LITERACY NARRATIVES IN FANTASY & REALITY: A CURRICULAR GUIDE

A pedagogy thesis presented

by

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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ABSTRACT

In this pedagogy thesis, I’ve developed a writing course called Literacy Narratives in Fantasy & Reality. In incorporating the unusual elements of theatre, young adult, and fantasy into this course, I aim to shape my classroom with tools of imagination, exploration, and inclusivity. I want to implement nontraditional teaching techniques that engage, support, and challenge students. I also want to work against the ideology of “canonical” literature, which further privileges already-privileged voices, and amplify student voices instead. To achieve these goals, I use a pedagogy of performative multiliteracies and a curriculum of female-authored young adult fantasy literature to support students’ explorations of their own literacy narratives.

This thesis includes a critical introduction, which outlines the theoretical rationale for the course and explains major course decisions; course materials, including a syllabus, assignment sheets, and one unit of lesson plans; and professional documents, including my résumé and a statement of my teaching philosophy.
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She began carving with the tip of her knife on the highest branches of the tallest trees in the most unreachable regions of the forest: This is a book. Or, on the stones of her buried campfires: This is a book. And, traced invisibly on her inner arm, on the round of her knee: This is a book.


—Traci Chee, The Reader
INTRODUCTION

1. Course Overview

Literacy Narratives in Fantasy & Reality is a hybrid beast: a cross between a writing course, a literature course, and a theatre course. Throughout the semester, students will read and write literacy narratives, using the genre to both explore their personal experiences with reading and writing and examine societal ideas about reading and writing. Specifically, they will use the literacy narratives of characters in young adult fantasy books as inspiration to write their own literacy narratives. They will engage with each other’s writing through the medium of performance; performance brings forward the ways in which people perform their identities and cultures, which shape their personal and societal literacy experiences. To guide students in examining different themes, I’ve structure the course around four units: Literacies & Nonliteracies, Stories & Truths, Adaptation & Transformation, and Culture & Power. The course culminates in an open mic night, where students will have the opportunity to share their ideas about these themes and perform their literacy narratives for an audience outside the classroom.

In incorporating the unusual elements of theatre, young adult, and fantasy, I aim to shape my classroom with tools of imagination, exploration, and inclusivity. I want to implement nontraditional teaching techniques that engage, support, and challenge students. I also want to work against the ideology of “canonical” literature, which further privileges already-privileged voices, and amplify student voices instead. To achieve these goals, I use a pedagogy of performative multiliteracies and a curriculum of female-authored young adult fantasy literature to support students’ explorations of their own literacy practices.

This pedagogy and curriculum support the mission of Northeastern University’s Department of English. The department aims to “preserve and produce knowledge about and to
engage students with English-language texts (in written and other forms) and the cultures that produce them,” “to involve students in the study and practice of writing and rhetoric in English,” and to provide undergraduates with “a flexible, intellectually challenging liberal arts experience that will serve as a basis for advanced study, for continuing self-development, and for meaningful employment” (Department). To support this mission, this course engages students with important contemporary young adult fantasy texts, involves students in the study and practice of writing in various genres, and provides a challenging curriculum that encourages students to think outside the box, perform original research, and self-reflect and self-assess.

Although this course is situated in the Department of English, it is open to students in any undergraduate program. Students do not need prior experience with literacy studies, young adult fantasy, creative writing, or performance to enroll; no matter what major or program they come from, I will welcome their perspectives on our course themes. The ideal students for Literacy Narratives in Fantasy & Reality are willing to take risks and exhibit respect and compassion while engaging with this course’s unusual elements, sharing their personal experiences, and working with others.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. A Pedagogy of Performative Multiliteracies

My pedagogy draws on elements of pedagogies of multiliteracies and performance. In their influential piece “A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures,” the New London Group uses the term multiliteracies to address “the multiplicity of communications channels and media” (63). They claim that a pedagogy of multiliteracies “focuses on modes of representation much broader than language alone,” going beyond the textual to look at the
multimodal: the visual, the audio, the spatial, the behavioral (64). I’m adding the mode of the
digital as well, and my conception of multiliteracies in the context of this course encompasses
traditional literacy, orality, and electracy.

To explain how we find meaning in these various modalities, the New London Group
introduces the concept of design, which positions people as “both inheritors of patterns and
conventions of meaning and at the same time active designers of meaning” (65). Kevin Leander
and Gail Boldt critique design in their article “Rereading ‘A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies’:
Bodies, Texts, and Emergence.” They find that the New London Group’s text-centricity can be
limiting, and that their future-orientation can give some literacy practices a false sense of
deliberateness (37). Rather, they use a body-centric, present-oriented approach to multiliteracies,
and they introduce the concept of potential, which they define as “energy, excitement, an
assemblage of emerging possibility that is founded in movement, affect, and desire” (37).
Leander and Boldt make space for spontaneity, improvisation, and experimentation in a way that
the original pedagogy of multiliteracies does not.

In his manifesto “A Call to Performance,” Norman K. Denzin describes a performance
pedagogy that also uses a body-centric, present-oriented approach. Leander and Boldt
conceptualize the body as “always in relation to an ever-changing environment,” and as “both
material and incorporeal” (29). The material body reacts to its environment in space and time,
and the incorporeal body gives those reactions forms, such as emotions, sensations, and energies
(29). When Denzin argues for the consideration of performance as the preferred form of
presentation of critical work, he writes that “a performance authorizes itself, not through the
citation of scholarly texts, but through its ability to evoke and invoke shared emotional
experience and understanding between performer and audience” (192). Both in and outside of the
classroom, performance engages the physical body and the incorporeal body in a way that mere writing or discussion cannot. Specifically, inside the classroom, performance pedagogy “uses performance as a mode of inquiry, as a method of doing evaluation ethnography, as a path to understanding, as a tool for engaging collaborative meanings of experience, as a means to mobilize people to take action in the world” (198). In including performance as a major component of my course, I aim to use it in these ways as a mode of inquiry to help students to help students understand personal and societal literacy practices, create meaning together, and take ownership of their narratives.

Denzin addresses the complexity of culture that can be explored through performance, writing that while “the ethnographer reads culture as if it were an open book,” the performance autoethnographer “struggles…to perform culture by putting ‘mobility, action, and agency back into play’” (Conquergood, cited in Denzin 195). In performing pieces about their literacy practices, students can think about the ways in which literacy practices come from and contribute to culture, the ways in which we are written by what we write, and the ways in which we are acted upon by our actions. These ideas are not always easy to see or explore; as Denzin explains, “the emphasis is on change, contingency, locality, motion, improvisation, struggle, situationally specific practices and articulations, the performance of con/texts” (195). As students examine ideas about literacy on personal and societal levels, performance will allow the messiness and complexity of real life to exist without being smoothed over. Performance is a tool of potential—of energy, excitement, movement, spontaneity, and improvisation.
2.2. A Curriculum of Young Adult Fantasy

We’ll begin our process of examining literacy practices by reading young adult (YA) fantasy literature. YA engages young adults on their own terms by exploring issues that are at stake for them, including identity, selfhood, power (Baer and Glasgow, Costello and Reigstad, Glaus, Glenn). I have chosen YA fantasy in particular because the fantasy in these texts serves to heighten the realities of these issues—an idea that J.R.R. Tolkien expresses in his famous essay “On Fairy-Stories.” According to British literature scholar Claire A. Davanzo, “for Tolkien, fairy-stories access the essential elements of the human experience, then heighten and highlight these elements through fantasy…fantasy has much to show us of our minds and our world, and of their respective wonders and terrors” (139). In this sense, fantasy is not a form of escapism, but rather a form of analysis. Davanzo uses this idea to study *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* using a Marxist lens, examining the ways in which institutionalized oppression in the novel speaks to institutionalized oppression in the real world. I plan to use a similar approach with my students to analyze the ways in which the literacy narratives in our YA fantasy books are connected to the issues of identity, selfhood, and power that exist in our real lives.

