

◀ SENIOR SEMINAR || Coming of Age in the 20<sup>th</sup>-Century American Novel ▶  
English 4397.001 | 5369.001 FALL 2024

FACULTY: Dr. Anett Jessop  
SCHEDULE: M 6:00 – 8:45pm  
CLASSROOM: CAS 258  
OFFICE: CAS 248  
OFFICE HRS: M 8:45-9:45pm; T 3:30-4:30pm; W 3:00-4:00pm & by appointment  
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### Course Description & Goals

Welcome! Our focus this semester is upon genre and theories of the **novel**, specifically the *bildungsroman*, or “coming of age” novel—a narrative of a protagonist’s personal and educational development. The *bildungsroman* dates to the 18<sup>th</sup>-century German writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s novel *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (1796), and the genre quickly became popular in Europe with such canonical examples as: in France, Stendhal’s *The Red and the Black* (1830) and Gustave Flaubert’s *Sentimental Education* (1869); in England, Jane Austen’s *Emma* (1815), Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847), and Charles Dickens’ *David Copperfield* (1850); and in the U. S., Mark Twain’s *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), Zora Neale Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1936), and Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960). A related subgenre, the *künstlerroman*, is a *bildungsroman* chronicling the development of a young artist, as in James Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916). I have chosen novels published during the 20<sup>th</sup> century that showcase a range of cultural, economic, racial, ethnic, gender, family system, and religious diversity representative of the United States. As we read, we will identify patterns that are characteristic of coming-of-age narratives as well as the distinctive outcomes associated with the above intersecting categories.



Adolescence and young adulthood are often depicted as a journey with ‘rites of passage,’ a narrative arc of innocence to experience, security to separation, developing moral and ethical consciousness, and questioning of the nature of authenticity and identity. Here are some questions we will consider:

- ◆ How do coming-of-age stories illustrate and illuminate questions of identity, affiliation, sexuality, maturation, and assimilation?
- ◆ What does it mean to “grow up,” mature, i.e., “adulthood” (v)?
- ◆ How do we come to know ourselves as an individual? How do we choose our associations? What is the cost of rebellion? And conformity?
- ◆ Are patterns and rituals of maturation different for girls and boys? If so, in what ways?
- ◆ In what ways is adolescence a period of (systematic) socialization?
- ◆ How do we identify and strive toward our potential? What happens if that potential runs counter to our family and community culture?
- ◆ How does race, biological gender, and a lack of role models (particularly for women, minorities, and the poor) impact struggle and success?
- ◆ How might coming of age be different in different families, local cultures, and regions of the country?

Other considerations might include how education, physicality, ability and disability, economics, and dependency shape and mold identity.

Additionally, we will consider the *bildungsroman* through scholarship and theories of the novel, genre, human development, cultural anthropology, gender and race.

In the end, the coming-of-age narrative is one with which each of us has intimate knowledge, as it pertains to our own youth and development. Hopefully, the class will provide an opportunity for students to reflect on their experiences with “coming of age”—intellectually, socially, spiritually, and creatively.

## Learning Objectives

### *Content-Based*

- ◆ Students will learn to identify patterns indicative of the novelistic genres of the bildungsroman and künstlerroman;
- ◆ Students will reflect on their own development experiences in order to widen and deepen their apperception and appreciation of the processes, opportunities, pressures, and even obstacles to the development of the individual’s potential;
- ◆ Students will demonstrate the capacity to forge crucial connections between and among creative and critical texts;
- ◆ Students will deepen their thinking about the relationships between and among history, culture, and the arts as well as the relationships between identities and historically shifting ideas about difference (gender, sexual identity, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic class, national/international);
- ◆ Students will continue to think critically about the world (local, national, global).

### *Skills-Based*

- ◆ Students will engage—in both written and oral expressions—in close readings of complex literary and theoretical texts and, as a result, will hone skills in nuanced analysis, research, cogent writing, and thoughtful discussion and debate;
- ◆ Students will practice both personal and learning community responsibility as borne out in meeting deadlines, respectfully engaging with peers and faculty, and working to highest academic standards.

These outcomes will be demonstrated through class discussions, discussion leadership, writing assignments, analytical essays and creative writing, all aimed to elicit objective analysis and substantive oral and written responses.

## Required Reading

- Butler, Octavia. *Parable of the Sower*. [1993] Grand Central Publishing, 2023. ISBN-13: 978-1538759394
- Houston, Jeanne Wakatsuki. *Farewell to Manzanar*. [1973] Clarion Books, 2023. ISBN-13: 978-1328742117.
- Knowles, John. *A Separate Peace*. [1959] Scribner, 2003. ISBN-13: 978-0743253970.
- Potok, Chaim. *My Name Is Asher Lev*. [1972] Anchor, 2003. ISBN-13: 978-1400031047
- Smith, Betty. *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*. [1943] Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2006. ISBN-13: 978-0061120077
- Critical readings are available in Canvas. See complete bibliography at bottom of Course Schedule.

