



# You'll Understand When You're Older: Exploring the Bildungsroman

Studies in Genre  
(English Course Number)  
(Semester/Year)  
(Day/Time)  
(Location)

Matthew Aaron Hernandez  
(Office: Location & Hours)

Email for a Zoom appointment.  
If you would like to meet in person,  
email and we can set that up too.

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

In this seminar, we will explore the evolution of the Bildungsroman, coming of age narratives, as both genre and form, from its early roots to its modern iterations. As a class, we will investigate how the bildungsroman has been theorized, and the ways authors from historically marginalized backgrounds have pushed against these formal constraints, challenging the genre and our understanding of what it means to come of age. While much of the foundational scholarship on the bildungsroman has been written about texts produced by white European and U.S. writers, in this course we will examine novels written by Native, Black, Asian American, Latinx, and LGBTQIA+ authors (and within the intersections of these identities) alongside readings considered canonic for the genre. We will examine, discuss, and reflect on these texts by pairing them with both classic and contemporary scholarship on the bildungsroman (both genre and form) to ask what that scholarship ultimately illuminates, and fails to account for, about these aspects. Topics include: the origins of the bildungsroman; theorizations of structure, time and space, perspective, voice, formal constraints, sociohistorical context, trauma theory; as well as innovations in speculative fiction, fantasy, and the bildungsroman's connection to role playing games.

In addition to our weekly in person meetings, you will be required to stay current with our Google Classroom Site (GCS). This is where you will find course materials, assignments, and links to optional further reading/viewing.

## **COURSE TEXTS\***

Johann van Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (Selections) (1796)  
Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park* (1814)  
Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield* (1850)  
Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland* (1865)  
Robert Lewis Stevenson, *Kidnapped* (1886)  
Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890)  
Rudyard Kipling, *Kim* (1901)  
D'Arcy McNickle, *The Surrounded* (1936)  
Ralph Ellison, *Battle Royal* (1947)  
Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (1987)  
Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower* (1993)  
Nic Stone, *Dear Martin* (2017)  
Jason Reynolds, *Long Way Down* (2017)  
Kelly Yang, *Front Desk* (2018)  
Kiku Hughes, *Displacement* (2018)

\*For further suggested readings, see the end of this document

\*\*Theory and Criticism (as well as selected works) will be posted on our Google Classroom Site (GCS).

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

**20 % Class Participation.** This class will run as a discussion-based seminar where a myriad of perspectives and voices collectively generate knowledge and develop varying readings of our texts. I expect everyone to contribute to the overall productive dynamic of the classroom by participating in discussions, asking questions, and offering your own critical insights and thoughts. This means I expect you to have read, have your materials, and be prepared to discuss the readings in every session. This is a crucial part of the class. I encourage you to take notes as you read and to freewrite your thoughts during your reading and after you have finished a text.

**10 % Game Play.** Throughout the semester there will be short games posted to our Google Classroom Site (GCS), these are meant to deepen your experiences reading and engaging with the assigned texts. These are listed on the course schedule and will be posted periodically throughout the semester (generally a week or two before they are due) and should take no more than 10 to 15 minutes to complete.

**20 % Class Facilitation.** Acting as the class facilitator is an opportunity to present your interpretations of a text and showcase the steps you took to get there. This is also your chance to incorporate your own separate interests into the course more prominently, so I encourage you to choose something you are truly interested in, be it an aspect of the text, a theoretical practice, or an exercise that engages the reading in a new and insightful way. Presentations should be about 20-30 minutes and should offer entryways into the text or texts on the schedule for that day, posing questions for the class to direct our discussions. Questions could be posed during or after the presentation, or both. Often, the most generative questions are stated simply and are ones the student is genuinely curious about. You do not have to have answers to these questions and may instead choose to use this time to engage the class on textual elements you found confusing or difficult.