Attached to these issues is the issue of representation. Academic attention to the genre of fantasy often focuses on straight white men, both as authors (such as Tolkien) and characters. However, there are so many fantasy books that represent other kinds of people, and in an attempt to hear marginalized voices and see marginalized characters, I’ve chosen books with female authors and diverse protagonists: *The Reader* by Traci Chee, *Princess Academy* by Shannon Hale, *Bitterblue* by Kristin Cashore, *Ash* by Malinda Lo, and *Six of Crows* by Leigh Bardugo. I hope that these books create an atmosphere of inclusivity, and emphasize that there are many different kinds of identities, cultures, and literacy experiences.
3. Course Structure

3.1. Assignment Sequence

Based on this theoretical background, Literacy Narratives in Fantasy & Reality has six specific goals for students. The course aims to help them critically and creatively examine their literacy practices using fantasy concepts; connect themes of literacy, identity, selfhood, and power across different works; create written/spoken work in a variety of genres; revise their writing/performances using feedback from others; provide peers with constructive, specific feedback; and reflect on their writing/performance processes and assess their work. To guide students in achieving these learning goals, the assignment sequence mainly focuses on developing original performance pieces, but expands over the semester to help students look at materials outside the course and explain the course to outside audiences. Through these assignments, students will create a small portfolio of written and spoken work based around themes of literacy, identity, selfhood, and power, and will revise and reflect on that work.

As I write on the syllabus, this course focuses more on the process than the product. I don’t want to grade students based on their natural talent for writing or performing; it’s not fair to them, and it’s not what the course is about. Rather, I want to understand students’ thought processes and see how they make connections between texts and themes. Because we spend so much time working on the process, I hope that the products we present at the open mic night at the end of the semester will be compelling. However, the point of the open mic is to give students a sense of performing for an audience outside the classroom so they can continue to revise and adjust their pieces. Ideally, a student’s performance at the open mic is not a final performance, but rather one in a series.
The main assignments for the course are the performance pieces. In each of our four units, students will write a few short pieces based on prompts, and, after workshopping them in class, will select one of those pieces to develop further. The final version of this piece includes a copy of the first draft, a performance score, and a short reflection; these three pieces show me the development of the draft, demonstrate what the student imagines the performance to be like, and explain why they made certain changes between drafts. The process of writing and revising the pieces should help students work toward all six learning goals. (For a sample performance score, see Appendix A; I adapted this component from the physical score assignment in Jonathan Carr’s Viewpoints course.)

During Unit 3, students will read book that’s not on our syllabus and review it from the perspective of our course. As with the performance pieces, students will bring drafts to class and participate in peer review exercises with them. This assignment, adapted from Ellen Cushman’s book review assignment in her Literacy Studies course, builds on the work of the performance pieces by asking students to examine our course themes of literacy, identity, selfhood, and power in a context outside of our classroom. It works toward the learning goal of connecting themes across varied materials. (For a sample book review, see Appendix B.)

Building on the performance pieces in a different way, the final assignment is the open mic project. This project includes, as before, a draft a performance score, but also includes a longer, broader reflection and an event-planning material, such as a promotional poster or a Facebook event cover photo. This assignment will help students look at their experiences in the course as a whole and explain the work of the course to our open mic audience. It works towards all six learning goals, and sets students up to continue thinking about these ideas and practicing this kind of creative critical thinking after the course ends.
3.2. Unit 1: Literacies & Nonliteracies

Our books for this unit describe societies that are primarily oral rather than literate. In the world of *The Reader*, literacy is rare—and it is literally magic. When the story begins, a young girl named Sefia is on the run with her aunt Nin and a mysterious rectangular object she inherited from her dead father. However, strangers kidnap Nin in their hunt for the object. On her tumultuous journey to find her aunt, Sefia discovers that the rectangular object is, in fact, a Book. As she learns to read the Book and wield its power, she picks up a strange group of companions: a mute boy that she frees from a violent press gang, and a crew of legendary pirates. Her adventures raise questions about how people communicate in different modalities. For example, Sefia writes the phrase “this is a book” on every surface she can find, turning each of them into objects that can be read. Archer, the mute boy, primarily communicates his thoughts through his body language—his facial expressions, his movements, the way he touches Sefia. Captain Reed, the leader of the pirates, is concerned with how, or if, people will remember his legacy after he’s gone. In addition, the actual book *The Reader* functions as a character, drawing the reader of *The Reader* into the story. This book is the perfect introduction to the course; it explores alternative ideas of literacy in engaging, surprising ways.

In *Princess Academy*, Miri Larendaughter feels useless because she’s too small to work in the quarries of her village on Mount Eskel. Mount Eskelites are not literate because literacy is not practical for them, but they do have a robust oral culture in the form of work songs and stories, poetic phrases known as *mountain wisdom*, and a form of communicating without words called *quarry-speech*. However, life on Mount Eskel changes when a messenger from the lowlands arrives and announces that the crown prince will choose his bride from the mountain’s girls. Miri and the other girls are forced to leave their village and attend a princess academy. In
the academy’s harsh environment, Miri pushes herself to be the best reader in the class, and she integrates her knowledge of Mount Eskel with her new skills in subjects like manners, diplomacy, and trade. She is the first person on Mount Eskel to find a new identity for herself through her literacy, and she is able to transform her village without letting go of the oral skills that make Mount Eskel unique. *Princess Academy* is useful for thinking about literacy because of the way it conceptualizes the nonliterate society of Mount Eskel and the literate society of the lowlands, and the extraordinary ways in which it imagines language.

Drawing on these books, the guiding questions for this unit are: What does it mean to be literate or nonliterate? What does it mean to “read” something? What tools do individuals and communities use to make meaning? How do cultural factors influence meaning-making practices? To explore these questions, the in-class activities connect text and body to tap into different modalities. I’ll do a brief introduction to two different techniques for voice and movement work, and we’ll do exercises based around reading non-book objects, creating literal and metaphorical maps, interpreting different kinds of writing through performance, and writing poetry as a group.

### 3.3. Unit 2: Stories & Truths

This unit focuses on a single book: Kristin Cashore’s *Bitterblue*. Bitterblue is the young queen of Monsea, crowned at age ten after her father’s assassination. Now, at age eighteen, she realizes that her father’s presence is not truly gone; her nation has not recovered from his cruelty and violence. He had the power to control minds through words, and he used this power to wrest the throne of Monsea from its last king and begin a reign of terror. Bitterblue’s advisors encourage her to look to the future instead of the past, but the more she explores her capital city,
the more she realizes that Monsea is not moving forward. With the help of her friends and relatives from other nations and her new friends in the city, she searches for ways to understand her identity as her father’s daughter and figure out what truly happened during his reign.

In addition to a prologue at the beginning and supplementary material at the end, *Bitterblue* is divided into five main sections. The section titles—“Stories and Lies,” “Puzzles and Muddles,” “Ciphers and Keys,” “Bridges and Crossings,” and “The Ministry of Stories and Truth”—hint at the mysteries that surround Bitterblue’s court and city and emphasize their language-based nature: Every section of the book is concerned with the ways that the truth, revealed through literacy, influences identity. This search for truth is sparked by the oral culture Bitterblue encounters, and the interplay between orality and literacy informs the changing identity of Bitterblue and Monsea.

These questions will guide our discussion of *Bitterblue*: How can spoken and written words reveal or obscure the truth? How do practices of storytelling and truth-telling relate to each other? How can individuals and communities use storytelling to come to terms with difficult truths? In our classes during this unit, we’ll do two exercises directly related to *Bitterblue*: one about the story rooms Bitterblue visits in the city, and one about the supplementary materials in the back of the book. We’ll also do two poetry exercises to explore the more interpretive forms of communication in the book—erasure poetry, which I will lead, and slam poetry, which a guest lecturer will lead.
3.4. Unit 3: Adaptation & Transformation

In this unit, we’ll look at two adaptations. We’ll read Malinda Lo’s *Ash*, a retelling of Cinderella, and we’ll watch a recording of Strangemen & Co.’s play *The Woodsman*, an exploration of the writings of L. Frank Baum.

*Ash* is a fairy tale about fairy tales. After her parents’ deaths, Ash finds comfort in a book of fairy tales her father gave her. Her stepmother treats her cruelly, and she begins a habit of wandering into the mysterious Wood near her their manor, longing to be stolen away by one of the fairies she’s read about. In her wanderings, she meets Sidhean, a dangerous fairy, and Kaisa, the King’s Huntress. While her stepsisters are trying to catch the prince’s attention, in the manner of a standard Cinderella story, Ash finds her heart caught between Sidhean and Kaisa. In showing how stories change Ash and how Ash, in turn, changes stories, this book twists the threads of Cinderella and other fairy tales into something new.