## Digital Archives

**The Bildungsroman Project**, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill:  
<http://bildungsromanproject.com>

Brief introduction: <https://liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/wlf/what-bildungsroman-definition-examples>

**Kanopy.com**: This streaming service has over 30,000 award-winning films and documentaries. Public library patrons, university students and faculty are able to watch free-of-charge with their institution’s library card. While the UTT Robert R. Muntz Library does not have a subscription, I was able to create an

account with my Tyler Public Library card. Excellent international, indie, and Great Courses archive! There are a number of educational programming related to our topic.

## **Policies & Requirements**

**PREPARATION, ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION** || My teaching methods emphasize individual preparation, group discussion, and collaborative learning. Class members will be expected to share insights and to encourage others to do so. This course is reading-, discussion-, and writing-intensive and students will engage in various writing assignments—both graded and ungraded—as a means to making discoveries and articulating insights about the literary and theoretical texts we read. Participation is crucial to your success in this class, which operates on the basis of a thoughtful interaction between teacher and student and among students.

Everyone is expected to attend all classes, arrive on time, turn off cellphones and laptops (unless you are working from a digital text) and store them in backpacks. ***Attention to the cellphone instead of class and peers will be counted as an absence.*** You will often work in small groups and are always expected to participate in discussions of the assignments. Please bring books under discussion to class as we will be reading from the texts during class time. Quizzes may be given at any time and may not be made up.



I will allow for **two** absences (equal to two weeks' attendance and participation: 1/7<sup>th</sup> of the course), excused or unexcused, during the semester, after which your participation grade will be compromised. **I will keep track of late arrivals and these will also affect your grade.** (A late arrival is defined as more than fifteen minutes after the beginning of the class time slot.) If you are late, assume you have been marked absent until you talk to me. If you are ill or have an emergency, please email me in order to turn in homework and to pick up the next assignment. Questions concerning grades, assignments, and paper drafts, however, should be addressed during my office hours rather than by email. I will be available by appointment in case of a time conflict.

**COMMUNICATION POLICY** || Emails will be answered within 24 hours during the school week and occur between 9am and 8pm. Feedback on written assignments will be within 2 weeks of submission unless otherwise informed.

**DISCUSSION FORUM POLICY** || Prompts, questions, and responses on the discussion board are to enable students to brainstorm about the readings and assignments. The postings on the discussion board must be focused on the assigned topic. All technical problems associated with Canvas, the Internet, or library databases, including passwords and user IDs, should be directed to the respective departments. The course instructor cannot answer technical questions.

**COMMUNICATION & COLLEAGIALITY** || We are all responsible for creating a seminar that is both intellectually rigorous and respectful. We commit to doing so in a way that values diverse perspectives and experiences and encourages productive reflection and interaction. Above all, be respectful (even when you strongly disagree) and be conscious of the ways that our identities position us in the classroom.

All postings on the discussion board must meet academic and professional standards. Abuses in the forms of bullying and/or discriminatory comments on gender, sex, race, or ethnicity are not allowed and will be reported if the instructor's intervention does not see immediate changes in behavior.

**CONVENTIONS OF ADDRESS** || Speaking to a professor, administrator, staff member, employer, manager, or colleague is different (at least initially) from speaking/texting with a friend, family member, or other familiar relation. In a professional, intellectual context like the University, it is conventional to refer to faculty, administrators, staff, and others by their titles (Doctor, Professor, Instructor, Coach, Ms./Mr.) unless explicitly instructed otherwise. You should also get into the habit of including greetings, salutations, and language appropriate to such contexts (not, for example, “Hey,”). I will respectfully refer to you according to your stated preferences and expect that you’ll reciprocate in kind.

**HOMEWORK & PAPER FORMAT** || Complete all assigned readings and assignments by the due date so that you can participate in online and classroom discussion and writing activities. All written assignments should be typed, double-spaced, use normal margins and readable font. Paper headings should include your name, date, course title, and professor’s name. Each page should include page number and your last name. Use MLA documentation to cite sources and include a Works Cited page.

**DUE DATE POLICY** || Assignments must be submitted through Canvas on or before the due date (unless otherwise requested). Work turned in late without a compelling reason will be lowered one-third of a grade per day.

