Issues of Social Justice in Children’s Literature**

**C&T 5199: Spring 2017**

Dr. Detra Price-Dennis, 418 Zankel Hall

**Office Hours**: **Tuesdays, 3:15-5:00p.m. & Wednesdays, 11:15am-12: 15pm**

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**Course website**: http://socialjusticeliterature.weebly.com/

**COURSE OVERVIEW**

In this course, we will explore the role that children’s literature has in society’s understanding of social justice issues by asking: In what ways can children’s literature contribute to conversations about justice, equality, and social change in the 21st century? This question directs our attention to the sociopolitical nature of children’s books as we examine diverse children’s literature that addresses issues of social justice (past and present), the sociopolitical context in which this literature was written, and strategies for fostering response and understanding in K-8 classrooms.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

In this course, students will evaluate and analyze depictions and aspects of social justice and injustice in children’s literature. We will consider topics such as racism, class, gender, power, publishing trends, and ideology as we strive to understand the role and contributions of children’s literature relative to some central purposes of social justice, equality, and social change in the 21st century. The goals of the course are:

1. To cultivate an awareness of literature about, and resources related to, social justice in the United States;

2. To gain a deeper understand of ourselves as we read and respond to a variety of culturally diverse children’s literature that examines issues of equity in society;

3. To analyze literary, aesthetic, sociopolitical, and cultural issues and controversies related to social justice topics in children’s literature;

4. To explore strategies for reading about and responding to social justice topics in children’s literature in K-8 classrooms.

**COURSE READINGS**

**Required Textbooks**

Botelho, M. J., & Rudman, M. K. (2009). *Critical multicultural analysis of children's literature: mirrors, windows and doors*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Coates, T. (2015) *Between the world and me*. New York, NY: Random House.

**Required Children’s Literature**

De La Peña, M. (2015). *Last Stop on Market Street*. New York, NY: G.P. Putnam’s Sons.

Draper, S. M. (2015). *Stella by Starlight.* New York, NY: Atheneum.

Dumont, J.F. (2014). *The Sheep Go On Strike.* Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Books for Young Readers.

Gino, A. (2015). *George.* New York, NY: Scholastic.

Sheinkin, S. (2014). *The Port Chicago 50: Disaster, Mutiny, and the Fight for Civil Rights.*New York NY: Roaring Book Press.

Erskine, K. (2010). *Mockingbird.* New York, NY: Philomel Books, a division of Penguins Young Readers Group.

Markel, M. (2013). *Brave Girl: Clara and the Shirtwaist Makers’ Strike of 1909.* New York, NY: HarperCollins.

Tonatiuh, D. (2014). *Separate is Never Equal.* New York, NY: Abrams Books for Young Readers.

Nelson, M. (2005). *A Wreath for Emmett Till.* Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company

Bryan, A. (2016). *Freedom Over Me: Eleven slaves, their lives and dreams.* New York, NY: Atheneum Books for Young Readers

**Required Children’s Literature** Circle **Selections -** (select one book option from of the sections below):

Literature Circle, #1 - (select one book from the options below):

Ramsey, C. A., & Strauss, G. (2010). *Ruth and the Green Book*. Minneapolis, MN: Carolrhoda

Books.

Brown, D. (2016). *Drowned City: Hurricane Katrina and New Orleans.* Boston, MA: Houghton

Mifflin Harcourt.

Tonatiuh, D. (2016). *Pancho Rabbit and the Coyote: A Migrant’s Tale*. New York: NY: Abrams

Books for Young Readers.

Dauvillier, L. (2012). *Hidden: A Child’s Story of the Holocaust*. New York, NY: First Second.

Literature Circle #2 - (select one book from the options below):

Aydin, A., & Lewis, J. (2016). *March: Book Three*. Marietta, GA: Top Shelf Productions.

Myers, W.D. (1999). *Monster.* New York, NY: HarperCollins.

Woodson, J. (1998). *If You Come Softly.* New York, NY: Penguin Group.

Reynolds, J. & Kiely, B. (2015). *All American Boys*. New York, NY: Atheneum/Caitlyn Dlouhy

Books.

Magoon, K. (2015). *How it Went Down*. New York, NY: Henry Holt Books.