Where *Ash* uses subtle, dreamlike language, *The Woodsman* hardly uses language at all. Devised from the writings of L. Frank Baum, particularly *The Woodsman of Oz*, the play tells the story of how the Tin Man loses his heart. At the beginning of the play, the Munchkins explain that the Wicked Witch of the East is always listening; therefore, they barely speak to avoid attracting her attention. While chopping down trees in the woods, Munchkin Nick Chopper meets Nimmee, the Witch’s slave, and they fall in love. Horrified by the change in Nimmee, the Witch curses Nick, causing him to lose pieces of himself. He replaces each missing piece with a metal substitute, until there’s nothing left. *The Woodsman* is an ensemble play; the full cast is almost always present onstage, telling the story with pantomime, coordinated movement, creative sound effects, haunting violin music, and incredible puppets. In creating this play,
Strangemen & Co. took a character that has been transformed many times in many different adaptations and managed to make something different.

*Ash* and *The Woodsman* are both adaptations about transformations. Inspired by these two works, our guiding questions are: How can familiar stories be adapted to make meaning in different moments? How do individuals and societies use stories to adapt to the worlds around them? How does the process of telling or experiencing stories transform the people involved? How can storytellers present narratives in ways that allow listeners or viewers to engage with and participate in the meaning-making process? With these questions in mind, we’ll engage in exercises that use fairy tale tropes and retellings in our classes on *Ash*. After we watch *The Woodsman*, we’ll do a workshop on a performance and composition technique related to the play.

3.5. **Unit 4: Culture & Power**

To finish the course, we’ll read Leigh Bardugo’s *Six of Crows*, a heist novel set in a fantasy version of the Netherlands. When the story begins, a group of misfit teenagers in a gang called the Dregs—Kaz, a genius thief; Inej, a wraithlike spy; Nina, an expatriate sorcerer; Matthias, a crusading convict; Jesper, a sharpshooting gambler; and Wylan, a mysterious runaway—embarks on the most high-stakes job of their lives. These six characters come from four different countries; *Six of Crows* is concerned with how the countries and cultures in its world interact and influence each other. As they plan their heist, the characters have to not only figure out how to infiltrate an impossibly secure building, but also navigate the differences in their cultures and backgrounds.
One detail of a character’s background is especially important: we find out that this character is nonliterate, and that that fact has shaped their life. This aspect of the book ties into our first unit on literacies and nonliteracies; however, where *The Reader* and *Princess Academy* show nonliterate characters in nonliterate societies, *Six of Crows* shows a nonliterate character in a literate society. All the main characters in *Six of Crows* struggle with sources and structures of power, and this character struggles with power through literacy.

Drawing on *Six of Crows* and connecting to the rest of our materials, the guiding questions for this unit are: How have the fantasy cultures we’ve studied defined and valued literacy? What are the similarities and differences across these cultures? How do these cultures relate to our own? What power structures surround ideas of literacy in fantasy worlds and in our world? How do we work in and around those structures? How have those structures shaped us?

To explore these questions, we’ll cast actors as the *Six of Crows* characters, experiment with building fantasy worlds, and bring another modality into the classroom in the form of music. We’ll also use the end of this unit to work on our final; on these days, I’ll lead some of my favorite performance exercises for warming up, building connections between ensemble members, and thinking about performance materials in different ways.

### 3.6. Theatre Elements

Throughout these units, this course introduces students to three different theatre techniques: Linklater Voice, the Suzuki Method, and Viewpoints. Linklater Voice provides breathing, speaking, and movement exercises that help people better understand and utilize their voices. On the first day of class, I use Workday One, a set of introductory activities from Kristin Linklater’s book *Freeing the Natural Voice*, to set up the body-centric approach to literacy.
learning. In Workday One, participants learn to be aware of their bodies—how they tense and relax, how they move in space. The experience of doing Workday One is simultaneously relaxing and unsettling, and I hope it will spark students’ interest in performance.

Near the end of Unit 1, we’ll have a class on the Suzuki Method, a series of highly focused, often strenuous actor training techniques developed by Japanese director Tadashi Suzuki. This workshop, led by a guest lecturer, will introduce students to the Sitting Statues exercise, in which they will have to recite a short monologue while holding different sitting positions. Doing Sitting Statues introduces the idea that doing something physically difficult onstage can drastically change your performance. I’m not expecting students to do this exact exercise while they’re sharing their performance pieces, but I hope that it helps them think about physical performance in a new way.

Finally, after we watch *The Woodsman* in Unit 3, we’ll do a class on Viewpoints, a technique that Strangemen & Co. most likely used to create the play. Viewpoints provides a set of tools and a philosophy for making and analyzing work. Although I can’t fully introduce students to the different Viewpoints (such as shape, tempo, and architecture) in only one class, I can lead them in a series of activities that will help them not only become more aware of their bodies in space, but also become aware of their bodies in relation to each other and work together as an ensemble. Viewpoints taught me how to create without being afraid of failure, and I hope that it will introduce this idea to students.

I also incorporate theatre into the course in smaller ways. In the course materials, I use a few specific phrases I learned in theatre classes and rehearsals. On the first page of the syllabus, I start the course description with: “Hey, team. Welcome to the show.” This greeting comes directly from Jesse Hinson. When I took his course The Actor’s Body: Narrative in Motion, he
used it to signal that class was about to start and invite us into the space. In the lesson plans, I list *check-ins* as the first activity for every class; the varying check-in exercises come from Alyssa Rubin’s rehearsals for *Godspell*. To do check-ins, we sit in a circle, and each person shares something about their day thus far. Sometimes we just give a short description, sometimes we rate our day on a scale of one to ten, and sometimes we do *rose, bud, thorn*—sharing something good (rose) something we’re excited about (bud), and something bad (thorn). Check-in exercises emphasize that the rehearsal room and the classroom are not separate from everyday life; the events happening in each of our lives are going to affect us in those spaces. I list *reinforcements* as the last exercise for every class; this exercise comes from Antonio Ocampo-Guzman’s rehearsals for *The House of Bernarda Alba*. To do reinforcements, we stand in a circle, and each person puts one hand on the back of the person to their right and the other hand on the stomach of the person to their left. One at a time, each person reinforces a concept or idea from the day that they feel is important using the phrase: “I reinforce ____.” For example, after a class in which we discuss *The Reader*, I might say, “I reinforce compassion,” or “I reinforce adventure.” This exercise is positive and powerful, and it’s my favorite way to end rehearsal.

4. Conclusion

In recent work in rhetoric and composition, scholars have emphasized the negative effects of failing to address multiliteracies and multimodalities in the classroom. After delivering a powerful analysis of the ways in which two girls interact while writing *Star Wars* fanfiction together, Angela Thomas urges teachers to use the texts of pop culture, including fanfiction, with their students. Students find “pleasure, motivation, and pure joy” in pop culture activities, and, as Jackie Marsh and Elaine Millard contend, the failure to incorporate pop culture into curricula
may result in students being less motivated and feeling that “literacy practices outside of school are meaningless and irrelevant” (Marsh & Millard, cited in Thomas 162). The girls that Thomas studies master a variety of literacy skills through their fanfiction activities; using nontraditional literacy practices, such as writing fanfiction and engaging with pop culture texts, can help them build further on those skills, feel like those skills are legitimate and valued, and find pleasure, motivation, and joy in class. However, it’s not enough to only use nontraditional print modes. In her article about aurality and composition, Cynthia L. Selfe argues that focusing only on print ignores other modes of making meaning and understanding the world, and devalues communities that engage in “multiple modalities of expression, multiple and hybrid ways of knowing, communicating, and establishing identity” (617-618). Here, the sense of illegitimacy that Marsh and Millard caution against extends into larger communities and cultures. The materials we study, the activities we perform, and the voices we amplify in the classroom matter.

As these articles show, multiliterate and multimodal classroom experiences not only introduce students to different forms of communication and expression, but also shape the landscapes of communication and expression for students. Thomas asks, “Who decides what knowledge is legitimate and authentic, which literacies are privileged and which are stigmatized, and which literacy practices are valued while others are trivialized?” (162). The themes of identity, selfhood, and power that we explore in Literacy Narratives in Fantasy & Reality are not broad, vague ideas; they are irrevocably tied into the study of multiliteracies and they shape the ways in which we relate to each other as people. Studying multiliteracies and multimodalities, implementing nontraditional teaching techniques, privileging noncanonical texts, and adopting attitudes of inclusion will improve our abilities to communicate, express ourselves, and, ultimately, create meaning in our lives.
TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

In my classroom, we study literature, composition, and art to learn about communication, expression, and creation of meaning. My goal as a teacher is to engage students in these processes through multiliterate, multimodal pedagogies situated in inclusive, supportive environments.

