

Odyssey Project: Literature

Fall Semester 2011 / Tuesdays @ 6 pm / Douglass Branch, Champaign Public Library

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

Spencer's UIUC campus office: English Building 310

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

Course Description

The definition of *literature* has expanded in recent years to include many different kinds of graphic narratives. Some of these borrow from comics; others are illustrated manuscripts. In this course, we will work together to read and understand several different graphic narratives. Your job as a student in the class will be to engage in *close reading* and develop thoughtful literary interpretations of the texts.

Throughout the semester, students will write 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*

a comic adaptation of a Shakespeare play, title to be announced

Written Work

Since we will be reading visual literature, not all of our work will be in the form of traditional 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, including evidence and analysis, that relates to Gene Yang's *American Born Chinese*. Use examples from the text to support your argument. Papers should be at least three pages long, double spaced, and demonstrate close reading. There will be a handout about this essay giving more specific guidelines.

Project 2: Visual Essay Assignment

As Sherman Alexie's book shows, some narratives can be enhanced and complicated with visual images. Create your own written and visual argument about Sherman Alexie's *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. Again: you will need evidence and analysis; you will need to demonstrate close reading. There will be a handout about this essay giving more specific guidelines.

Project 3: Final Essay

Toward the end of the semester, we will read a comic adaptation of a Shakespeare play. For this project, choose either the traditional essay form or the visual essay form. Make an argument that demonstrates close reading of the play that we read. There will be a handout about this essay giving more specific guidelines.

Course Policies and Expectations

Students are expected to attend each class period having done the readings. Please give your fully attention to class and do your own work. 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.

Literature Course Calendar

T 8/23 Introduction to Odyssey Project

Th 8/25 Critical Thinking and Writing

T 8/30 Literature 1

have read for today: to page 106 in *American Born Chinese*
in-class: background discussion on The Monkey King, Sun Wukong
handout: text / image / panel approach to reading graphic narratives introduced
handout: "just the text" from *American Born Chinese*
introduction to the first essay project
discussion of *close reading*

Th 9/1 Philosophy 1

T 9/6 Literature 2

have read for today: finish *American Born Chinese*

text / image / panel approach discussed more
discussion of *close reading* continued
handout: "just the images" from *American Born Chinese*
in-class writing: developing your own close readings of the text
discussion of argument-based writing relying on evidence and analysis
"what?/why?" exercise on reading literary texts
Shakespeare play announced (for later in the semester)

Th 9/8 Philosophy 2

T 9/13 Critical Thinking and Writing 2

Th 9/15 Philosophy 3

T 9/20 Literature 3

Project 1 Due: Essay Assignment

in-class discussion of essays
in-class discussion of use of evidence and analysis
in-class discussion of Nikki Lee
close reading exercise
background discussion on Sherman Alexie

Th 9/22 Philosophy 4

T 9/27 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: use of diagrams in the book
discussion: what is a visual essay?
introduction to the visual essay project

Th 9/19 Philosophy 5

T 10/4 Literature 5

have read for today: to p. 150 of *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*
in-class discussion: finding evidence and engaging in analysis
close reading revisited
("what?/why?" exercise revisited)
in-class writing: visual essay workshop on collage writing using images

Th 10/6 Philosophy 6

T 10/11 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

Th 10/13 Critical Thinking and Writing 3

T 10/18 Literature 7

Project 2 Due: Visual Essay Assignment

background discussion on Shakespeare and comic adaptations
sonnet close reading exercise
examples of sonnet adaptations and remix

Th 10/10 Philosophy 7

T 10/25 Literature 8

have read for today: first half of Shakespeare play
introduction to the final portfolio project
in-class writing exercise

Th 10/27 Philosophy 8

T 11/1 Literature 9

have read for today: all of the Shakespeare play
in-class writing exercise: finding evidence to analyze

Th 11/3 Critical Thinking and Writing 4

T 11/8 Literature 10

discussion continued

Th 11/10 Philosophy 9

T 11/15 Literature 11

Project 3 Draft of Final Essay Assignment Due

Th 11/17 Philosophy 10

T 11/22 Thanksgiving Break – No Class

Th 11/24 Thanksgiving Break – No Class

T 11/29 Critical Thinking and Writing 5

Th 12/1 Critical Thinking and Writing 6

T 12/6 Critical Thinking and Writing 7

final Essay Assignment due today