Instructor:
Shannon Mersand, MLS, MS CDIT
Student consultations by appointment (can accommodate virtual appointments)
E-mail: smersand@albany.edu  (Please include IST571 in subject line.)
Class Location: Online via Blackboard Learning System (https://blackboard.albany.edu/)
Class gmail/YouTube account: Please see Course Information in BLS

Course Description: Introductory survey of literature for children with the emphasis on twentieth and twenty-first century authors and illustrators. Problems and trends in writing and publishing. Both traditional and nontraditional formats will be discussed. Students will leave the class with a foundational repertoire of children's literature and the skills with which to create engaging and interactive story hours and programs. Integrated throughout the course is an introduction to the Common Core State Standards with practical application to the genre studies; students will leave the course with a basic understanding of how to use these standards for curriculum integration and reader’s advisory. Class discussion, activities, projects, and extensive reading.

Pedagogical Approach: The major theories that drive the course are Rosenblatt’s reader response (i.e., transactional) theory of literature, as well as, socio-cultural learning theory. The course layout, activities, and assignments are geared towards a three-pronged learning approach - - literature immersion, classroom discussion and activity, and practical application.

A Note About Class Design: One basic tenet of online course design is consistency. The course is divided into five modules. Each module has an Overview in which we lay out information under these headings: Read, Mini Lecture, Discuss, Share, and Team Area. The Overview page will give you a synopsis of the module. Then each week within each module has an Overview so you know exactly what is expected. Something is due every Wednesday and Sunday. We have factored the various holidays into the schedule. We also have a module with tutorials and specific instructions for how to make the videos or work with the media that is part of the course.

At first glance, the course — and syllabus- can seem overwhelming, but I assure you we will guide you through it and help you stay on track. If you do the readings (academic reading as well as delving into children’s books on your own throughout the semester), you will do fine! When you are prepared, this course can be very engaging and lots of fun! We’ll experience the course together, and make adjustments as necessary.

Course Objectives/Competencies:

The readings, lectures, and course activities are designed to enable you to:

1. become familiar with many authors and illustrators of children’s books and recognize the various genres of children’s literature;
2. understand the role of literature in the lives of children and the importance of respecting cultural diversity and individual uniqueness;
3. develop and apply criteria for judging the literary and aesthetic qualities of children’s books (text and artwork);
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4. understand the librarian’s/media specialist’s role in relating literature to the curriculum and facilitating a literature-based approach;
5. develop a basic understanding of ELA/ Literacy Common Core State Standards;
6. become familiar with professional resources: basic selection tools and resources helpful in identifying appropriate titles to use with children;
7. be aware of current issues and trends in the writing and publishing of children’s titles;
8. understand the role electronic technologies play in children’s literature for both professionals and children;
9. develop a professional philosophy of selection, incorporating respect for the child’s freedom to read and a knowledge of the librarian’s role in resisting censorship.

Student Exit Competencies:

At the conclusion of this class, students will be able to:

1. use basic reference tools in selecting, evaluating, talking, and writing about children’s books.
2. demonstrate a reading knowledge of children’s books in a variety of genres and from a diversity of cultural backgrounds.
3. demonstrate familiarity with current issues and trends in the field of children’s literature.
4. demonstrate ability to read aloud, discuss books with adults and children, and promote enjoyment of literature to both children and professionals.
5. find basic electronic resources on the internet relating to children’s literature and library programming;
6. understand how to promote and defend children’s rights and respect for divergent views.

Departmental Goal Alignments:

This course is aligned with the following Information Studies Goals/Objectives:

1. demonstrate a sense of professional identity by applying the concepts and principles of library and information sciences and related disciplines.
4. assess the information needs of diverse and underserved populations and provide resources and instruction to meet those needs.
6. formulate, interpret, and implement information policy, including issues of privacy, equity, intellectual property, and intellectual freedom.
8. conduct and apply research to develop, maintain, and evaluate information content and assess information services.
9. understand, implement, and use appropriate technologies in the delivery of information content and services.
11. understand the information environments and build collaborative relationships to strengthen library and information services and literacy.