**10 % Final Project Flash Presentation.** This assignment is designed to help you start planning for your final project. By this point, your research interests/questions might be broad however, this is your opportunity to elicit feedback from your peers. First, briefly state what you are interested in exploring. Then, decide the form that your project will take (see below for some suggestions). For your flash presentation please let us know which text/texts you are engaging and then succinctly explain the: a) argument b) interventions/contributions c) theoretical framework and/or methodology d) findings e) how it might potentially be useful for you.

**40 % Final Project (Options):**

Paper Option (15-20 pages): You can write about any topic of your choosing. It should demonstrate literary/cultural analysis and incorporate relevant research materials. You could write a traditional academic paper or an essay you might want to pitch for a public venue like *LARB* or *Public Books*.

Game Option: Create an interactive game (using either Twine or Google Classroom Tech) in which the main protagonist comes of age.

\*See extra handout for further explanation.

Mixed Media Presentation: Using Scalar (or another relevant hosting site) create a mixed media presentation of at least one of our course texts. These projects should incorporate video, music, and/or images alongside a written portion that engages our course theme and one of our texts in a relevant way. The written section/s should be no more than 10 pages and no less than 5 in total, depending on the media portion, and can be broken up by section. Please also provide an outline or content section along with your abstract if you choose this option.

## SCHEDULE

### Week 1

#### Reading Due:

Johann van Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (Selections)  
Bakhtin, MM. "The Bildungsroman and Its Significance in the History of Realism (Toward a Historical Typology of the Novel)," from *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* (GCS)

### Week 2

#### Reading Due:

Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield* (1850)  
Moretti, Franco. *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture*, in McKeon, *Theory of the Novel*. Selections (GCS)

Choose Class Facilitator Dates

### Week 3

#### Reading Due:

Robert Lewis Stevenson, *Kidnapped* (1886)  
Graham, Sarah. *A History of the Bildungsroman*. Selections (GCS)

#### Play:

*Kidnapped* Choose Your Own Adventure (GCS)

- Week 4**      **Reading Due:**  
Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park* (1814)  
Said, Edward. “Consolidated Vision”, *Culture and Imperialism*, 1993. (GCS)
- Week 5**      **Reading Due:**  
Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890)  
Esty, Jed. *Unseasonable Youth: Modernism, Colonialism, and the Fiction of Development*. Selections (GCS)  
**Play:**  
“Dorian’s Mirror” Game (GCS)
- Week 6**      **Reading Due:**  
Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland* (1865)  
Esty, Jed. *Unseasonable Youth: Modernism, Colonialism, and the Fiction of Development*. Selections (GCS)  
**Play:**  
“Wonderland” Game (GCS)
- Week 7**      **Reading Due:**  
Rudyard Kipling, *Kim* (1901)  
Said, Edward. “Introduction”. *Kim*. Penguin Books. (GCS)
- Week 8**      **Reading Due:**  
Betty Smith, *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* (1943)  
Ralph Ellison, *Battle Royal* (1947)
- Week 9**      **Reading Due:**  
Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (1987)  
Morrison, Toni. *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*.  
Selections (GCS)  
Final Project Discussion and Q&A
- Week 10**      **Spring Break—No class** (Relax if you’re able to, or have an adventure, give in to some good madness, or just catch up on some sleep)
- Week 11**      **Reading Due:**  
D’Arcy McNickle, *The Surrounded* (1936)  
Lima, Enrique. “The Uneven Development of the *Bildungsroman*: D’Arcy McNickle and Native American Modernity”  
**Play:**  
“Development Arrested” Game (GCS)
- Week 12**      **Reading Due:**  
Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower* (1993)  
Thomas, Ebony Elizabeth. *The Dark Fantastic*. Selections (GCS)