**Additional Required Reading –**There will be additional readings for this course that will be available on Canvas.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

**Participation (10%)**

**Class Particip**at**ion and Professionalism:** During class sessions, you are expected to participate in whole-class dialogue, small-group discussions of readings, group response projects, and individual work time. Because this participation is important to your learning in this course, your presence, positive participation, and professional disposition will count heavily toward your grade. The following will be considered in this category:

* On-time, regular attendance to class meetings
* Thoughtful and consistent contributions to class discussions
* Participation on social media or discussion board
* Bringing in children’s books that fit the theme of the session (see schedule)
* Preparation for class, including having all materials prepared before class, completing assigned readings, submitting assignments on time, and preparing for group projects
* Openness to feedback from peers and instructor and its application to your work

**Children’s Literature Group Response Projects (10% each – x2)**

You will participate in book discussions (in various grouping formats) for two of the children’s literature texts required for this course. The purpose of the literature groups is to: a) read texts closely and share ideas worthy of group discussion; b) share your recorded text responses to books to raise questions, make connections, and provide analysis; c) consider how your discussion responses are stretched by group members by examining your personal responses as a reader; and d) reflect on your group discussion experiences (opportunities to talk about thoughtfully chosen texts, sharing with other engaged readers) and consider the pedagogical affordances and implications for children. Your group will discuss the text, pose questions to the whole group, and share a visual representation of your conversation (corkulous; voice thread; collage; etc.…). I imagine this literature group experience as a space to work through what you are noticing and thinking in response to the book—to take close note of the impact, the images, the ideas, and feelings you experienced when a fine author is at work. I hope you will be honest in your responses, theorize how this book selection fits into your developing definition of social justice, think carefully through the themes present, and push yourself to consider others’ perspectives.

**Reading Responses**  (20%)

**Infographic:** You will create an infographic that captures the important ideas and questions that arise from the academic texts we are reading for class. We will share these during class and spend time discussing your ideas in small groups. You will also submit a 1-page reflection addressing the big ideas you selected, connection between these ideas and the children’s literature event you attended (optional), and why these ideas should inform the field’s understanding of social justice children’s literature. See course schedule for due date.

**Flipgrid Reading Response**: You will post one response about the course readings on Flipgrid (I will provide code to access), AND respond to one of your peers’ posts. Your responses should grapple with the content of the course readings, pose questions for your peers to think about and respond to on the thread, make connections between the big ideas and the children’s literature event you attended (optional), and offer perspectives about classroom implications. See course schedule for due dates.

**Text Set (30%)**

You will create a text set of books across genres about a social justice issue. Your text set should include the following items:

* 15 books (include image for each title)
* 1 book review
* Link to author/illustrator webpage, blog, instagram, twitter, etc…
* List of 2-3 current events that connect to your topic
* 2-page explanation about how you put the collection together, how the books are aligned with tenets of social justice, how the topic is connected to the children’s literature event you attended (optional), and curriculum connections

Optional:

* Link to Podcast about your topic
* PSA about why people should care about your topic
* List of twitter hashtags, blogs, or other social media outlets that relate to your topic

**Remix of Children’s Book** (20%)

Working independently or in a group with no more than three members, you will “remix” a children’s book to address an issue related to race, class, gender, language, and/or ability that is absent from the original version of your book selection and informed by the course readings and children’s literature event that you attended.

# ASSESSMENT

Assessment will be a continuous and central part of our work in this class. Your reading responses, infograhics, in-class assignments, social media responses, and projects will be evaluated based on the clarity of your ideas and engagement with information presented in class and texts.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Class focus** | **Read prior to class** | **Assignments due** |
| 1.24 | What do we mean by social justice?  Course Intro | Botelho & Rudman, Ch. 1  6 Elements  *The Sheep Go on Strike* | Questions you want to explore this semester (see survey on course website) |
| 1.31 | Knowing children’s literature through a socially just lens | Botelho & Rudman, Ch. 2  What is social justice (see Canvas module)  PDF- Ghiso, Campano, & Hall  Literature Group #1 | Book that exemplifies social justice |
| 2.07 | Sociohistorical constructions of race and power in children’s literature | Botelho & Rudman, Ch. 6  PDF- Sims-Bishop  *Stella By Starlight* | Flipgrid: Group 1 (Post due by Sunday at 9pm. Responses due by Monday at 5pm) |
| 2.14 | Contemporary understandings of race and social justice | PDF- Alexander  Between the world and me  Literature Group #2 |  |
| 2.21 | Theorizing critical multicultural children’s literature | Botelho & Rudman, Ch. 4 & 5  American Indian Blog (see Canvas module)  Laura Jimenez Interview (see Canvas module)  *Separate is Never Equal* | On-line platform (TBA) |
| 2.28 | Trauma and social justice in children’s literature | PDF- Wissman  PDF- Baldwin  *A Wreath for Emmett Till* | Song lyrics that address social justice issue in America |
| 3.7 | Speaking truth to power | Botelho & Rudman, Ch.8  PDF- DeNicolo & Franquiz  *The Port Chicago 50* | Flipgrid: Group 2 (Post due by Sunday at 9pm. Responses due by Monday at 5pm) |
| 3.14 | No Class- Spring Break | | |
| 3.21 | Social construction of class | Botelho & Rudman, Ch. 7  PDF (Jones)  *Last Stop on Market Street* | Materials for Remix project |
| 3.28 | Social construction of gender | Botelho & Rudman, Ch. 9  PDF (Tschida et al)  Recommended PDF- Moller  *George* | Infographic |
| 4.04 | No Class- Attend Children’s Literature Event/ Text Set work day | | |
| 4.11 | Social construction of (dis)ability | PDF- TBA *Mockingbird* |  |
| 4.18 | “Ain’t I a Woman?” –Whose voices are missing in this discussion? | PDF- Lorde  Blog- Feminism (see link)  *Brave Girl: Clara and the Shirtwaist Makers’ Strike of 1909* |  |
| 4.25 | Special Topic | PDF- TBA | Text Set |
| 5.02 | What do we mean by social justice in children’s literature? | PDF- Moller | - Book that exemplifies social justice |
| 5.09 | Poetry | PDF-TBA  *Freedom Over Me* | Remix |