**AI POLICY** || UT Tyler is committed to exploring and using artificial intelligence (AI) tools as appropriate for the discipline and task undertaken. We encourage discussing AI tools’ ethical, societal, philosophical, and disciplinary implications. All uses of AI should be acknowledged as this aligns with our commitment to honor and integrity, as noted in UT Tyler’s Honor Code. Faculty and students must not use protected information, data, or copyrighted materials when using any AI tool. Additionally, users should be aware that AI tools rely on predictive models to generate content that may appear correct but is sometimes shown to be incomplete, inaccurate, taken without attribution from other sources, and/or biased. Consequently, an AI tool should not be considered a substitute for traditional approaches to research. You are ultimately responsible for the quality and content of the information you submit. Misusing AI tools that violate the guidelines specified for this course (see below) is considered a breach of academic integrity. The student will be subject to disciplinary actions as outlined in UT Tyler’s Academic Integrity Policy.

For this course, **AI is not permitted in this course at all.** I expect all work students submit for this course to be their own. I have carefully designed all assignments and class activities to support your learning. Doing your own work, without human or artificial intelligence assistance, is best for your efforts in mastering course learning objectives. For this course, I expressly forbid using ChatGPT or any other artificial intelligence (AI) tools for any stages of the work process, including brainstorming. Deviations from these guidelines will be considered a violation of UT Tyler’s Honor Code and academic honesty values.

## **Assignments & Projects**

### **Readings & Discussions (In-Class & Online)**

**⌘ ASSIGNED READINGS** || Complete all literary and critical assigned readings by the due date so that you can participate in classroom discussion and learning activities. It will be beneficial for you if you keep an annotated bibliography of the critical readings: that is, a short description of each article’s main topics and arguments. This will save you time when crafting your prospectuses and final paper.

**⌘ WEEKLY PASSAGES** || For each week’s class meeting, bring a hard-copy printout of two passages from the week’s readings—one from the novel and one from the assigned scholarly article—that speak to each other in an interesting way/s. Below the quotations, list some topics and issues for discussion based

on your choices. These will be collected each week and returned the next class period. **Graded 'complete/incomplete'**

⌘ **DISCUSSION LEADERSHIP POSTING ON CANVAS** || Across the semester, each student will be responsible for posting a summary of the discussions from class the night before. The discussion leader will succinctly summarize the topics, questions, and insights offered during class discussion followed by 3 prompts for discussion that engage the novel and the supporting scholarship. I've made initial assignments; please let me know if you have a conflict with that date. You are welcome to consult with me as you draft your posting. Discussion leadership postings will be **letter-graded** according to the concision and insights of the summary, the depth and thoughtfulness of the discussion prompts and questions, and the grammatical correctness and polish of the prose.

**Format: 400+ words. POST by Tuesday (midnight).**

⌘ **WEEKLY CLASS DISCUSSION RESPONSES** || Each class member is responsible for a cogent response to the week's discussion leader's posting. Once you've posted for the week, feel free to respond more briefly to colleagues' comments. **Graded 'complete/incomplete'**

**Format: 200+ words. POST by Saturday (midnight).**

**\*\*NOTE\*\*** The English major Senior Portfolio requires examples of the student's ability to give evidence of "extended written critical debate with classmates in interactive forums on larger thematic topics when prompted." Keep copies of posts that you are particularly proud of as you prepare material for your graduation portfolio!

### **Analytic & Creative Writing**

⌘ **TIMED REFLECTION WRITING** || At the start of most class periods I will set out a question or prompt related to the week's required readings (open book) for your consideration and response; the class will have about **15** minutes to respond. I am looking for evidence of your active preparation for class and formulation of new insights, connections across texts, and research questions as we move forward in our studies. Written responses will be **graded on a rising 1-4 point scale**. If you arrive late to class you will not be given additional time. Responses cannot be made up. Hopefully the writing and brainstorming you generate will offer ideas that might be of use in prospectuses and the final paper.

⌘ **'PROSPECTUS' ~ RESEARCH PAPER ABSTRACT** || There will be TWO "prospectus" assignments for which students will map out an abstract for a research paper, to include a working thesis argument paragraph followed by a set of supporting passages (both creative and critical-scholarly sources) and a rationale statement for how these would be used to support the thesis. You are free to choose your own topic of analysis as you explore more deeply your insights about works under review during the period of the semester leading up to the due date. Include the questions you are using to help guide your research; the specific novel/s you propose to examine; and difficulties, questions, or problems you anticipate. You will get feedback, so ask any other questions as well. Concision and logic of the argument are key!

**Format: Word count should be a minimum of 500+ words and no more than 1200, including the bibliography.** Title your prospectus and submit as a Word document (not PDF). More information about the formatting and letter grading is posted in Canvas and will be discussed in class.