- Week 13      Reading Due:**  
 Kelly Yang, *Front Desk* (2018)  
 Kiku Hughes, *Displacement* (2018)  
 Kidd, Kenneth. "A" is for Auschwitz: Psychoanalysis, Trauma Theory, and the "Children's Literature of Atrocity". (GCS)  
 Tribunella, Eric. "Introduction" *Melancholia and Maturation: The Use Of Trauma in American Children's Literature*. (GCS)
- Week 14      Final Project Flash Presentations (5 Mins each)**  
Project Abstracts Due
- Week 15      Reading Due:**  
 Jason Reynolds, *Long Way Down* (2017)  
 Crain, Patricia. "Regarding the Pain of Children." (GCS)  
**Play:**  
 "Elevator" Game (GCS)
- Week 16      Reading Due:**  
 Nic Stone, *Dear Martin* (2017)  
 MacCann, Donnarac. *White Supremacy in Children's Literature*. Selections (GCS)  
**Write:**  
 A letter to someone whose advice you'd like to have.  
 (We won't be sharing these in class, but we will use this exercise to direct our discussion.)

**Final project due via email the Thursday before the end of the semester by 11:59pm**

\*\*Please consider the schedule a living document, which could change depending on our class needs.

### **SUGGESTED FURTHER READING (OPTIONAL)**

#### NOVELS

Johann van Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (1796)  
 Thomas Hughes, *Tom Brown's School Days* (1857)  
 George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans), *The Mill on the Floss* (1860)  
 Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations* (1861)  
 Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure* (1896)  
 E.M. Forester, *Maurice* (1913/1971)  
 Dodie Smith, *I Capture the Castle* (1948)  
 Rita Mae Brown, *Rubyfruit Jungle* (1973)  
 Walter Dean Myers, *Monster* (1999)  
 Marjane Satrapi, *The Complete Persepolis* (2000)  
 Julie Ann Peters, *Luna* (2004)  
 Nnedi Okorafor, *Akata Witch* (2011)  
 Kelly Yang, *Front Desk* (2018)  
 Kiku Hughes, *Displacement* (2018)  
 Imam Baksh, *The Dark of the Sea* (2019)  
 Angeline Boulley, *Firekeeper's Daughter* (2021)

## SCHOLARSHIP

Esty, Jed. *Unseasonable Youth: Modernism, Colonialism, and the Fiction of Development*.

Graham, Sarah. *A History of the Bildungsroman*.

MacCann, Donnarae. *White Supremacy in Children's Literature*.

Myers, Christopher. "Where Are the People of Color in Children's Books".

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Myers, Walter Dean. "Diversity in Kids' Books".

Morrison, Toni. *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*.

Thomas, Ebony Elizabeth. *The Dark Fantastic*.

Tribunella, Eric. *Melancholia and Maturation: The Use Of Trauma in American Children's Literature*.

Trites, Roberta Seelinger. *Disturbing the Universe: Power and Repression in Adolescent Literature*.

## STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC CONDUCT AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS

### **Academic Conduct:**

Plagiarism – presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, "Behavior Violating University Standards" <https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>.

### **Support Systems:**

Student Counseling Services (SCS) - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

<https://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling/>

### **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** - 1-800-273-8255

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

### **Relationship & Sexual Violence Prevention** Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 - 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp/>

### **Sexual Assault Resource Center**

For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: <http://sarc.usc.edu/>

### **Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX compliance** – (213) 740-5086

Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class.

<https://equity.usc.edu/>

### **Bias Assessment Response and Support**

Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support/>

**Student Support & Advocacy** – (213) 821-4710

Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa/>

**Diversity at USC** – <https://diversity.usc.edu/> Tabs for Events, Programs and Training, Task Force (including representatives for each school), Chronology, Participate, Resources for Students

Behavior that persistently or grossly interferes with classroom activities is considered disruptive behavior and may be subject to disciplinary action. Such behavior inhibits other students' ability to learn and an instructor's ability to teach. A student responsible for disruptive behavior may be required to leave class pending discussion and resolution of the problem and may be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs for disciplinary action. These strictures may extend to behaviors outside the classroom that are related to the course.

**Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis**

In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies.