

Odyssey Project: Literature

Fall Semester 2010 / Thursdays @ 6 pm / Douglass Branch, Champaign Public Library

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course homepage: <http://metaspencer.com> ... click on "teaching"

Spencer's UIUC campus office: English Building 300

Odyssey Project wiki: <http://theodysseyprojectcu.wikispaces.com>

Course Description

What gets considered literature has expanded in recent years to include many forms of visual expression, much of it borrowed from comics. In this course, we will work together to interpret various forms of "graphic narratives." We will read three different kinds of graphic narratives, engaging in close literary interpretation of the texts.

Our ultimate goal is to write thoughtfully about what we read. Throughout the semester, our inquiry will be supported by writing, much of it done in class. Sharing written work and collaborating with others will be a key part of this class.

Books

Gene Yang's *American Born Chinese*

Sherman Alexie's *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*

Alan Moore's *Watchmen*

Written Work

Since we will be reading visual forms of literature, not all of our work will be in the form of writing. Visual projects and more traditional written work will blend together in this class. Students will be responsible for three main projects, each listed below on the course calendar.

Project 1: Essay Assignment

Compose a written argument that relates to Gene Yang's *American Born Chinese*. Use examples from the text to support your argument. Papers should be three pages, double spaced (or longer).

Project 2: Visual Essay Assignment

As Sherman Alexie's book demonstrates, some narratives can be enhanced and

complicated with visual images. Create a written and visual argument that relates to Sherman Alexie's *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*.

Project 3: Portfolio Assignment

The Watchmen is a comic book, a graphic novel, and a collection of documents. Create your own collection of documents (a portfolio) that make an argument relating to Alan Moore's novel. We will spend time in class exploring what you might include in your portfolio.

Course Policies and Expectations

Students are expected to attend each class period having done the readings. Much of the written work will be done in class, so it is essential that students attend. In class, active participation in discussions is strongly encouraged. We can learn from each other if we come to class prepared and actively engage in the class.

Course Calendar

T 8/24 Introduction

Th 8/26 Critical Thinking and Writing

Th 9/2 Literature 1

have read for today: to page 106 in *American Born Chinese*
background discussion on The Monkey King, Sun Wukong
text / image / panel approach to reading graphic narratives introduced
in-class writing: translating images into language exercise

Th 9/9 Literature 2

have read for today: finish *American Born Chinese*
text / image / panel approach discussed some more
in-class writing: developing essay topics and arguments
discussion of various writing processes

Th 9/16 Critical Thinking and Writing 2

Th 9/23 Literature 3

Project 1 Due: Essay Assignment

in-class discussion of essay assignment
in-class reading and discussion: Johanna Drucker
background discussion on Sherman Alexie

Th 9/30 Literature 4

have read for today: to p. 75 of *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*
in-class writing: memoir, autobiography, and writing critically about yourself
in-class discussion: visual typography videos
discussion: visual essays

Th 10/7 Literature 5

have read for today: to p. 150 of *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*
in-class writing: visual essay workshop

Th 10/14 Literature 6

have read for today: all of *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*
in-class writing: how to revise a visual essay?
in-class writing: adding to your visual essay
form 2 groups for next week's sessions

Th 10/21 Literature 7 — Class to Meet in Small Conference Room @ Douglas Branch

Project 2 Due: Visual Essay Assignment
Group I Meet in Smaller Conference Room from 6-7
Group II Meet in Smaller Conference Room from 7-8
background discussion on Alan Moore

Th 10/28 Literature 8

have read for today: chapters 1-7 of *Watchmen*
introduction to the final portfolio project: working with multiple genres
in-class writing: sample genres about *Watchmen*

Th 11/4 Literature 9

have read for today: all of *Watchmen*
in-class workshop: using multiple genres ... to say more and connect ideas

Th 11/11 Literature 10

CLASS DOES NOT MEET TODAY

Th 11/18 Literature 11

Project 3 Draft Due: Portfolio Assignment

T 11/23 Thanksgiving Break – No Class

Th 11/25 Thanksgiving Break – No Class

Th 12/2 Critical Thinking and Writing

T 12/7 Critical Thinking and Writing

final version of your Portfolio Assignment due today