

Education in Fiction And Fact

Fall 2018 | ENGL 299/4 | MW 9-10:15 | Gray Court 161 | Prof. Elisabeth Gruner
egruner@richmond.edu | Office Hours: T 3-4:30, W 11-12, and by appt. | Ryland 303-C

“It’s my first morning of high school. I have seven new notebooks, a skirt I hate, and a stomachache.”

--Laure Halse Anderson, *Speak*

American high school students spend about 1000 hours a year in the classroom. Is that time well spent? Whose idea was that, anyway, and what are they getting out of it? Does that system operate the same way for everyone? These are some of the questions that will frame our study of education in the United States. Focusing especially on high school, we will explore the history of compulsory education and the stories, both fictional and social, that we tell ourselves about what students should know, and how they should learn it.

**This course satisfies the
literary studies
requirement...**



**and is part of the Sophomore
Scholars in Residence
Program.**



Required texts



Johann N. Neem, *Democracy's Schools* [bookstore]

Laura Amy Schlitz, *The Hired Girl*

Mildred Taylor, *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*

Renee Watson, *This Side of Home*

Angie Thomas, *The Hate U Give*

Laurie Halse Anderson, *Speak*

Meg Medina, *Yaqui Delgado Wants to Kick Your Ass*

J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter & the Sorcerer's Stone*

How are you evaluated?

Assignment Details

There are two kinds of assignments for this class—frequent, informal, ungraded ones, and several more formal graded ones. We will determine the relative weighting of assignments together, in class. I'll provide more specific details for each assignment, including a grading rubric, in plenty of time before it's due; below, you'll find the general outlines.

Informal Journal

Weekly, ungraded

I expect all students to keep a journal with informal responses to all course readings, discussions, presentations, and field trips. Although the journals will not be graded, they will serve as a resource for in-class discussion, discussion leadership, and writing, as well as for out-of-class assignments, so I expect them to be of great value to us all.

In-class discussion

Daily, ungraded

Because this is a small, community-oriented class, I encourage you to participate freely in class even if you are not accustomed to doing so. Our classroom will be a space of free intellectual inquiry where it is safe to ask questions and try out ideas. If you have a question, another student may share it, or may have an answer for you—in either case, you'll be contributing to our common good by posing it, as well as by offering your thoughts on readings and other course materials.

Students will also lead discussion and/or introduce a speaker at least once during the semester.

Response Papers

Twice, as noted in syllabus

Students will demonstrate their analytical and writing skills in two 3-4 page responses to readings during the semester. These may develop out of journal entries (see above) and/or course materials. They should be focused on a passage or concept from at least one novel from our class, and develop an argument that relates that passage to a non-fiction reading, speaker, or field trip. Details to follow.

“School settings exist in adolescent literature to socialize teenagers into accepting the inevitable power social institutions have over individuals in every aspect of their lives.” —Roberta Seelinger Trites, *Disturbing the Universe: Power and Repression in Adolescent Literature*.

Final project

Due on or before Nov. 21, 2018

Students will demonstrate their ability to synthesize course material in a “satellite” project. This project will involve connecting course texts to other materials both visually and in writing, developing an original argument about high school derived from our course discussion, texts, and field trips. Details to follow.

Course Calendar

1	MON 8/27	Where do we start? Course introduction, community norms	Email questionnaire to me
	WED 8/29	Where did we come from? What do teachers, students, and schools do? "The Danger of a Single Story"	<i>Democracy's Schools</i> , preface and introduction; excerpt from <i>Record of a School</i> (Blackboard)

2	MON 9/3	A Hunger for Learning	Begin reading <i>The Hired Girl</i> <i>Democracy's Schools</i> , chapter one
	WED 9/5	Continued.....	Continue reading <i>The Hired Girl</i> <i>Democracy's Schools</i> , chapter two

3	MON 9/10	Continued...	Continue reading <i>The Hired Girl</i> First response paper due
	WED 9/12	Continued...	Finish <i>The Hired Girl</i> <i>Democracy's Schools</i> , chapter four