**GRADING POLICY**

See the Teachers College Catalog for a complete explanation of grading policy at the College. The grade of “B” is assigned for satisfactory graduate-level work. Students are evaluated on the following:

(a) Attendance and participation in class

You are expected to be on time, to demonstrate professional behavior, and to contribute to discussions and activities. Attendance is mandatory; absence in excess of two sessions will result in a failing grade or the need to retake the course.

(b) Satisfactory completion of assignments on time

Assignments that are submitted on time contribute to a meaningful dialogue between student and professor. All assignments are due at the beginning of class. Conversely, assignments that are submitted late will be reduced by half a grade (e.g., B+ to B; B to B-; etc.) and be assessed at the end of the semester. Only students who hand in their assignments on time can expect significant written feedback from the professor; late assignments will be graded, but feedback will be minimal. All assignments are expected to be clearly and coherently written with attention given to the organization and structure of the paper as a whole, as well as to the editing of basic mechanics of language usage such as spelling, punctuation, and grammar. **APA style, double-spacing, 12-point font and 1 inch margins are required.** Also, please use the APA guidelines for unbiased language (for tips on gender inclusive language see: http://www.valpo.edu/writctr/FAQ11.html).

(c) Thorough reading and engagement with course texts

We will be spending a significant amount of time discussing texts that are relevant to the weekly topics. You should come to each class having carefully read the assigned texts and expect to participate in a variety of activities that require analytic discussion.

**Grading system**

93-100% A  
90-92% A-  
87-89% B+  
83-86% B  
80-82% B-  
77-79% C+  
73-76% C  
70-72% C-  
60-69% D  
Below 60% F

**COLLEGE AND PROGRAM POLICIES**

**Statement on Academic & Professional Honesty & Integrity**

Students who intentionally submit work that is either not their own or without clear attribution to the original source, fabricate data or other information, engage in cheating or misrepresentation of academic records may be subject to charges. Sanctions may include dismissal from the College for violation of the Teachers College principles of academic and professional integrity fundamental to the purpose of the College.

**Policy on the Grade of Incomplete**

According to the Teachers College policy, the grade of Incomplete is to be assigned only when the course attendance requirement has been met but, for reasons satisfactory to the instructor, the granting of a final grade has been postponed because certain course assignments are outstanding. If the outstanding assignments are completed within one calendar year from the date of the close of term in which the grade of Incomplete was received and a final grade submitted, the final grade will be recorded on the permanent transcript, replacing the grade of Incomplete, with a transcript notation indicating the date that the grade of Incomplete was replaced by a final grade.

If the outstanding work is not completed within one calendar year from the date of the close of term in which the grade of Incomplete was received, the grade will remain as a permanent Incomplete on the transcript. In such instances, if the course is a required course or part of an approved program of study, students will be required to re-enroll in the course including repayment of all tuition and fee charges for the new registration and satisfactorily complete all course requirements. If the required course is not offered in subsequent terms, the student should speak with the faculty advisor or Program Coordinator about their options for fulfilling the degree requirement.

**Teachers College Policy on Reasonable Accommodations**

The College will make reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities. Students are encouraged to contact the Office of Access and Services for Individuals with Disabilities for information about registration (166 Thorndike Hall). Services are available only to students who are registered and submit appropriate documentation. As your instructors, we are happy to discuss specific needs with you as well, but these discussions should begin BEFORE you need any accommodations. (Don’t wait until you are overwhelmed or experiencing difficulty to come and discuss your learning and instructional needs.)

**Teachers College Policy on Emergency Notification**

Teachers College students have the responsibility for activating the Columbia University Network ID (UNI), which includes a free Columbia email account. As official communications from the College – e.g., information on graduation, announcements of closing due to severe storm, flu epidemic, transportation disruption, etc. – will be sent to the student’s Columbia email account, students are responsible for either reading email there or for utilizing the mail forwarding option to forward mail from their Columbia account to an email address that they will monitor.