Age Matters in Literature and Culture

What goes on four legs in the morning, on two legs at noon, and on three legs in the evening?

The “capstone” class is a culminating experience for students to review literary, cultural, and rhetorical concepts acquired during undergraduate study and to build upon them. Students will assemble a “best of” writing portfolio and produce a research project that advances toward graduate level academic writing. The readings will be pulled from a variety of genres (novel, poetry, short story, play, film) and organized around the theme of age, a category often overlooked in English studies, but one that has much to teach us about subject formation, the reading and writing act, and the nation. What does it mean to be told to act one’s age? How have the meanings attached to the child, the adolescent, the middle ager, the old person shifted during the last 100 years and for what social/political end? How do age categories protect us and how do they cause us harm? As a class we will build a cultural studies of age as a category and a concept, while keeping an ever-vigilant eye out for ways to complicate (deconstruct) the category/concept and question its usefulness.

Required Readings/Viewings

Aria, Ron. Road to Tamazunchale
Ashby, Hal. “Harold and Maude” (film)
Carroll, Lewis Alice in Wonderland/Through the Looking Glass
Chopin, Kate The Awakening
Joyce, James “The Dead”
Kureishi, Buddha of Suburbia
Mann, Thomas. Death in Venice
Nabakov, Vladimir Lolita
Wordsworth, William “Intimations of Immortality”

Secondary Readings:

Aries, Phillipe. “From Immodesty to Innocence” (Centuries of Childhood)
Cohen, Patricia. “The Prime Meridian” (In our Prime: The Invention of Middle Age)
Erikson, Erik H. “Prologue” (Identity, Youth and Crisis)
Esman, Aaron H. “Adolescence in History” (Adolescence and Culture)
Freud, Anna. “Adolescence”
Goals for the Capstone Class: Over the course of the semester, you will
• explore course readings and issues with your peers in open and engaged discussions;
• expand and share your knowledge of literature, contexts, and genres in relation to our thematic focus;
• organize and reflect upon a portfolio of your college writings in three different discourse genres;
• engage in sustained research that you will share with your classmates and use to develop your own independent project.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLO): Students who successfully complete this course will be able to
1. apply professional standards in argumentation, research, and documentation;
2. evaluate various uses of genre and textuality;
3. create independent research projects by applying the skills of literary and cultural analysis.

Grade Break-down:
- Reading responses 15%
- Capstone Portfolio 10%
- 4 Short writing projects 40%
- Group Presentation 10%
- Research project 25%

Course Requirements

Attendance
Active participation in class discussion and attendance are crucial for your success in this class. You can miss two classes without penalty. For every subsequent class you miss, two points may be deducted from your final grade.

Daily writing: Besides formal essays, you will write prompted responses to readings, critiques of presentations, and focused questions about readings, and presentations during class.

Capstone Portfolio:
You will find the explanation for this exercise on the last page of the syllabus. The goal of the portfolio is for you to reflect on the discourse genres in which you have written and studied as an undergraduate.

**Short Writings** (textual analysis and creative writing)

You will write three essays (3 – 4 pages) that demonstrate your ability to work closely with literary and visual texts. You will make claims that you support with textual evidence and analysis, and you will use your claims to build an argument. In addition, you will write a personal memoir or series of poems that express your experience of aging or working with/against age categories.

**Complicating Age Categories**

The first week of class you will join a group whose task will be to complicate the neat, overly simplified age categories used in the syllabus that structure our readings. For example, how do the meanings surrounding “the child” change when we move away from American/European contexts? Does the rebellious teen hold if we move to Asia, to the nineteenth century, to the poor and working classes? How do other countries treat their elderly as compared to ours? In terms of nation, is America a teen, and if so which nation is the adult? What about new nations, formed after the fall of empire? Are they children, and if so, isn’t this problematic? In groups you will make a list of ideas, concepts, contexts that complicate and/or extend our understanding of your assigned age category. Perhaps you create new categories, with new names (young professional?)

Each of you will conduct outside research on one of two of the identified ideas/concepts; along with this individual contribution, the group as a whole will link the individual strands together and synthesize the research findings to build a cohesive, thought-provoking argument. The format of this presentation is up to the group, but it must be unified, not a series of dangling topic threads. Engaging the class in Q&A or an activity directly relevant to topic (no games please!!) will be a plus. Each group member will turn in their portion of the presentation, including notes, a bibliography, and an assessment of learning. In addition, students in audience will write a critique of the presentation at its conclusion and turn it in to me. The presentation must be at least 45 minutes and no longer than 60 minutes.

**Research Project**

This project is meant to represent the culmination of skills you have acquired during your years as an English major: literary/rhetorical analysis, argumentation, research and documentation. You will identify a research topic early in the semester that investigates or further complicates the meanings associated with age categories and aging. Feel free to use your short essays and your contribution to the group presentation toward the building of your research project. Your final paper will be 12 – 15 pages in length and will include knowledge/information gleaned from at least 12 scholarly sources. You will present a section of your paper at the mini-research conference held on the last three days of class.
Additional Information:

**Academic Advising:** The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. The Academic Advisor will set up a degree plan, which must be signed by the student, a faculty mentor, and the department chair. The College's Academic Advising Center is located in Driftwood 203E, and can be reached at 825-3466.