4	MON 9/17	Who gets to learn?	Begin <i>Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry</i> Read excerpts from <i>Black Doctor</i> , <i>American to the Backbone</i> (Blackboard)
	WED 9/19	Continued...	Finish <i>Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry</i> ; <i>Democracy's Schools</i> , chapter five

5	MON 9/24	Continued...	Begin <i>This Side of Home</i>
	WED 9/26	Legacies of Desegregation	Continue <i>This Side of Home</i>

6	MON 10/1	Continued...	Continue <i>This Side of Home</i> <i>Another Kind of Public Education</i> , ch. 3 (Blackboard)
	WED 10/3	Continued...	Class meets in Rare Books Classroom, Boatwright B1

7	MON 10/8	Continued...	Finish <i>This Side of Home</i>
	WED 10/10	Preparing for Boston	Readings TBA Second response paper due

8	SAT-MON 10/13-15	Finding the story on site: Boston & Concord	Boston and Concord walking tours; Orchard House visit; school visits
	TUE-WED 10/16-10/17	Finding the story in the archive	Visit to American Antiquarian Society and desegregation archive

9	MON 10/22	Debrief Boston trip	Readings TBA 1A podcast: " Dishonesty and Advantage in America's Education System "
	WED 10/24	Black Lives Matter in/and School	Begin <i>The Hate U Give</i> Selections from <i>When They Call You a Terrorist</i> (TBA)
	THU 10/25	One Book and WILL*/WGSS Speaker Series: janaya khan 7 pm, Camp Concert Hall	<i>"Demanding Social Transformation, Justice, and Equality for All"</i>

10	MON 10/29	Black Lives Matter, continued	<i>T.H.U.G.</i> , continued Marah Gubar, " Empathy is Not Enough " (pdf also on Blackboard)
	WED 10/31	Continued...	<i>T.H.U.G.</i> , continued

11	MON 11/5	Continued...	Finish <i>T.H.U.G.</i>
	WED 11/7	When School isn't Safe	Begin <i>Yaqui Delgado Wants to Kick Your Ass</i> , Meg Medina

12	MON 11/12	Continued...	Finish <i>Yaqui Delgado</i>
	WED 11/13	Continued...	Begin <i>Speak</i>

13	MON 11/19	Continued...	Finish <i>Speak</i> Last day to turn in satellite project
	WED 11/21	Thanksgiving Break	No class

14	MON 11/26	Even wizards take tests	Begin <i>Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone</i> , " The Darker Side of the Sorting Hat " (pdf also on Blackboard)
	WED 11/28	Continued...	Finish <i>Harry Potter</i>

15	MON 12/3	Final Thoughts	Readings TBA
	WED 12/5	Last Day: Reflections, planning for next semester	Readings TBA

Course Policies

As a group, we determined that we learn best when we:



- Participate
- Ask questions
- Collaborate
- Are flexible/understanding
- Listen
- Don't judge
- Are open to other opinions
- Build on each other's discussion
- Are supportive of one another
- Don't control the conversation
- Pay attention and listen actively
- Come prepared
- Listen intentionally
- Take time to reflect



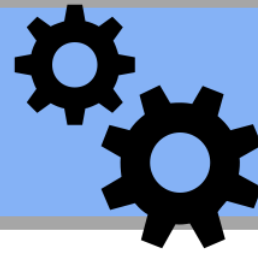
We agree to be reasonable in our use of digital devices—to use them only when necessary, not to distract each other with them, and always to put them away when asked.



Readings. The readings form the core of our class discussions, so please come to class prepared. This means taking notes in your reading journal, writing down quotations from the reading, bringing questions, and making connections between the readings.