I aim to support students' learning by:

- **Using a workshop structure.** I'll lead discussions, writing and performance exercises, and peer review activities, but I want to encourage students to actively contribute to class and participate with me rather than passively listen to me.

- **Building an inclusive classroom.** Being inclusive means meeting students on their terms, and helping them engage with the concept of difference. We are all in a state of being yet-to-be; as Stephanie L. Kerschbaum explains, “to acknowledge individuals’ yet-to-be-ness is to maintain an openness to one’s own and others’ identities and to avoid treating identity markers as fixed or static elements” (69). In recognizing that the differences between us are changing and relational rather than fixed and defined, we open up possibilities for engaging those differences.

- **Incorporating performance pedagogies.** In my training as an actor and director, I've seen that using performance as a learning tool brings energy, connection, and compassion to the classroom. Breathing, speaking, and movement exercises challenge students to work together and think about their classroom, their work, and themselves in new ways.

- **Challenging the established “canon” of literature.** The canon excludes a lot of books that I believe are relevant to and valuable for students, including young adult and genre fiction. I move beyond the canon in my courses.

- **Assuming the best of students.** I operate under the assumption that students are smart, creative, and ready to participate. This assumption leads me to develop challenging curricula and find ways to encourage students to do their best work.

In my personal and professional lives, I strive to work towards the goals of the performance technique Viewpoints: “listen, pay attention, be open, change, respond, surprise yourself, use accidents, and work with fearlessness and abandon and an open heart” (Bogart & Landau 7). I bring that attitude into the classroom, and I hope to inspire it in my students as we communicate, express ourselves, and create meaning together.
ENGL 3880 Topics in Writing: LITERACY NARRATIVES IN FANTASY & REALITY

Northeastern University, Fall 2017

Instructor: Kayla Allen, allen.ka@husky.neu.edu
Office & Hours: 467 Holmes Hall, Tuesday 12:30-2:30 & by appointment
Class Meetings: 121 Snell Library, Tuesday & Friday 9:50-11:30

OVERVIEW

Hey, team. Welcome to the show.

In this course, we'll read and write literacy narratives, using the genre to both explore our personal experiences with reading and writing and examine societal ideas about reading and writing. After all, although reading and writing are often individual experiences, those experiences are often shaped by what the surrounding society considers to be useful or valuable.

Specifically, we'll use literacy narratives in young adult fantasy books as inspiration to write our literacy narratives. Many YA fantasy books examine the interconnected themes of literacy, identity, selfhood, and power, and looking at literacy in those fantasy worlds can give us new perspectives for looking at literacy in our world. To guide our thinking in these areas, the course will be split into four units: Literacies & Nonliteracies, Stories & Truths, Adaptation & Transformation, and Culture & Power.

This course is a little different than a regular writing course—instead of handing out copies of our writing for others to read, we'll primarily share our writing by performing it. Performance brings forward the ways in which we perform our identities and cultures, which shape our personal and societal literacy experiences. You don't need any performance experience to take this course—we'll go over some tips and techniques together throughout the semester.

Let's get started!

LEARNING GOALS

This course aims to enable you to:

- critically and creatively examine your literacy practices using fantasy concepts
- connect themes of literacy, identity, selfhood, and power across different works
- create written/spoken work in a variety of genres
- revise your writing/performances using feedback from others
- provide peers with constructive, specific feedback
- reflect on your writing/performance processes and assess your work
REQUIRED TEXTS

The genre of fantasy is dominated by straight white men—both as authors and as characters—so I’ve chosen books with female authors and diverse protagonists so we can hear marginalized voices and see marginalized characters.

We’ll be studying these five books:

There are copies available in the Northeastern Bookstore, and one copy of each on reserve in Snell Library. You’re welcome to use any edition, physical or digital.

THE WORK

The assignments in this course are designed to help you 1) create a small portfolio of written and spoken work based around themes of literacy, identity, selfhood, and power and 2) revise and reflect on that work.

This course is more about the process than the product, so to speak. I’m not interested in judging your natural talent for writing or performing; I’m interested in understanding your thought process and seeing how you make connections between our texts and themes. Because you’ll put so much energy into the process, your products will be compelling.

Participation | 35%
This course will function as a workshop, which means that your participation is essential to its success. Strong participation entails preparing for class, actively engaging in class discussions and activities, being willing to take risks, and showing respect and compassion when working with others.

Performance Pieces | 40%
In each unit, we’ll develop several short performance pieces through our in-class exercises. At the end of the unit, you’ll choose one piece to develop further. To document and explain your work, you’ll hand in a draft of your piece, a performance score, and a short reflection.

Book Review | 10%
You’ll write a short review of a book from the perspective of our course. In the review, you will explain how (or if) the book was helpful to you while thinking about our course themes.

Open Mic | 15%
At the end of the course, we’ll host an open mic. Each of you will get to perform at least one of your pieces, and we’ll invite others to share work related to our course themes. To document and explain your work, you’ll hand in draft(s), a performance score, a short reflection, and event-planning materials.
COURSE POLICIES

Communication
My regular office hours are from 12:30–2:30 on Tuesdays, and I encourage you to stop by and talk at least once during the semester. If that time doesn't work for you, please feel free to email me and set up an appointment at a different time. On weekdays, I will respond to emails within 24 hours, and on weekends, I will respond as soon as possible.

Attendance & Lateness
Our course is a workshop, and we do a lot of talking, writing, performing, and revising during class time. For this reason, you are allowed two unexcused absences, and for every further unexcused absence, you will lose one half of a letter from your final grade. Significant and/or frequent lateness may be counted as an absence.

You have the right to a limited number of excused absences due to religious observances, illness, family emergencies, required participation in athletic events, or other serious and unavoidable life circumstances. If you need an excused absence, please email me.

Accommodations
The university's Disability Resource Center works with students and faculty to provide students who qualify under the Americans with Disabilities Act with accommodations that allow them to participate fully in the activities at the university. Ordinarily, students receiving such accommodations will deliver teacher notification letters at the beginning of the semester, but I invite you to discuss accommodations with me at time. Students have the right to disclose or not disclose their disabilities to their instructors. For more information about the DRC, visit www.northeastern.edu/drc.

Comfortable with Being Uncomfortable
Topics and themes in our course materials (such as violence, sexual assault, and suicide) may be uncomfortable to talk about. One way to build a classroom space where we can critically and sensitively discuss such topics is to recognize that we are uncomfortable with certain issues, and then accept that it makes sense we would be uncomfortable talking about it. We might start with developing the ability, as individuals and as a class, to be comfortable with being uncomfortable. That said, if you would like a content warning about a specific topic, please come talk to me about it in my office hours or send me an email. I expect everyone to engage with our texts, but I want you to be able to prepare yourself for anything that may be especially difficult.

Classroom Commitments
On the first day of class, we'll come up with a set of commitments to guide our interactions with each other. To start, I propose that we will:

- recognize and appreciate that we all come to this class with different experiences
- assume that people are always doing their best, want to be treated with respect, and want to learn
- create a respectfully challenging atmosphere for open discussion
- give each other constructive criticism that promotes improvement
- make room for laughter and play as well as moments of sincerity
Grading Scale
Excellent: A (95-100), A- (90-94)
Good: B+ (87-89), B (83-86), B- (80-82)
Adequate: C+ (77-79), C (73-76), C- (70-72)
Poor: D+ (67-69), D (63-66), D- (60-62), F (0-59)

Late Assignments
Assignment due dates and times are listed in the course calendar and on the assignment sheets. Late assignments will lose five points for every day (not class meeting) they are late.

Academic Integrity
I expect your work to follow Northeastern's Academic Integrity Policy, available at northeastern.edu/osccr/academic-integrity-policy. If I find that you have violated this policy in an assignment, I may report you to OSCCR, give you a failing grade for the assignment, or even give you a failing grade for the course.

UNIVERSITY RESOURCES

The Writing Center
The Writing Center offers free and friendly help to any writer from any academic discipline. To make an appointment, visit neu.mywconline.com. For more information, visit www.northeastern.edu/writingcenter.