**Academic Honesty/Plagiarism:** The University will not tolerate plagiarism or any other form of intellectual or academic dishonesty. Violations of academic honesty will be processed under the Procedure for Academic Misconduct Cases 13.02.99.C3.01 (see http://ses.tamucc.edu/grievances.html and the Student Code of Conduct http://judicialaffairs.tamucc.edu/assets/2013-2014StudentHandbook.pdf). All cases of academic misconduct are recorded in the student’s file. Consequences are determined by the faculty member and/or the Academic Integrity Hearing Panel. It is sometimes difficult to understand what plagiarism actually is. Students sometimes commit unintentional plagiarism (not citing sources properly, for example), because they are unaware of the standards that apply. Plagiarism includes:

- using the work of another as your own,
- downloading or purchasing ready-made essays off the web and using them as your own,
- using resource materials without correct documentation,
- using the organization or language of a source without using quote marks and proper citation, or
- turning in a researched paper without citing sources in an appropriate documentation style.

Be aware that there are many ways to plagiarize. English 1301 and 1302 courses and the Writing Center at CASA will review rules of academic citation. Information academic citation is available at the Purdue University’s OWL: [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/) and/or from our local Writing Center at CASA.

**Notice to Students with Disabilities:** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall 116. You can also visit their website at [http://disabilityservices.tamucc.edu/](http://disabilityservices.tamucc.edu/) and contact them via e-mail at [disability.services@tamucc.edu](mailto:disability.services@tamucc.edu). If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom, or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance.

**Grade Appeal Process:** As stated in University Rule 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures, a student who believes that his or her final grade reflects academic
evaluation which is arbitrary, prejudiced, or inappropriate in view of the standards and procedures outlined in the class syllabus, may appeal the grade given for the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see the University Rule 13.02.99.C2.01, in the University Handbook for Rules & Procedures: http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/Rules_Procedures/

**REMINDER TO ENGLISH MAJORS:** As part of the English undergraduate capstone course (ENGL 4351), all English majors are required to submit a portfolio of writings in different discourse genres that they have completed for their college classes. To help you prepare for this assignment, you should **keep a copy** of all essays, research papers, literary analyses, creative and report writing, etc., so that you will have an ample selection from which to choose when the portfolio comes due.

**Readings and Class Schedule:** (asterisked readings can be found on blackboard. I expect you to print them out, [re]read them, and bring them with you to class. Not having your readings in class suggests to me a lack of commitment to learning).

**Wed. Jan 22:** Introductions

**Childhood**

**Mon. Jan 27:**
* Wordsworth’s “Intimations of Immortality”
Reading response 1 due
Sign up for presentation groups

**Wed. Jan 29:** Alice in Wonderland
* “The Discovery of Childhood” (Aries)

**Mon. Feb 3:** Through the Looking Glass
* “Lewis Carroll and the Little Girl” (Robson)
Reading response 2 due

**Wed. Feb 5:** Lolita
* “Annabelle Lee” (Poe)

**Mon. Feb 10:** Lolita
* “Inventing the child—and Sexuality” (Kincaid)
Reading response 3 due

**Web. Feb 12:** Lolita
Group 1 presentation: Complicating “the child”

**Fri. Feb 14:** **Essay 1 due:** Representations of the child
**Adolescence**

Mon. Feb 17:    Lolita

Wed. Feb 19:    Adolescence and Culture (Esman)
                 Identity, Youth, and Crisis (Erikson)
                 “Adolescence” (Anna Freud)
                 from Coming of Age in Somoa (Mead)

Mon. Feb 24:    *Buddha of Suburbia*
                 *Reading response 4 due*

Wed. Feb 26:    *Buddha of Suburbia*

Mon. Mar 3:     *Buddha of Suburbia*
                 *Group 2 Presentation: Complicating the teen/adolescent*

Wed. Mar 5:     *Buddha of Suburbia*

Fri. Mar 7:     *Essay #2 due*

Mar 10 – 15     SPRING BREAK!!!

**Adult/Middle Age**

Mon. Mar 17:    *The Awakening*
                 *From Passages* (Sheehy)

Wed. Mar 19:    *The Awakening*

Mon. Mar 24:    “The Dead”
                 *From In our Prime* (Cohen)

Wed. Mar 26:    *Death in Venice*
                 “Birth of Tragedy” (Nietzsche)
                 *Reading response #5 due*

Mon. Mar 31:    *Death in Venice*
                 *Group 3 Presentation: Complicating “the adult”*
                 *Essay #3 due*

Wed. Apr 2:     Portfolio workshop
                 *Research proposal due*
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<th>Assignment</th>
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<td>Mon. Apr 7</td>
<td>* Tennyson “Ulysses,” Yeats “Sailing to Byzantium.” “A Sunset of the City” (Brooks), “Forgetfulness” (Collins)</td>
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<td>Wed. Apr 9</td>
<td>“Harold and Maude”</td>
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<td><strong>Portfolios due</strong></td>
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<td>Mon. Apr 14</td>
<td>Creative writing due—poetry or memoir</td>
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<td><strong>Annotated bibliography due</strong></td>
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<td>Wed. Apr 16</td>
<td><em>Road to Tamazunchale</em></td>
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<td>Mon. Apr 21</td>
<td><em>Road to Tamazunchale</em></td>
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<td>Group 4: Complicating the Adult</td>
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<td>Wed. Apr 23</td>
<td><em>Road to Tamazunchale</em></td>
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<td><strong>Draft (or tight outline) of research paper due</strong> (8 pages)</td>
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<td>Mon. Apr 28</td>
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<td>Wed. Apr 30</td>
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<td>Mon. May 5</td>
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<td><strong>Scheduled final:</strong> Research project due</td>
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