Readings: You can get the required textbook at Amazon.com, half.com, Bigwords.com, or any bookstore. The required text will be supplemented by additional readings and resources that will be linked off of our class BLS, as well as children’s books you can purchase or check out at your local library. (I highly recommend making full use of your library’s interlibrary loan system. Make friends with the children’s and youth library
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staff! You can even manage your account, keep track of due dates, request books, etc. online in most libraries. Plan ahead!

Required Professional/Academic Reading:


OR


Required Children’s Books We Will All Read (no need to purchase: plan ahead and use your library):

The mostly True Adventures of Homer P. Figg by Rodman Philbrick (Historical Fiction)
Captain Underpants by David Pilkey (any issue) or Bad Kitty by Nick Bruell (any book)
Wonder by R. J. Palacio (Contemporary Realism)
Flora & Ulysses: The Illuminated Adventures by Kate DiCamillo (Mixed Genre, 2014 Newbery Medal)
When You Reach Me by Rebeca Stead (Science Fiction) OR
Gregor the Overlander by Suzanne Collins (Fantasy)

You will also choose books to read from a variety of genres. In our class, you will be reading widely and broadly from a variety of genres. Most of this literature immersion will be done on your own, since the element of choice is important in our reading enjoyment. However, you will also read books for team projects, class activities, and presentations (and even then, you get to make a lot of your own choices). You will get credit for all the reading you do in the class as you compile a briefly annotated bibliography from them. My goal is to get you to read widely and not just to stick to one or two comfortable genres. See what’s out there and immerse yourself in a variety of children’s books. Have fun with this! (See the Self Assessment Form for requirements.)

Supplemental articles will be linked off our course BLS, or references given for online retrieval.

Advice: read, read, read

Course Policies:
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**Class Participation and Attendance:**  
In keeping with a student centered, social learning approach, this class incorporates a lot of student participation and interaction. In a face-to-face class, students must be present in class to be a part of it. This holds true in the online classroom: students need to “show up” and participate in a regular and timely fashion in order to be a part of the class community and to get the most out of it. Student active participation in class discussions is the heart of the course and this is valued heavily in the grading. Additionally, students are placed in teams at the beginning of the semester to work on skills-building exercises or collaborative projects. A course schedule with deadlines is provided in Blackboard.

**Asynchronous vs. Synchronous:**  
This course is held asynchronously; that is, students sign in at convenient times for them within the framework of the course schedule. Since it is not an independent study, there is a schedule and everyone is expected to participate weekly, but not necessarily at the same time of day. However, there is the possibility that students may decide to meet for synchronous sessions with teammates during the semester for skills-building exercises or a class activity or presentation. I will also provide both synchronous office hours through video conferencing (or asynchronously via email). Whether you and your teammates meet synchronously or asynchronously is up to you. Synchronous sessions can be done through Google Hangouts or another platform ITS is making available for us. See more about this in the Media section of our course BLS.

**Team Activities:** Team activities are an important part of the course design. At the beginning of the semester, you will be assigned to a team that will work together throughout the duration of the course. Sometimes students are apprehensive about working in teams because of prior poor experiences. While in many courses group work is structured unfairly, such that some students end up doing all the work while everyone shares the credit, two factors will prevent that from happening in this class. First, nearly all graded team work will be preceded by plenty of opportunity for team members to read, discuss, plan, and practice, for which each individual will be accountable, thus ensuring that individual team members are each prepared to contribute to the team effort. Second, each individual’s contribution to team work will be assessed by his or her teammates and factored into the final course grade. You are accountable to each other.

**Prerequisites:** In order to complete the assignments in this course, students will need access to a computer with an Internet connection, recent web browser, and video cam.

**Time Required:** This is a graduate level 3-credit class. The University at Albany uses the Carnegie units as the standard: for every credit hour, there should be 2-3 hours of homework. This translates to about 9-12 hours of coursework per week, or 135-180 hours per semester for a rigorous graduate level course. The discussions and project-based assignments are deceptively simple and require a lot of time, so it is encouraged that students plan their schedules accordingly and complete assignments in a timely manner.

