GSWS 210-3: GENDER TODAY: GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND THE YOUNG ADULT NOVEL: EXAMINING INTERSECTIONAL REPRESENTATION AND APPROACHES TO LITERATURE FOR YOUTH

Professor: Dr. Rob Bittner  
Email: rob1@sfu.ca  
Office: TBA  
Office hours: TBA  
Lecture: Mondays 14:30 – 17:20; WMC 2200  

COURSE DESCRIPTION:  
Young adult (YA) literature is incredibly sensitive to sociocultural shifts and many children’s literature scholars work within a liminal and constantly shifting theoretical space in order to understand the young adult literary landscape. With the emergence of novels that feature more empowered female characters, more LGBT characters, and more nuanced male characters, how do we know what theoretical frame to use for critical analysis, especially since such frameworks are in a constant state of flux. Many engagements with literature rely on more formalistic components of the published work, however, where this course will differ from traditional literature classes, is in the treatment of gender and sexuality through intersectional critical lenses, with an emphasis on feminism, queer theory, and other related perspectives.

This course will encourage the development of strong critical thinking skills, engaging students in multiple ways of reading a number of books throughout the term. After an examination of YA literature as a literary form, the course will move toward an examination of numerous theoretical frames through which YA texts can be read, including queer theory, transgender studies, various feminist lenses, and masculinity studies. Students taking this course can expect to read a significant amount of literature and should be prepared to engage in close readings of each text from multiple perspectives throughout the term, culminating in a longer final paper.

By the end of the course, students should be able to:
- Engage in critical thinking on theories of gender and sexuality in relation to literature;
- Prepare and defend a well-argued research paper arguing on some aspect of representations of gender/sexuality in a particular YA novel;
- Examine gender/sexuality through multiple theoretical lenses reading the novels as textual representations of current cultural phenomena;
- Present researched findings to the class, utilizing the theoretical frameworks provided through critical readings of self- and teacher-selected articles.

EDUCATIONAL GOALS:  
For more detailed information please see the GSWS website: [http://www.sfu.ca/gsws/courses/Educational_Goals.html](http://www.sfu.ca/gsws/courses/Educational_Goals.html)

PREREQUISITE: none
COURSE EVALUATION AND ASSIGNMENTS:
In-Class Participation 15%
Three Critical Literary Responses 15%
In-Class Presentation 15%
Research Paper Proposal 10%
First Draft of Research Paper 20%
Second Draft of Research Paper 25%

COURSE TEXTS AND COURSEWARE:
- Representing the Rainbow in Young Adult Literature (Rowman and Littlefield, 2018), Michael Cart & Christine Jenkins
- Grasshopper Jungle (Dutton, 2014), Andrew Smith
- Glory O’Brien’s History of the Future (Little, Brown, 2014), A.S. King
- Two Boys Kissing (Knopf, 2013), David Levithan
- Felix Yz (Viking, 2017), Lisa Bunker
- Openly Straight (Scholastic, 2013), Bill Konigsburg
- When the Moon Was Ours (Macmillan, 2016), Anna-Marie McLemore
- I’ll Give You the Sun (Dial, 2014), Jandy Nelson
- Fat Angie (Candlewick, 2013), E. E. Charlton-Trujillo
- Like a Love Story (Balzer + Bray), Abdi Nazemian
- Symptoms of Being Human (Balzer + Bray), Jeff Garvin
- Articles pertaining to specific theoretical perspectives will be provided throughout the term, including selections from Susan Stryker, Annemarie Jagose, Judith Halberstam, Kathryn Bond Stockton, and other queer, trans, and feminist theorists.

Semester Breakdown:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction to concepts in literature studies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>What is YA literature? What are common assumptions about YA? Evolving YA literature: mapping changes in YA.</td>
<td>Representing the Rainbow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>How can incorporate queer theory into literature studies? How can we use trans studies in literature analysis? How can we use feminist theory for literature studies?</td>
<td>Representing the Rainbow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Intersections of race and sexuality</td>
<td>Openly Straight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Intersections of race, feminist, and fat studies</td>
<td>Fat Angie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Intersections of trans studies and feminism</td>
<td>When the Moon Was Ours; Felix Yz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Intersections of feminism and gender fluidity</td>
<td>Every Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Intersections of history and future</td>
<td>Two Boys Kissing; Like a Love Story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Magical realism and gender</td>
<td>I’ll Give You the Sun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Intersections of feminism, politics, and youth studies</td>
<td>Glory O’Brien</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Exploring bisexuality and masculinity</td>
<td>Grasshopper Jungle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>What’s the point of labels?</td>
<td>Symptoms of Being Human</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Where do we go from here?</td>
<td>Symptoms of a Being Human</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>