Children’s Literature: Texts, Theories, Contexts
Description

This course explores shifting attitudes towards childhood, children’s literature, and their attendant critical and theoretical discourses from the nineteenth century to the present. From Lewis Carroll’s *Alice* books, which heralded a new “Golden Age” of children’s literature, to Cold-War-era fantasy, comic songs, and Japanese anime, students will consider a variety of different texts and the notions of childhood they reflect and generate. What linguistic and narrative strategies do adult writers, illustrators, and filmmakers draw on in their attempts to speak to, and for, young audiences? What assumptions do we, as adults, bring to our encounters with children’s texts? Using Philip Nel and Lissa Paul’s seminal *Keywords for Children’s Literature* (2011), students will develop the critical vocabulary necessary to discuss children’s fiction, poetry, and film in its aesthetic, ideological, and historical contexts. Students will also cultivate a strong theoretical framework for the study of children’s literature by engaging with field-defining scholarship by Jacqueline Rose, Perry Nodelman, and others.

Required Texts

- Readings by A. A. Milne and Shel Silverstein will be posted on NTULearn


Assessments

Participation: 15%
Short Essay: 10%
Term Paper: 25%
Final Exam: 50%

Deadlines and Late Penalties

The Short Essay is due on **Thursday, September 27th**, and the Term Paper is due on **Thursday, November 8th**. In each case, please submit a hard copy of your work at the beginning of class, and a soft copy via Turnitin (uploaded no later than 14:30 on the due date). Late work will be penalized one half-mark per day late (an A paper submitted one day late would drop to an A-, etc.) and will not receive written feedback. Late work will only be accepted within 48 hours of the deadline.

Schedule

1. Aug. 16th - Introduction

2. Aug. 23rd - Reading Children’s Literature
   PRIMARY READING:
   - Chapters 1-13 of Frances Hodgson Burnett, *The Secret Garden* (1911)
   SECONDARY READING:
   - Beverly Lyon Clark, “Audience” (14-17)
   - Karen Sanchez Eppler, “Childhood” (35-41)
   - Peter Hunt, “Children’s Literature” (42-47)
3. Aug. 30th - The Natural World
PRIMARY READING:
• Chapters 14-27 of Frances Hodgson Burnett, *The Secret Garden* (1911)
SECONDARY READING:
• Philip Hollindale, “Nature” (161-164)

4. Sept. 6th - Children’s Poetry
PRIMARY READING:
• A. A. Milne, “Binker”, “In the Dark” (1927), “Vespers” (1924)

5. Sept. 13th - The Kingdom of Wisdom
PRIMARY READING:
SECONDARY READING:
• Elisabeth Rose Gruner, “Education” (70-74)

6. Sept. 20th - Children and Animals
*In-class screening of My Neighbor Totoro* (Studio Ghibli, 1988)

7. Sept. 27th - The Gifted Child
PRIMARY READING:
SECONDARY READING:
• Elizabeth Bullen, “Class” (48-52)
• Lissa Paul, “Literacy” (141-145)

8. Oct. 11th - Academic Writing

9. Oct. 18th - The Book of Books
PRIMARY READING:
• Chapters 1-12 of Michael Ende, *The Neverending Story* (1979)
SECONDARY READING:
• Dierdre Baker, “Fantasy” (79-85)

10. Oct. 25th - Infinity and Order
PRIMARY READING:
• Chapters 13-26 of Michael Ende, *The Neverending Story*

11. Nov. 1st - Curiouser and Curiouser
PRIMARY READING:
• Lewis Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (1865); *Through the Looking-Glass* (1872)
SECONDARY READING:
• Angela Sorby, “Golden Age” (96-99)

12. Nov. 8th - Alice and Pop Culture
PRIMARY READING:
• Lewis Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (1865); *Through the Looking-Glass* (1872)
SECONDARY READING:
• Richard Flynn, “Culture” (62-66)
• June Cummings, “Marketing” (146-50)

13. Nov. 15th - Conclusion