

Instructor: Paul Acampora
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Writing Fiction for Children and Young Adults – ENGL 393Z
Class time/place: Mondays, 6:30 – 9:30 -- PPHAC 232

<i>Because of Winn-Dixie</i> by Kate DiCamillo <i>Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key</i> by Jack Gantos <i>Love, Ruby Lavendar</i> by Deb Wiles <i>The Life & Opinions of Amy Finawitz</i> by Laura Toffler-Corrie <i>Lizzie Bright and the Buckminster Boy</i> by Gary Schmidt	<i>The Disreputable History of Frankie Landau-Banks</i> by E. Lockhart <i>Speak</i> by Laurie Halse Anderson <i>Defining Dulcie</i> by Paul Acampora <i>Marcelo in the Real World</i> by Francisco X. Stork <i>Going Bovine</i> by Libba Bray
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Textbook: *Second Sight: An Editor's Talks on Writing, Revising, and Publishing Books for Children and Young Adults* by Cheryl Klein

Course Description

This course assumes you have a special interest in writing fiction for juvenile and teen audiences. The coming semester will be a busy one, full of writing, reading and talking about literature for young readers. Our main focus will be on middle grade and YA novels and short fiction. We will not be working on picture books, non-fiction or poetry. We will use the texts listed above as well as others to consider how and why these pieces work as successful fiction for young people with special emphasis on the “nuts and bolts” of good fiction: technique, form, structure, style, character, plot, theme, and setting.

Responsibilities

- **Class attendance** is necessary if you hope to pass this course. More than one unexcused absence will lower your grade. Failure to attend is grounds for failing the course.
- **Participation**– discussing and critiquing each other's work is an important part of the course. In addition, participation in class discussion is vital to the success of the class and to your grade. What you think matters.
- **Assignments** are due on time. You will write several stories and/or chapters during the semester. In addition, there will be several writing exercises assigned both in and out of class. Unexcused late papers automatically receive a lower grade. Note: Homework must be typed, double-spaced, 12 point font with 1 inch margins.
- **Keep a Writer's Notebook.** The notebook will contain weekly in-class writing exercises, analysis/reaction entries for each of the novels we read, and your thoughts, inspirations and observations as you work on your own stories.
- **Stay organized & be prepared:** Always bring your journal to class and be ready to write. Keep a class folder to hold manuscripts, handouts and exercises.
- **Original work** is the point. Plagiarism – presenting others' work as your own – is very serious and will be grounds for failure, suspension or even expulsion.

GRADING

You will receive a grade from 1-5 on each of your major pieces of writing: 5 = excellent; 4 = good; 3 = average; 2 = below average; 1 = poor work. If you're not happy with the grade, you may have fourteen days to revise the piece. If you choose to rewrite any pieces, I'll drop the original grade and count the rewrite grade. If you fail to turn in your revision within the time limit, the original grade will stand. You must turn in your original piece along with your revision so that I can compare the two (otherwise I'll have no way to judge what you've changed).

Your stories will count for roughly 70% of your final grade. Attendance, participation, discussions led, and especially written comments on your classmates' work will count for roughly 20%. Exercises and other work will count for roughly 10%. I will collect folders and journals to read and review at least once during the semester. In addition, I will schedule at least one one-on-one meeting with you during the semester. There will be no final exam.

Additional Notes

- It is within the instructor's purview to apply qualitative judgment in determining grades for an assignment and/or a course.
- Students who wish to disclose a disability and request accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) first MUST meet with either Mrs. Laurie Roth in the Office of Learning Services (for learning disabilities and/or ADD/ADHD) or Dr. Ronald Kline in the Counseling Center (for all other disabilities.)
- The syllabus is subject to change.