Please note that the course is designed with an introductory module (i.e., Module One) in order to give students the opportunity to become familiar with the course classroom space and course information documents. This “cushion” (or “ice-breaker”) is built in to allow for adequate time to read and reflect upon this foundational material, as well as to practice using some of the tools you will need to use in order to participate in the course. Students are strongly cautioned not to wait until the last minute to start their work in this course. Self-regulated learners will do well in this class because students must be able to engage with the material and interact with others in our learning community, as well as to consistently read all sorts of children’s books independently throughout the semester (while building your bibliography, i.e. Children’s Lit Kit).
E-mail and Introductions: Each student is expected to use their University e-mail account for this class. Please also provide contact information here. Students are also expected to introduce themselves in our Meet Your Classmates Section (please read instructions). See more about this in Module One.

Incompletes: No incompletes will be given in this class without the express permission of the instructor in advance.

Academic Integrity: Please see the Graduate Studies Bulletin for information about academic integrity standards, examples of dishonesty, and possible penalties: http://www.albany.edu/graduatebulletin/requirements_degree.htm#standards_integrity. Basically, whatever you produce for this course should be your own work and unique to this course. You should not submit any work for this course that you’ve also presented or will present to another course. You cannot present the work of others as your own. If you borrow text or media from another source or paraphrase substantial ideas from someone else, you must provide a reference to your source. Failure to follow these guidelines is a serious infraction of University regulations, and you will receive zero points for the work in question. Other penalties are possible including a failing grade in the course, referral to the University Judicial System, or dismissal from the University. When students engage in academic dishonesty, they lose valuable opportunities for practice and deny faculty and peers opportunities to guide you to new insights and creativity. If you have ANY questions about whether your work duplicates something you or someone else has done elsewhere, please talk to me about it. This course uses the SafeAssign tool for some of the assignments. I, of course, only expect the best from everyone.

Open lines of communication: An attitude of openness, respect, a willingness to listen to others, and a community spirit are desirable. There are no stupid questions. Learning can be a vulnerable and risky enterprise. I expect that you will “listen” carefully to each other and help one another articulate emerging thoughts. We will work explicitly on these skills, as they are important in both this class and in our professional practice. Students will have a formal opportunity to evaluate the course and the instructor at the end of the semester. Please feel free to discuss issues and concerns with me as the semester progresses. I use a reflective teaching practice and will be periodically asking for your feedback as we experience the semester together. I am always concerned with what helps or hinders your learning and will try to make modifications where possible. Please pay careful attention to proper netiquette: disrespectful talk about or to anyone in our learning community will not be tolerated. I encourage a healthy exchange of ideas and feel free to disagree with ideas, philosophies, approaches, etc. but always treat each other with respect while doing so.

Learning Accommodations: Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with documented physical, sensory, systemic, cognitive, learning and psychiatric disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring accommodation in this class, please notify the Disability Resource Center (BA120, 442-5490). That office will provide the course instructor with verification of your disability, and will recommend appropriate accommodations. Please see their website for more information (http://www.albany.edu/disability/).

Grading System:
Assignments, listed below, will each receive a specific number of points. Total number of points accumulated by the end of the semester will determine your final grade.

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79</td>
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<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69</td>
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<td>E</td>
<td>&lt;60</td>
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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
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<td>83-86</td>
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<td>70-72</td>
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<td>D-</td>
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Class Assignments:
All course activities, readings, and assignments are directly linked to the course objectives and expected exit competencies. *Only briefly describe the assignments in the syllabus, so please read the detailed Assignment sheet for every assignment that is due for this course or you may risk losing credit for not submitting complete work.* The Assignment pages are located in the Assignment Folder in the course BLS.