Snell Library
The library has a large collection of research materials, many of which are available online. In addition, librarian Amanda Rust has put together a research guide for English literature, rhetoric, and composition, available at subjectguides.lib.neu.edu/english. For research assistance, contact Amanda at a.rust@neu.edu. The library also houses the Digital Media Commons, which offers a variety of resources regarding multimedia projects. For more information, visit library.northeastern.edu/digital-media-commons.

WeCare
WeCare, a program operated through the Office for Student Affairs, aims to help students experiencing unexpected challenges maintain their academic progress. WeCare works with students to coordinate among university offices and to offer appropriate on- and off-campus referrals for help and support. For more information, visit northeastern.edu/wecare.

Title IX
Northeastern's Title IX Policy prohibits sexual harassment, sexual assault, relationship or domestic violence, and stalking. The Title IX Policy applies to the entire community, including male, female, and nonbinary students, faculty, and staff. For more information, visit northeastern.edu/titleix.
COURSE CALENDAR

Please bring your books to class on days we are scheduled to discuss them, and bring your preferred writing materials (notebook and pen, computer, etc.) and headphones every day.

On days marked with an asterisk (*), please wear or bring clothing that you can comfortably move in. Leggings, sweatpants, and workout clothes are all encouraged. Jeans, khakis, and similar pants are often too restrictive, and may prevent you from fully participating in the activities. We may work in socks, so have a pair with you.

Please note that readings and assignments are listed on the days they are due.

Unit 1: Literacies & Nonliteracies

This unit’s books, Traci Chee’s The Reader and Shannon Hale’s Princess Academy, both describe societies that are primarily oral rather than literate. In the world of The Reader, reading is magic; in the world of Princess Academy, a form of speaking is magic.

Questions to consider: What does it mean to be literate or nonliterate? What does it mean to “read” something? What tools do individuals and communities use to make meaning? How do cultural factors influence meaning-making practices?

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Class Topics</th>
<th>Readings &amp; Assignments Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F, 9/8</td>
<td>Linklater Workday One*</td>
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<tr>
<td>T, 9/12</td>
<td>This is a Book</td>
<td>The Reader Ch. 1 - 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F, 9/15</td>
<td>Mapmaking</td>
<td>The Reader Ch. 13 - 33</td>
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<tr>
<td>T, 9/19</td>
<td>Physicality of Writing</td>
<td>The Reader Ch. 34 – end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F, 9/22</td>
<td>The Suzuki Method*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T, 9/26</td>
<td>Alternative Vocabularies</td>
<td>Princess Academy Ch. 1 - 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F, 9/29</td>
<td>Exquisite Corpse</td>
<td>Princess Academy Ch. 12 – end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T, 10/3</td>
<td>Workshop Day</td>
<td>Unit 1 Performance Piece Drafts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Unit 2: Stories & Truths

Moving into the second unit, we'll read Kristin Cashore's *Bitterblue*, which describes a society that used to be literate. As the story progresses, the interplay between orality and literacy informs the changing identity of both Bitterblue and her kingdom.

Questions to consider: How can spoken and written words reveal or obscure the truth? How do practices of storytelling and truth-telling relate to each other? How can individuals and communities use storytelling to come to terms with difficult truths?

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Class Topics</th>
<th>Readings &amp; Assignments Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F, 10/6</td>
<td>Story Rooms</td>
<td><em>Bitterblue</em> Prologue – Part 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T, 10/10</td>
<td>Erasure Poetry</td>
<td><em>Bitterblue</em> Part 2, Unit 1 Performance Piece Revision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F, 10/13</td>
<td>Slam Poetry</td>
<td><em>Bitterblue</em> Part 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T, 10/17</td>
<td>Supplementary Materials</td>
<td><em>Bitterblue</em> Part 4 – end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F, 10/20</td>
<td>Workshop Day</td>
<td>Unit 2 Performance Piece Drafts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unit 3: Adaptation & Transformation

This unit’s materials are both adaptations: Malinda Lo’s *Ash* is a retelling of Cinderella, and Strangemen & Co.’s play *The Woodsman* is an exploration of the writings of L. Frank Baum. *Ash* uses subtle, dreamlike language; *The Woodsman* hardly uses language at all.

Questions to consider: How can familiar stories be adapted to make meaning in different moments? How do individuals and societies use stories to adapt to the worlds around them? How does the process of telling or experiencing stories transform the people involved? How can storytellers present narratives in ways that allow listeners or viewers to engage with and participate in the meaning-making process?

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Class Topics</th>
<th>Readings &amp; Assignments Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T, 10/24</td>
<td>Fairy Tale Tropes</td>
<td><em>Ash</em> Part I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F, 10/27</td>
<td>Fairy Tale Retellings</td>
<td><em>Ash</em> Part II, Unit 2 Performance Piece Revision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T, 10/31</td>
<td>The Woodsman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F, 11/3</td>
<td>Viewpoints Training*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T, 11/7</td>
<td>Workshop Day</td>
<td>Unit 3 Performance Piece Drafts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F, 11/10</td>
<td>Workshop Day</td>
<td>Book Review Draft</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Unit 4: Culture & Power

To finish the course, we'll read Leigh Bardugo's *Six of Crows*, a heist novel set in a fantasy version of the Netherlands. The cast of characters includes a quick-thinking thief, a wraithlike spy, an expatriate sorcerer, a vengeful convict, a gambling sharpshooter, and a mysterious runaway.

Questions to consider: How have the fantasy cultures we've studied defined and valued literacy? What are the similarities and differences across cultures? How do these cultures relate to our own? What power structures surround ideas of literacy in fantasy worlds and in our world? How do we work in and around those structures? How have those structures shaped us?

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Class Topics</th>
<th>Readings &amp; Assignments Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T, 11/14</td>
<td>Fancasting</td>
<td><em>Six of Crows</em> Parts 1 &amp; 2, Unit 3 Performance Piece Revision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F, 11/17</td>
<td>Worldbuilding</td>
<td><em>Six of Crows</em> Parts 3 &amp; 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T, 11/21</td>
<td>Music</td>
<td><em>Six of Crows</em> Parts 5 &amp; 6, Book Review Revision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F, 11/24</td>
<td>No Class – Thanksgiving Break</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T, 11/28</td>
<td>Workshop Day</td>
<td>Unit 4 Performance Piece Drafts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F, 12/1</td>
<td>Workshop Day*</td>
<td>Open Mic Performance Piece Drafts</td>
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<tr>
<td>T, 12/5</td>
<td>Workshop Day*</td>
<td>Open Mic Performance Piece Drafts, Unit 4 Performance Piece Revision</td>
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<tr>
<td>R, 12/7</td>
<td>Reading Day – Open Mic at 2:00 PM in AfterHours</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>T, 12/12</td>
<td>No Class – Finals</td>
<td>Open Mic Final Project</td>
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Assignment 1:
PERFORMANCE PIECES

The main work of our course is the reading, writing, and performance of literacy narratives. In the performance piece assignment for each unit, you’ll get to reflect on your work and give me insight into your creative process.

This assignment is designed to help you achieve all six of our learning goals:

- critically and creatively examine your literacy practices using fantasy concepts
- connect themes of literacy, identity, selfhood, and power across different works
- create written/spoken work in a variety of genres
- revise your writing/performances using feedback from others
- provide peers with constructive, specific feedback
- reflect on your writing/performance processes and assess your work

As a whole, the performance pieces are worth 40% of your final grade. Near the end of the course, you’ll get to choose how much each unit is worth.

REQUIREMENTS

Drafts

On workshop days, bring physical or digital copies of your writing from our in-class exercises from that unit. Be prepared to perform two of them for a small group of your peers. You don’t have to memorize them, but be familiar with the words.

Revision

After the workshop day, choose one piece that you want to work on further. To document and explain your work, you’ll hand in these three things:

1. **Original Draft**: The original draft that you brought to class. I’m asking you to include it so I can reference it as I read the other two components.

2. **Performance Score**: Revise your piece as needed, based on the feedback you receive in the workshop. Then, type it up and double space it. Finally, write in your performance notes—either use the comment function in your word processor, or print the score out and handwrite your notes. I’ll provide an example of what a performance score might look like.

3. **Reflection**: Write a 250- to 500-word reflection on your piece. Address which parts you revised and why (and, if applicable, whose feedback led to your revisions), how you feel about your piece at this point, and how you see your piece connecting with our texts.
You can either email your revision to me before class (in Word, Google Doc, or PDF form), or submit a hard copy in class.