⌘ **FINAL RESEARCH PAPER** || For the end-of-term project, expand upon and/or revise one of the prospectus assignments already submitted OR design a new paper topic that explores a set of propositions that constellate creative and critical texts into significant conversations. *If a final paper is not submitted, the student will fail the course.*

**In a minimum of 2750 words (undergraduate) and 3000 words (graduate) including Works Cited,**



engage the creative and critical works we've discussed and deploy arguments highlighted throughout the semester in order to offer a literary-critical examination and focused reading. The paper should include a minimum of three outside scholarly sources. Feel free to draw from the criticism we've read over the semester. Your essay must be typed and formatted according to the "Homework & Paper Format" description above. Use MLA documentation to cite sources. Submit the final paper through Canvas in a Word document.

**GRADS** || You will be preparing an article for submission to *The Explicator* journal (it is up to you whether you actually do a final submission at semester's end). We will talk more about this in class. **Be inspired by a UT Tyler alum!** Kneitly, Jonahs (2021). "Rappaccini's Queer Daughter: Gender Non-Conformity in "Rappaccini's Daughter." *The Explicator*, 79(3), 97–100. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00144940.2021.1920358>

**Success Tip!** *As you are conceptualizing your prospectuses and final papers, I recommend that students meet with me during office hours or through email exchanges, as well as consult your humanities librarian, Vandy Dubre. Visit the Writing Center for support in drafting and revising the paper.*

⌘ **E-SYMPOSIUM** || Seminar paper abstracts will be posted during the final week of the semester in a mini-conference format. Feel free to use this forum for brainstorming and requesting suggestions and feedback from your colleagues to help you during your final paper drafting process. **Graded 'complete/incomplete'**

⌘ **CREATIVE VARIATION & EXPLICATION** || *This assignment has two parts:*

**PART I:** To test your engagement with this genre, you will create an original work (flash fiction, short-short fiction, poetry) describing a revelatory/critical moment of separation, self-awareness, and/or identity that reflects upon one of the threads of individuation we discover in the novels—*it is better to concentrate on a small but significant insight or event*. You might choose to put your narrative in 3<sup>rd</sup> person POV (point of view) to give it some distance from yourself—the better to reflect upon it. There is no word count minimum. ***This effort will not be letter-graded.***

**PART II:** In an attached explication (800+ words) explain the premises for your creative work and discuss the ways in which you engage the literary-critical categories and/or patterns of the coming-of-age novel. ***This explication will be letter-graded.***

⌘ **ALTERNATIVE SYLLABUS (GRADS)** || This assignment offers graduate students the opportunity to design a syllabus for a different configuration (thematic, topical, generic) of creative and theoretical readings and emphases for a bildungsroman/coming of age course to be offered at a high school, community college, or university. *More information on formatting and grading will be handed out in class.*

## **I Grades & Final Evaluation**

Final course grades will be based on the weighted average grades based on the following percentages. The final grade will include my assessment of your overall contribution and progress in the class. Feel free to communicate with me at any time about your grades.

### **UNDERGRADUATES:**

Attendance & In-Class Participation	10%
Canvas Postings	15%
Discussion Leadership	5%

Reflection Responses	5%
Weekly Passages	15%
Prospecti (2)	20%
Creative Variation	10%
Final Paper and E-Symposium	20%

**GRADUATES:**

Attendance & In-Class Participation	10%
Canvas Postings	5%
Discussion Leadership	5%
Reflection Responses	5%
Weekly Passages	10%
Prospecti (2)	20%
Creative Variation	10%
Alternative Syllabus	10%
Final Paper and E-Symposium	25%

**| Paper Grading Standards**

**Excellent (A)** papers have clear theses and soundly organized arguments that reflect detailed, nuanced understanding of the text. They are precisely and concisely written and have few if any mechanical problems—even minor ones. They weave quotations into their arguments smoothly and forcefully. A vital, graceful voice animates such essays; they say something compelling in a compelling way.

**Good (B)** papers have clear theses and are thoughtfully and reasonably organized. They may be marred by a few infelicities (inappropriateness) of style, but they will have no major mechanical problems—and not many minor ones either. These are solid, disciplined papers that make a definite point in a logical, coherent manner to a definite audience.

**Satisfactory (C)** papers have a thesis supported by evidence. The writing is clean and properly proofed, but not always compelling; it may be marred by some minor mechanical problems and one or two major ones (like fragments or run-ons). While their arguments may not be particularly cogent, these papers do say something interesting, and they say it in a comprehensible and responsible way.

**Poor (D)** papers, while giving evidence of effort on the part of the writer, lack a thesis, have major mechanical problems, poor organization, betray serious misreadings of the text, and show little sense of subject or audience.

**Failing (F)** papers have weaknesses even graver than those indicated for poor papers. They usually betray a lack of effort on the part of the writer. Any evidence of plagiarism (intentional or otherwise) will result in a failing grade—and referral to the Academic Conduct Committee.

**Image credits**

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