

Sophister Option Description MT 2026

Option Name: Genders and Sexualities in Children's Literatures

Option Short Title: Genders and Sexualities

Lecturer Name and Email Address: Pádraic Whyte, whytepa@tcd.ie

ECTS Weighting: 10

Semester/Term Taught: Michaelmas Term

Year: JS

Module Content*

1. Introduction: Theoretical and critical context
2. Maria Tatar, *The Classic Fairy Tales* (1999)
3. Periodicals: *The Boy's Own Paper*, *Atalanta* (19thC /20thC)
4. Robert Cormier, *The Chocolate War* (1975)
5. Malinda Lo, *Last Night at the Telegraph Club* (2021)
6. Aidan Chambers, *Dance on My Grave* (1982)
7. Reading Week
8. Student Presentations
9. Siobhan Dowd, *A Swift Pure Cry* (2006)
10. Hinailemoana Wong-Kalu, Dean Hamer, and Joe Wilson; illus by Daniel Sousa, *Kapaemahu* (2021)
11. Walter Dean Myers, *Monster* (novel format, 1999)
12. Creative Project/Presentation/Revision

**Please note that module content is subject to change. A final schedule and full reading list will be provided on Blackboard before term begins.*

Learning Outcomes:

On successful completion of this module students should be able to

- Discuss and evaluate representations of genders and sexualities within the broader context of history and criticism of children's literature
- Identify key theoretical approaches specific to the study of gender and sexualities in children's literature
- Relate textual analysis to broader cultural debates
- Undertake independent research and take responsibility for their own learning experience

- Develop existing critical and analytical skills, become empowered citizens, and think beyond the confines of 'learning outcomes'

Option Learning Aims:

This new Sophister module facilitates the exploration of genders and sexualities across a broad range of children's literary texts, from picturebooks through to Young Adult fiction. Through the lens of genders and sexualities, students will be introduced to a series of subject areas including fairytales, school stories, child-adult power-relations, politics, national identity, visual narratives, narrative voice, ability, race and ethnicity. Discussions will be positioned within the context of broader cultural and literary debates and will incorporate a number of theoretical approaches, particularly those related to gender theory, feminist theories, queer theories, and theories of masculinities. We'll address some big questions such as: what exactly is children's literature; what do we mean by genders and sexualities; what language have we used in the past to discuss these topics and what language are we using today; does the attempt to categorise impede or facilitate discussion; who gets to decide what is 'age-appropriate' and why; and what might it mean to be male or female or neither or both? The analysis of texts will also focus on theoretical approaches specific to the study of children's literature. Students are expected to read the assigned texts **as well as** any assigned critical material for each week. Students are also expected to engage fully with class discussions and to complete any formative tasks.

Assessment Details:

- Number of Components: 1
- Name/Type of Component(s): Essay
- Word Count of Component(s): 5,000 – 6,000 words
- Percentage Value of Component(s): 100%

Preliminary Reading List:

(A full and final list will be provided at the beginning of term)

Theories of Children's Literature

Hollindale, Peter, *Signs of Childness in Children's Books* (Gloucester: Thimble Press, 1997)

Hunt, Peter (ed) *Children's Literature Vols 1-4* (London: Routledge, 2006)

- *Literature for Children: Contemporary criticism* (London: Routledge, 1992) Mallan, Kerry, *Gender Dilemmas in Children's Fiction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009)

Reynolds, Kimberley (ed), *Modern Children's Literature: an introduction* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005)

Rose, Jacqueline, *The Case of Peter Pan or The Impossibility of Children's Fiction*, Revised edn (London: Macmillan Press, 1994)

Stephens, John, *Language and Ideology in Children's Fiction* (London: Longman, 1992)

- (ed) *Ways of Being Male: Representing Masculinities in Children's Literature and Film* (New York and London: Routledge, 2002)

Trites, Roberta Seelinger, *Disturbing the Universe: Power and Repression in Adolescent Literature* (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 2000)

Wall, Barbara, *The Narrator's Voice: The Dilemma of Children's Fiction* (London: Macmillan, 1991)

Gender

Belsey, Catherine and Moore, Jane (eds), *The Feminist Reader: Essays in Gender and the Politics of Literary Criticism* (2nd ed), (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997)

Butler, Judith, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990)

Connell, RW, *The Men and the Boys* (Oxford: Polity, 2000) - *Masculinities* (2nd ed.). (Oxford: Polity Press, 2005)

Connell, Raewyn and Rebecca Pearse, *Gender: In World Perspective* 3rd edn (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015)

de Beauvoir, Simone, *The Second Sex* (New York: Vintage, 1974)

Hall, Donald E. and Annamarie Jagose (eds.), *The Routledge Queer Studies Reader*, (New York: Routledge, 2013)

McCann, Carole R. and Seung-kyung, