ENG5F | Writing Intensive Seminar in English

Reading Serial Children's Literature: Lemony Snicket's *A Series of Unfortunate Events*

MW 11:30-12:50
Conducted via Zoom and Canvas
Spring 2021

Course Instructor:
Nichole Nomura
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Office hours link here

Learning Outcomes:

- Understand and apply critical models for education and childhood/adolescent development in reading and writing about children's literature
- Be able to integrate theoretical frameworks and textual objects into critical writing
- Perform critical readings at a variety of scales (close, distant, etc) using appropriate tools and methodologies, for identified audiences.

Over the course of a quarter, we will read Lemony Snicket's *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, books 1-13, alongside academic research in children's literature, seriality, and adolescent development. How do we write about literature that exists simultaneously at the scale of a single novel and a series? What methods are appropriate for answering what questions? In this course, we'll be exploring the world of best-sellers and book deals alongside questions of "appropriateness," popularity, and adolescent development using literary critical and digital humanities methods.

Course Assignments:
Full Assignment sheets for each assignment are available on Canvas

Writing Journal:
At the beginning of the quarter, pick two features you're interested in. Interested in female characters? Scenes of education? Style? Suspense? After finishing each novel, you'll write for 15 minutes, recording your observations about these features. This is note-taking, not polished-prose. These are due at the start of class on Canvas.

Intake Assessment--Compare and Contrast essay:
Compare and contrast one feature from books 1 and 2 (Max 3 pages, double-spaced). You may use one of the features from your writing journal, or you may pick another one. This is a "basic" writing skill, yes, but one that can always be made more elegant. We're using this piece to assess where you're at with your writing as we start the quarter, and we'll do a self-assessment paired with an individual appointment to evaluate it.

Op-Ed Assignment:

Write an Op-Ed for a specified audience (you choose!) responding to Cox Gurdon's claims, using *A Series of Unfortunate Events* as one of your example texts (you're welcome to use as many other texts as you want). Since "Darkness Too Visible" is now an older text, you can choose to directly respond to it, or to respond to the discourse more generally (especially if you're planning on sending this out for publication). This is an opportunity to play with style and form for a public audience while making big-picture claims.

This assignment will be assessed on the following:
- Does the Op-Ed set up the debate/problem clearly and immediately?
- Does the Op-Ed articulate a clear stand on the issue?
- Does the Op-Ed draw on theory and research in an accessible and useful way?
- For bonus points: Does it entertain?

Data Assignment:

You'll be provided with datasets related to *A Series of Unfortunate Events*. In class, we'll talk about what questions these datasets can be used to answer. You're welcome to continue exploring these datasets for this assignment, or to find others that will be of use to you in your final paper.

You'll identify a question (one that might be useful to your final paper), and then summarize the data and methods used to create that data in a way that would help you answer that question in a literary critical essay. (Max 2 paragraphs)

We will co-construct the rubric for this assignment in class, based on exemplar texts.

Final Research Paper

During week 6, you'll propose and workshop some paper topics. You're free to write about anything that engages substantively with course themes (although "substantive" is subject to instructor discretion--don't get too committed to a topic before you talk to me). We'll plot a research course during a one-on-one meeting, set deadlines for individual elements of your research course, and co-design a rubric for the assessment of the paper.

Tentative Weekly Course Readings

Week 1	
Monday	**Due**: **Intro Survey** **Read**: Syllabus
Wednesday	**Read**: 1: *The Bad Beginning*

Week 2	
Monday	**Read**: 2: *The Reptile Room* "Common Assumptions about Childhood" (Canvas)
Wednesday	**Due: Intake Assessment** **Read**: Lerer, Seth. "Ingenuity and Authority: Aesop's Fables and their Afterlives.(Canvas) Cox Gurdon, "Darkness too Visible" (Canvas)
Week 3	
Monday	**Read:** 3: *The Wide Window* One Childhood Reading article of your choosing (Canvas)
Wednesday	**Watch:** *Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events* (2004)
Week 4	
Monday	**Read:** 4: *The Miserable Mill*
Wednesday	**Read**: 5: *The Austere Academy*
Friday	**No class. Due: Op-Ed Assignment**
Week 5	
Monday	**Read:** 6: *The Ersatz Elevator* 7: *The Vile Village*
Wednesday	**Read**: 8: *The Hostile Hospital* Reimer et al, "Introduction: The Compulsion to Repeat" (Canvas)
Week 6	
Monday	**Due: Data Assignment** **Read:** 9: *The Carnivorous Carnival* One piece of interest to you in *Seriality and Texts for Young People* (Canvas)
Wednesday	**Read:** 10: *The Slippery Slope* Selection, Saldaña *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers, 3E* (Canvas)

Week 7	
Monday	**Read:** 11: *The Grim Grotto*
Wednesday	**Read**: 12: *The Penultimate Peril*
Week 8	
Monday	**Read:** 13: *The End*
Wednesday	**(This is a gap day, in case things need to change during the quarter)**
Week 9	
Monday	**Read:** Who is Daniel Handler? Module on Canvas
Wednesday	In-class workshop
Week 10	
Monday	No class
Wednesday	**Read:** Your workshop partners' materials for in-class workshop

(Grading breakdown, Stanford's remote learning policies, and information on accommodations have been removed)