RUBRIC

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria/Weight</th>
<th>Adequate</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Development of Performance Piece</td>
<td>Includes the original draft and current draft and shows some connections between them. Engages minimally with feedback from peers.</td>
<td>Generally shows the development of the piece from the original draft to the current draft. Identifies general things that have changed, and explains why. Engages with general feedback from peers.</td>
<td>Clearly shows the development of the piece from the original draft to the current draft. Identifies specific things that have changed, and explains why. Engages with specific feedback from peers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement with Course Texts &amp; Themes</td>
<td>Minimally engages with the prompt and the texts.</td>
<td>Clearly engages with the prompt. Draws substantial but general connections within and across texts.</td>
<td>Thoughtfully and creatively engages with the prompt. Draws specific connections within and across texts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance Score</td>
<td>Includes minimal physical and verbal notes.</td>
<td>Includes general physical and verbal notes.</td>
<td>Includes thoughtful, specific physical and verbal notes.</td>
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</table>

DUE DATES

**Unit 1 Drafts:** Tuesday, October 3  
**Unit 1 Revision:** Tuesday, October 10

**Unit 2 Drafts:** Friday, October 20  
**Unit 2 Revision:** Friday, October 27

**Unit 3 Drafts:** Tuesday, November 7  
**Unit 3 Revision:** Tuesday, November 13

**Unit 4 Drafts:** Tuesday, November 28  
**Unit 4 Revision:** Tuesday, December 5
Assignment 2: BOOK REVIEW

We're using five young adult fantasy books to examine themes of literacy, identity, selfhood, and power, but there are so many other books that relate to these themes. For this assignment, choose a book that's not on our syllabus and review it from the perspective of our course. It doesn't have to be a young adult fantasy book (although there are many other great YA fantasy options).

This assignment is designed to help you focus on these learning goals:
- connect themes of literacy, identity, selfhood, and power across different works
- revise your writing/performances using feedback from others
- provide peers with constructive, specific feedback
- reflect on your writing/ performance processes and assess your work

Possible books include:
- Terrier, Tamora Pierce (fantasy)
- Serpentine, Cindy Pon (fantasy)
- A Darker Shade of Magic, V.E. Schwab (fantasy)
- The Raven Boys, Maggie Stiefvater (fantasy)
- An Ember in the Ashes, Sabaa Tahir (fantasy)
- Illuminae, Amie Kaufman & Jay Kristoff (sci-fi)
- I Capture the Castle, Dodie Smith (historical fiction)
- Nimona, Noelle Stevenson (graphic novel)
- Persepolis, Marjane Satrapi (graphic novel)
- Milk & Honey, Rupi Kaur (poetry)

For more recommendations, you can look at:
- Goodreads: www.goodreads.com
- YA Interrobang: www.yainterrobang.com/category/weekly/new-releases
- We Need Diverse Books: weneeddiversebooks.org/end-of-the-year-booklists

You can also just browse around in the library; the Hub on the first floor of Snell has a lot of great new books.

The book review is worth 10% of your final grade.

REQUIREMENTS

Draft

This review should be 650–850 words. In it, you should summarize the more important or relevant aspects of the book, and explain how (or if) it was helpful to you in thinking about our course themes of storytelling, literacy, identity, selfhood, and power.
Include a **writer’s note** with your draft. A writer’s note gives reviewers context for your piece and allows you to ask for specific feedback. In the note, tell us where the piece is in its development, your assessment of the piece, and the kind of response that you want. It’s okay to ask for encouragement if you’re feeling unsure about your piece. Writer’s notes are usually 1-3 paragraphs.

On our workshop day, November 10, email the draft with the writer’s note to me before class and bring four hard copies with you to class. We’ll do some peer review exercises, and I’ll provide feedback via email.

**Revision**

Revise your draft as necessary, based on the feedback you receive from your peers and from me. Include a 150- to 250-word **reflection** on your piece. Address which parts you revised and why (and, if applicable, whose feedback led to your revisions) and how you feel about your piece at this point.

On November 21, email the revision to me before class in Word, Google Doc, or PDF form.

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<tr>
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<th>Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engagement with Course Texts &amp; Themes (30%)</td>
<td>Draws minimal connections between the book and the course themes.</td>
<td>Draws substantial but general connections between the book and the course themes.</td>
<td>Draws specific connections between the book and the course themes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection (20%)</td>
<td>Minimally discusses changes in the piece. Minimally engages with feedback from instructor and peers.</td>
<td>Identifies general things that have changed between drafts, and explains why. Engages with general feedback from instructor and peers.</td>
<td>Identifies specific things that have changed between drafts, and explains why. Engages with specific feedback from instructor and peers.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**DUE DATES**

**Draft:** Friday, November 10  
**Revision:** Tuesday, November 21
Assignment 3: OPEN MIC FINAL PROJECT

At the end of the semester, we’ll host an open mic on campus. Each of you will get to perform at least one of the pieces you wrote during this course, and we’ll invite others to share their work in relation to our course themes. This open mic is designed to not only showcase your work, but also to invite others to participate in our meaning-making process. The final project gives you the chance to reflect on your work and on the course as a whole, and gives me insight into your creative process.

This assignment is designed to help you achieve all six of our learning goals:

• critically and creatively examine your literacy practices using fantasy concepts
• connect themes of literacy, identity, selfhood, and power across different works
• create written/spoken work in a variety of genres
• revise your writing/performance using feedback from others
• provide peers with constructive, specific feedback
• reflect on your writing/performance processes and assess your work

The open mic final project is worth 15% of your final grade.

REQUIREMENTS

Drafts

The drafts are options for your open mic performance. On our workshop days, bring physical or digital copies of at least three different pieces, and be prepared to perform them. You don’t have to memorize them, but be familiar with the words.

Final Project

After the workshop day, choose one piece that you want to perform at the open mic. To document and explain your work on the event, you’ll hand in these four things:

1. **Original Draft:** The original draft/s of your piece that you brought to class. (If you're choosing one of your focus pieces, you may have more than one draft.)

2. **Revision and Performance Score:** Revise your piece as needed, based on the feedback you receive in the workshop. Then, type it up and double space it. Finally, write in your performance notes—either use the comment function, or print the score out and handwrite your notes.

3. **Reflection:** Write a 500- to 750-word reflection on your piece and performance. Address which parts of your piece you revised and why (and, if applicable, whose feedback led to your revisions), what the experience of performing your piece was like, and how you see your piece fitting into the course.
4. **Event-Planning Materials:** To explain our work to an outside audience, you'll create a promotional poster, quote poster, event cover photo, or program for our open mic. We'll discuss these options in class.

You can either email your documentation to me (in Word, Google Doc, or PDF form), or leave a hard copy in my mailbox in the English Department.

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<tr>
<td><strong>Development of Performance Piece</strong> (30%)</td>
<td>Includes the original draft and current draft and shows some connections between them. Engages minimally with feedback from instructor and peers.</td>
<td>Generally shows the development of the piece from the original draft to the current draft. Identifies general things that have changed, and explains why. Engages with general feedback from instructor and peers.</td>
<td>Clearly shows the development of the piece from the original draft to the current draft. Identifies specific things that have changed, and explains why. Engages with specific feedback from instructor and peers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Engagement with Course Texts &amp; Themes</strong> (30%)</td>
<td>Minimally engages with the prompt and the texts.</td>
<td>Clearly engages with the prompt. Draws general connections within and across texts. Generally situates the piece in the context of the course as a whole.</td>
<td>Thoughtfully and creatively engages with the prompt. Draws specific connections within and across texts. Specifically situates the piece in the context of the course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Performance Score</strong> (15%)</td>
<td>Includes minimal physical and verbal notes.</td>
<td>Includes general physical and verbal notes.</td>
<td>Includes thoughtful, specific physical and verbal notes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reflection</strong> (15%)</td>
<td>Minimally describes the experience of performing the piece.</td>
<td>Generally describes the experience of performing the piece.</td>
<td>Describes the experience of performing the piece with specific details.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Event-Planning Materials</strong> (10%)</td>
<td>Attempts to explain the work of the course to an outside audience.</td>
<td>Generally explains the work of the course to an outside audience. Design is readable.</td>
<td>Clearly explains the work of the course to an outside audience. Design is appealing.</td>
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### DUE DATES

**Drafts:** Friday, December 1 & Tuesday, December 5  
**Open Mic:** Thursday, December 7 at 2:00 PM in AfterHours  
**Final Project:** Tuesday, December 12 by 4:00 PM
Unit 3 / Class 14: FAIRY TALE TROPES

Readings due: Ash Part I
Assignments due: none

1. Welcome & Check-Ins

2. Discussion of Ash Part I
   - Initial reactions?
   - What does it mean for Ash to be “her mother’s daughter?”
   - Check out the TV Tropes page on Cinderella: bit.ly/2pI9WqS. Which of these tropes appear in Ash? What function do they serve?