"The school story thus is and is about a peculiarly marginal institution, a boundary institution between family and world, between private and public spheres. Schooling is, furthermore, addressed to marginal individuals, to those between childhood and adulthood, and adults always marginalize children and adolescents. For even now, however much we may think that we are child-centered, we still apply, unthinkingly, adult norms. When we use metaphors of juvenility, we use them to disparage: it is hardly a compliment to call someone immature or infantile. School is also curiously marginalized by its being a temporary site from the perspective of the individual. It situates the student in the position of always becoming; even its ending is called a commencement" (7).
--Beverly Lyons Clark: *Regendering the School Story: Sassy Sissies and Tattling Tomboys*.

The Technical Stuff...



Course Outcomes

Students in this class will demonstrate

- Effective written and oral communication skills
- An in-depth understanding of the ways writers approach complex issues, particularly with regard to education, in fiction and nonfiction
- An ability to analyze texts within historical and political contexts, particularly in relation to education
- An awareness of the ways our interpretations of texts change when we put them into conversation
- An appreciation of each other as readers and thinkers

Boatwright Library Research Librarians

(<http://library.richmond.edu/help/ask/> or 289-8876): Research librarians assist students with identifying and locating resources for class assignments, research papers and other course projects. Librarians also provide research support for students and can respond to questions about evaluating and citing sources. Students can email, text or IM or schedule a personal research appointment to meet with a librarian in his/her office on the first floor Research and Collaborative Study area. Our library liaison is Marcia Whitehead.

Career

Services (<http://careerservices.richmond.edu/>

or 289-8547): Can assist you in exploring your interests and abilities, choosing a major or course of study, connecting with internships and jobs, and investigating graduate and professional school options. Our liaison, Rachel Rodney, will be available to meet with students by appointment.

Academic Support

If you experience difficulties in this course, please let me know right away. There are also other resources that can support you in your efforts to meet course requirements.

Academic Skills Center (<http://asc.richmond.edu>, 289-8626 or 289-8956): Assists students in assessing their academic strengths and weaknesses; honing their academic skills through teaching effective test preparation, critical reading and thinking, information conceptualization, concentration, and related techniques; working on specific subject areas (e.g., calculus, chemistry, accounting, etc.); and encouraging campus and community involvement. Hours at the Center are:

Sunday through Wednesday 3:00-9:00 p.m. and Thursday 3:00-7:00 p.m. On-call tutors are also available.

Academic Integrity.

Plagiarism is using another's words or thoughts without attribution. In an internet age it is particularly difficult to avoid—we all end up cutting and pasting, and losing track of where we found what. It is critically important, however, to give credit where it is due—to acknowledge our influences, our borrowings, our debts. Doing so is a way of honoring our intellectual mentors (even those we've never met) and becoming part of an intellectual tradition. If you are in doubt as to whether you should cite something, ask me, ask a librarian, or just cite it. You'll rarely go wrong that way. If I see something in a paper that should have been cited, or that seems as if it might be borrowed, I'll discuss it with you first. If we can't come to an agreement about the source, or the problem persists, I will involve the Honor Council at that point.

Counseling and Psychological Services (<http://wellness.richmond.edu/offices/caps/> or 289-8119):

Assists currently enrolled, full-time, degree-seeking students in improving their mental health and well-being, and in handling challenges that may impede their growth and development. Services include short-term counseling and psychotherapy, crisis intervention, psychiatric consultation, and related services.



Disability Services (<https://disability.richmond.edu/students/index.html> or 289.8032) The Office of Disability Services works to ensure that qualified students with a disability (whether incoming or current) are provided with reasonable accommodations that enable that student to participate fully in activities, programs, services and benefits provided to all students. Please let me know as soon as possible if you have an accommodation that requires academic coordination and planning.

You may also find these resources helpful...

Speech Center (<http://speech.richmond.edu> or 289-6409): Assists with preparation and practice in public expression. Recording, playback, coaching and critique sessions offered by teams of student consultants trained to assist in developing ideas, arranging key points for more effective organization, improving style and delivery, and handling multimedia aids for individual and group presentations.

Writing Center (<http://writing.richmond.edu> or 289-8263): Assists writers at all levels of experience, across all majors. Students can schedule appointments with trained writing consultants who offer friendly critiques of written work.