Student Performance Evaluation

45 - Class Participation:
  Weekly participation in discussion and activities (45)
30 – Children’s Literature Kit (AKA Children’s Lit Kit)
  Blog Posts (20)
  Story Hour (5)
  Standards Aligned Literature Grouping with rationale (5)
10 – Engaging Kids in Libraries Presentation
5 – HOT TOPICS BLOG - Current Event/ Hot Topic report and discussion in Children’s Literature, Youth Services Librarianship, or School Librarianship
5 – Team Peer Assessment
5 – Team Activities (Caldecott, Patterns & Perceptions) – extra participation points on those weeks

Summary of Assignments:

Class Participation

Weekly participation in discussion and activities - See notes under Class Participation and Attendance. Fifty-five percent of your grade has to do with your participation in this course. (Roughly 3 points per week, plus extra points during presentation weeks, and peer assessment.) Since this is a highly interactive class, students will be expected to “come” prepared to work as a viable and important member of our learning community. This includes doing the assigned readings, posting to discussions in a timely manner, getting all books and materials needed to work on activities, contributing to team activities, fulfilling team and class expectations in a timely manner. Tip 1: Get started early and do not procrastinate.

A word about discussions: Each week students are assigned an instructor-initiated discussion question to address. The response to this question becomes a public document that will be read and responded to by classmates. Students should post an exquisite/ well-prepared answer to each week's instructor-initiated question in a timely fashion. In addition to responding to the instructor-initiated question, each week students should also read and respond to at least one of their classmates' responses. Thoughtful reflections on colleagues' work are a highly valued component of this course. See Discussion Rubric. Tip 2: View Assignment sheets and rubrics.
Children’s Lit Kit

Due 12/11, however students should be reading & writing throughout the semester

Your Children’s Lit Kit will consist of four main components: Posts about the books you have read and the selling tools you created; Book talk ideas for three of the books you read for class (see form); an original Story Hour with accompanying materials; and an ELA/Literacy CCSS Aligned Literature Grouping with rationale. This Lit Kit is meant to serve as a tool for you to draw from in real world practice. The best part is you get to share your Lit Kit with the entire class, and so the class leaves with a valuable shared resource. *In addition to the Lit Kit, students will be sharing resources all semester. Together, this will make a practical portfolio you can take from this class and use in professional practice.*

About the bibliography: Throughout the semester, you will be compiling a bibliography in the form of blog posts that will include brief annotations or selling tools, lexile measures and other info, and these will be organized in a specific way (i.e., see the template). You can use these write-ups as a resource from which to draw in your own readers’ advisory during your professional practice. *These will be handed in at the end of the semester, but you should be doing your posts throughout the semester in order to avoid a very stressful end-of-semester load. Please see the Assignment Sheet for specifics.*

Engaging Kids in Libraries: Turning Kids on to Reading

Due week of 11/27

Each student will have the opportunity to choose the kind of presentation that will best support his or her own learning: storytelling or booktalking. Each of these presentations comes with its own set of criteria that will reflect an equal amount of rigor in preparation. The storytellers will tell a story to the rest of the class. The booktalkers will give a formal booktalk for some of the novels (*NOT* picture books) you read, view or listen to for this class. Select the grade(s) of your choice for the audience. There are several options for this project (and I am open to proposals for variations on the assignment). More details and information are provided in the assignment handout. *There is a short, but required, written component.*

HOT TOPIC Current Event Report

Scheduled weekly

*Each student will initiate a* discussion of a journal article which highlights a current event or hot topic in children's literature, youth services librarianship, or school librarianship. See assignment sheet for details. You will find the sign-up sheet in Module One.

Team Peer Assessment

Due week of 11/20

You will have worked with a group of people all semester on a variety of activities. Peer assessments help keep us accountable and make sure everyone carries their own weight. In a class such as ours with a good deal of expected team interaction, everyone will have the opportunity to submit a confidential peer assessment form in which they will evaluate themselves and fellow team members and have the opportunity to offer constructive feedback. Please see rubric and confidential peer assessment in the Assignments section of Blackboard.
Team Activity
In Modules Two, Three, and Four, you will have the opportunity to engage in team activities (e.g., Caldecott Voting, Patterns & Perceptions in Children’s Lit) and present them to the class. You will also practice with your teammates some basic skills needed in order to engage children in libraries (e.g., story telling, booktalking, and read alouds). This is where you get extra points for engaging in these activities.

Following are some of the topics that will be covered in our class:

- Reader Response
- Search aids and resources
- Picture Books & evaluation
- Children’s Book Awards
- Engaging kids in libraries: storytelling, booktalking, book discussions
- Multicultural books
- Perceptions, patterns, or cultural impressions that are conveyed or implied in children’s literature
- Common Core State Standards
- Web resources for children
- Censorship and selection policies
- Turning kids onto books, using different media, books kids love to read, Quick Picks
- Graphic Novels
- Library programs
- School Library literacy topics

Genre studies:

- Folklore - Fairy Tales/ Folk Tales (also referred to as Traditional Literature)
- Multicultural Literature (often contained within other genres)
- Historical Fiction
- Contemporary Realism (also referred to as Realistic Fiction)
- Science Fiction
- Fantasy
- Biography (a subgenre of Nonfiction) and Memoir (which can be fiction or biography)
- Informational (a subgenre of Nonfiction)
- Poetry

Activities:

- Read Alouds
- Skills-building activities
- Mock Caldecott Awards
- Storytelling, Booktalking Presentations
- Perceptions project
- Discussions
- Traditional Literature – various versions of fairy tales/ folk tales
- Discussion of current events and hot topics in children’s literature and youth services librarianship.
Tip 3: Again, time management and planning ahead are critical to your being prepared to take part in the class. Please do yourself a huge favor and don't wait until the last minute. Modules will be open well enough ahead of time for you to glance ahead and plan out your schedule. As a courtesy, I've compiled a list of books you might need for activities.

PLAN AHEAD Checklist (Make a trip to the library - - or request books from your library’s online catalog asap). Start reading the novels we will discuss together. Here are some of the books you’ll need during the module. I hope this helps in your planning. See the detailed COURSE SCHEDULE: I recommend you print it out and keep it handy. The first novel we will be discussing is Flora and Ulysses.

**August 21-27**
- Order the required textbooks and start requesting books from your local library

**Throughout the Course**
- Select novels of your choice to complete your reading of various genres for the literature immersion component of this class. (See Lit Kit Self-Assessment Form.)

**For Module Two**
- Pick a picture book to read to your team for skills-building
- A Caldecott Award winning or honor picture book
- A picture book you wish to nominate for our Mock Caldecott Vote
- *Flora & Ulysses: The Illuminated Adventures* by Kate DiCamillo
- *Captain Underpants* by David Pilkey or *Bad Kitty* by Nick Bruell
- An award winning book of your choice (e.g., *Newbery, Coretta Scott King, Pure Bulpre, etc.*)
- *When You Reach Me by Rebecca Stead* (Science Fiction) or *Gregor the Overlander* by Suzanne Collins (Fantasy)

**For Module Three**
- A novel of any genre to book-talk to your team
- Once your team decides on a topic, select 3 books each for the perception/pattern theme your team is working on
- A novel and picture book example of multicultural books
- Pick a book about Christopher Columbus
- *Wonder* by R. J. Palacio

**For Module Four**
- Read *The mostly True Adventures of Homer P. Figg* by Rodman Philbrick
- Fairy tale readings
- Poetry book or novel in verse

**Recommended Professional/Academic Reading:**  (NOTE: Just for your reference. Not required.)

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Huck, Charlotte S., Janet Hickman, and Barbara Keifer. (2000). *Children's Literature in the Elementary School.* McGraw Hill. *(Good source of information on evaluative criteria for a variety of genre and contains extensive lists of titles for each genre. Could be useful. 7th Edition and higher are of good value and can be purchased inexpensively online - lots of good used books out there.)*


See the detailed Course Schedule in the Course Information section in BLS. I recommend you print it out and keep it handy (or keep it on your computer Desktop so that it is handy). Hopefully, it will help you stay on target!