3. In-Class Writing
   - Prompt: Write a piece about yourself using TV Tropes.

4. Small Group Discussion of Writing
   - What direction are you taking the prompt?
   - What’s working so far? What’s not working?
   - What’s your ideal version of your piece?

5. Reminders for Next Class
   - Read Ash Part II.
   - Hand in Unit 2 Performance Piece Revision.

6. Reinforcements
Unit 3 / Class 15:
FAIRY TALE RETELLINGS

Readings due: Ash Part II
Assignments due: none

1. Check-Ins

2. Discussion of Ash Part II

   • Initial reactions?
   • Kaisa says that hunting stories and fairy tales are different. What might those differences be, and what might they mean?
   • How do the fairy tales in Ash’s book, Tales of Wonder and Grace, function within the larger fairy tale of Ash?
   • How does the book fulfill or subvert your expectations for a Cinderella retelling?
   • Check out this list of Cinderella retellings from Goodreads: bit.ly/2ow7riJ.
     Looking at the covers of these different books, what strikes you?
   • What are some possible reasons for retelling this story in so many ways?

3. In-Class Writing

   • Prompt: Retell a fairy tale.

4. Small Group Discussion of Writing

   • Why did you choose this fairy tale?
   • What’s working so far? What’s not working?
   • What’s your ideal version of your piece?

5. Reinforcements
Unit 3 / Class 16:  
THE WOODSMAN

Readings due: none  
Assignments due: none

1. Check-Ins

2. Watch The Woodsman
   - Recording: bit.ly/2oPB8P0

3. Discussion
   - Initial reactions?
   - Did the relative lack of words stand out to you?
   - How do the actors use nonverbal sounds to tell the story?
   - How do the actors work together as a storytelling unit?
   - How does the play fulfill or subvert your expectations for a Wizard of Oz piece?

4. Reminders for Next Class
   - Wear movement clothes for Viewpoints training.

5. Reinforcements
Unit 3 / Class 17: VIEWPOINTS TRAINING

Readings due: none
Assignments due: none

1. Check-Ins
2. Introduction to Viewpoints
3. Counting*
4. High Jumps*
5. Peripheral Vision*
6. The Flying Phrases*
7. In-Class Writing
   - Prompt: Write a piece about a reading or writing experience that requires movement in the performance.
8. Reminders for Next Class
   - Bring Unit 3 Performance Piece Drafts for workshopping.
9. Reinforcements

*For additional information about these exercises, see Appendix C.
Unit 3 / Class 18: WORKSHOP DAY

Readings due: none
Assignments due: Unit 3 Drafts

1. Check-Ins

2. Small Group Workshopping
   - Part 1: Write a quick performance score on each of your drafts. Exchange drafts with your partner. You'll each perform each other's work, using the performance scores as guidelines.
   - Part 2: Take a few minutes to review your own drafts again. Perform them for your partners as you had originally imagined.

3. Regroup & Check-In
   - What was the experience of watching other people perform your work like?
   - Was this exercise personally helpful?

4. Reminders for Next Class

5. Reinforcements
Unit 3 / Class 19: WORKSHOP DAY

Readings due: none
Assignments due: Book Review Draft

1. Check-Ins

2. Small Group Workshopping
   - Would you like to work with the reviews through writing or speaking?
   - If writing, break into small groups, exchange drafts, and read and discuss.
   - If speaking, break into small groups, take a few minutes to come up with an elevator pitch for your review, and deliver it to the group.

3. Wrap-Up of Unit 3
   - How can familiar stories be adapted to make meaning in different moments?
   - How do individuals and societies use stories to adapt to the worlds around them?
   - How does the process of telling or experiencing stories transform the people involved?
   - How can storytellers present narratives in ways that allow listeners or viewers to engage with and participate in the meaning-making process?

4. Reminders for Next Class
   - Read Six of Crows Parts 1 & 2.
   - Hand in Unit 3 Performance Piece Revision.

5. Reinforcements
THEATRE

Associate Artist
NU Stage Musical Theater Company
September 2012 – April 2017

Directed Noble Roman’s Pizza and Dog Park, or Sexual Perversity in Magnuson for 12-hour theatre festivals. Conceived, cast, and directed the sci-fi & fantasy-themed show The Cabaret Strikes Back. Music directed and assisted with casting and administrative duties for Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson.

Artistic Programming Apprentice
The New Victory Theater
May – August 2016

Designed a WordPress website with resources for New Victory LabWorks Artists and archived audience feedback from LabWorks Open Rehearsals. Compiled a searchable database of information about every New Victory show since 1996. Worked with a team of apprentices to brainstorm concepts for the annual family fundraising gala.

WRITING

Theatre Columnist
College Fashion

Wrote forty articles analyzing plays through fashion, putting together affordable, wearable outfits representing characters and themes from everything from Hamlet to Hamilton.

Research Assistant
Northeastern University Department of English
March 2016 – August 2016

Worked with professors in English, Communications, and Theatre to design an interdisciplinary minor in Social Justice & the Arts. Researched the theoretical foundations of the minor.

Social Media Intern
Sanborn (formerly Sanborn Media Factory)
May – August 2015

Brainstormed content, researched trends, and wrote copy for the social media pages of several famous beauty brands and entertainers. Wrote the agency’s first intern handbook, detailing daily intern tasks.

EDITING

Editor-in-Chief
Sword & Kettle Press
March 2015 – present

Select pieces for publication in literary magazines and work with authors to fine-tune work. Use social media to advertise and connect with writers, readers, and editors around the world, and maintain WordPress website. Design and distribute print and digital editions of publications.

Editing Consultant
Northeastern University Writing Center
September 2015 – April 2017

Consulted with students to help them understand assignments, develop ideas, structure pieces, use correct citations, and address grammatical issues.

EDUCATION

Master of Arts, English
Northeastern University
May 2017

Specialized in fantasy, children’s and young adult literature, and pop culture. For thesis, designed a course on literacy, fantasy, and performance. Assisted in planning the English Graduate Student Association’s annual conference. Completed coursework in teaching, literacy studies, and arts administration.

Bachelor of Arts, English
Northeastern University
May 2016


SKILLS

Social Media: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Tumblr, Hootsuite, Buffer

Coding & Software: HTML, CSS, TEI, WordPress, Microsoft Office, Google Apps
APPENDIX A: SAMPLE PERFORMANCE SCORE

This poem is a found poem. It was found in the Twitter account @TheStrangeLog, which documents changelogs and patch notes of games.

This is “Strange New World.”

delivery style:
Cecil from “Welcome to Night Vale”

hard “k” sound
Peaceful rock lobster herds
draw out vowels
roam the gloomy depths. Geese

fly between lakes and swim around acting like geese.

Demons masquerading as gods

try a little harder.

emphasize
A fresh sea breeze flows through the world.

use a different inflection when “geese” repeats

make eye contact with an audience member

pause before last line
APPENDIX B: SAMPLE BOOK REVIEW

*Bitterblue*
Kristin Cashore

*Bitterblue*, the third book in Kristin Cashore’s *Graceling Realm* series, is the perfect example of the ways in which fantasy literature can help us conceptualize literacy. Monsea, the kingdom that Bitterblue rules, initially focuses on orality rather than literacy, and as the story progresses, the interplay between orality and literacy informs the changing identity of both Bitterblue and Monsea.

Bitterblue became the queen of Monsea at age ten, when King Leck, her father, was assassinated. At age eighteen, she realizes that her father’s presence is not truly gone; her nation has not recovered from his cruelty and violence. Leck had the power to control minds through words, and he used this power to wrest the throne of Monsea from its last king and begin a reign of terror.

Bitterblue’s advisors encourage her to look to the future instead of the past, but the more she explores her capital city, the more she realizes that Monsea is not moving forward. With the help of her friends and relatives from other nations and her new friends in the city, she searches for ways to understand her identity as Leck’s daughter and what truly happened during his reign.

In addition to a prologue at the beginning and supplementary material at the end, *Bitterblue* is divided into five main sections whose titles hint at the mysteries that surround Bitterblue’s court and city and emphasize their language-based nature. In “Stories and Lies,” Bitterblue first visits the city’s story-rooms: pubs and bars in which people gather to hear stories about Leck’s rise, rule, and downfall. Since he deprived his people of education, many of them are illiterate, and rely on oral stories for information. In “Puzzles and Muddles,” she tries to understand Leck by reading the books in his personal library, and learns that someone is preventing her friend Teddy, a printer, from distributing information about Leck. In “Ciphers and Keys,” Bitterblue and her librarian decode Bitterblue’s mother’s ciphered messages, and in “Bridges and Crossings,” they decipher her father’s ciphered journals. She finally understands the truths that the people around her have been trying to hide, and in “The Ministry of Stories and Truth,” she launches an official truth and reconciliation process. Every section of the book is concerned with the ways that the truth, revealed through literacy, influences identity. This search for truth is sparked by the oral culture Bitterblue encounters, and both oral histories and written histories become important to Bitterblue and Monsea.

*Bitterblue* is not only a powerful standalone book, but also a satisfying companion to *Graceling* and *Fire*. Cashore is able to weave together a variety of plotlines and bring in characters from the previous books without making *Bitterblue* too crowded. It’s nice to get to know minor characters from the earlier books better; it makes the world feel more complex and complete.
Although the book is difficult to read at times because of its darkness, Cashore leads readers through the process of truth and reconciliation along with Bitterblue and her people. The end result is catharsis rather than hopelessness.

The prologue and supplementary material tie in to the book’s themes as well. Fantasy books often include maps and lists of characters, but in *Bitterblue*, they act more like a product of Monsea’s new valuing of written information rather than a generic trope. The prologue initially seems incongruous; Bitterblue narrates it in the first person, but the rest of the book uses third person limited. However, in light of the creation of the Ministry of Stories and Truth, it fits perfectly. The story completes a full circle.

Overall, *Bitterblue* is helpful for thinking about literacy because it tackles the idea from so many different angles. It portrays literacy as a tool of power, and it can be useful for us to examine this topic in a world with very different power structures.
APPENDIX C: VIEWPOINTS EXERCISES

The activities in the lesson plan for Unit 3 / Class 17 come directly from The Viewpoints Book by Anne Bogart and Tina Landau. I’ve reproduced them below.

High Jumps

…standing in a circle, the group jumps in place together, as high as possible. The jump is not initiated by any individual but, rather, happens because of a shared consent. The goal is to simultaneously jump as high as possible, to land together in the same instant, and to land on the floor with as little noise as possible. At the height of the jump the feet should be tucked up under the buttocks so that as much space between the floor and the body as possible can be achieved. This exercise should be repeated until the group has discovered together how to accomplish the task. (26)

Peripheral Vision

…ask everyone to walk freely in a space experiment with presence. Presence is related to personal moment-to-moment interest; interest is something that cannot be faked or indicated. Everyone should use soft focus in order to develop awareness of the group and the surrounding space. The participants walk continuously throughout this exercise. While walking, have them refer back to the sense imagery of Exercise 4: the sensation of the golden band pulling up, the soft focus, strong legs and feet, open heart. This will be helpful.

Next, each participant chooses one person in the group to observe without letting that person know that they are being studied. Use soft focus, do not look directly at the chosen person, rather, see them in the periphery of your vision. Do not let the selected individual go out of your field of vision at any time. Allow information about the selected person to come toward you. You are reversing the habitual way information is processed. Rather than reaching out for information, let the information come to you. With soft focus, notice the color of the person’s clothes and skin, their unique shape, the rhythm of their walk, etc. Be aware of the moment when you lose interest, the moment that you stop allowing new information in. Attempt to remain present and interested in the information (the news) about this person.

After about a minute of this soft focus observation of an individual, ask everyone to release that person from her/his view. Each participant should choose a new person, again watched in the same soft, surreptitious way, with the task of allowing the differences to be discerned and felt. The information, or news, of this person’s difference from the previous person should be noticed. The colors are different, the body is different, and the tempos are different.

After a minute or so, ask each person to add another individual to her/his
peripheral vision without losing track of the one already under observation. Now there are two people in each person’s peripheral vision. At no time should one of those two people leave the field of vision. Now with twice as much news to feel and experience, ask the participants not to clump the two people together in their minds, but rather to allow for the differences of the two people to have their effect. After a while, add yet another person into the peripheral vision, so now the same three remain in the field of vision, all three allowed to remain distinct and individual. After a while add a fourth. The same four people should always remain in the person’s field of vision. If it is possible, add a fifth. Finally, let all five go and ask everybody to return to just walking with presence and interest.

Finally, ask everyone to choose a new person to observe with soft focus. Next, each participant should walk directly toward that person and come to a stop as close as possible to her/him. It will happen often that the group will fold into one or two sub-groups. Once all the participants are still, ask them to close their eyes. Remind the group that there are many sources for information besides seeing. Touch, for example, and sound and smell, and the sensation of heat or cold. Information seeps into the body through many places. Ask the participants to locate a part of their perceptual system that is not eager to be present and receptive. For example, perhaps a foot is pulled away, or a shoulder tensed. Ask them to include this part of their body in the sensation of the moment. Ask them to allow themselves to receive information—news—from all senses. After a minute or two, ask them to open their eyes without allowing vision to dominate the other senses. Have the participants move away from each other, all the while maintaining their sense of openness and heightened sensory perception. (29-31)

**Counting**

1. Begin with a counting exercise in which everyone walks in the space at a similar speed but in any direction. For example, if there are twenty people, ask the group to attempt to count from one to twenty without more than one person ever speaking at the same time, so everyone is counting a different number out loud. Each person is to speak only once in the course of counting to twenty. Once someone has counted a number, they are not to count again. If more than one person speaks at a time the group must start the counting all over again. If they have trouble doing this, ask them to listen and focus with more attention to the whole.

2. To cultivate listening even further, have the participants continue walking with soft focus while heightening awareness of their tempo. Everyone should walk at the same speed. Then, once established, each person should accelerate her/his speed, again in coordination with the other group members. Then each person should break into a run together; when acceleration reaches a peak, everyone should change to a deceleration together, slowing down as a group. From a medium walking speed the entire group should attempt to stop together at the same instant. In the moment the body stops, the internal energy accelerates.
3. After several moments of stillness, the group attempts to start walking again at the same instant and at a precise and unison speed. (65-66)

**The Flying Phrases**

In two or three minutes, each participant, working alone, creates a brief movement combination or phrase, which begins on one side of the space and ends on the other. The phrase should feel like flying; it should devour space, have a clear beginning, middle and end and be something that others will be able to learn quickly (and without injuring themselves). If a participant comes from a dance background it is fine for them to use that training in devising a combination.

1. Divide the participants into groups of five.

2. Choose one person from the entire group to show her/his own combination to all the groups. All five groups are to learn the combination immediately by watching.

3. The person who invented the combination stands in the middle. The first group performs the combination in unison, moving from one side of the space to the other. Count off: “5, 6, 7, 8” or “4, 3, 2, 1” to get them going. Perhaps suggest that suddenly it is opening night at a major regional theater and this combination has been rehearsed for five weeks on a LORT (B+) salary. With this attitude they are to perform as an ensemble, with a sense of what the others are doing at each instant, and with an ending that is definite and unified. If they have trouble staying together, ask them to at least “sell the ending.” Make us believe that they are a company.

4. Once the first group has performed this satisfactorily (it may take several tries) have the second group give it a try, with the originator once again in the middle. And so on. If a group performs really well, ask them to try it at double time, then half time.

Note: The point of this exercise is not the caliber of the choreography, but rather the quality of group performance. How does the group handle the sudden crisis of performance together? They should try the best they can to stay together and perform the movement in unison, but also learn to incorporate any “mistakes” gracefully.

This exercise develops fluency with Repetition. Repetition, you learn here, is not imitation, rather it is *entering into* the quality of other people’s Shape and Tempo.
WORKS CITED

Baer, Allison L., and Jacqueline N. Glasgow. “Negotiating Understanding Through the Young Adult Literature of Muslim Cultures.” *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, vol. 54, no. 1, 2010, pp. 23–32.


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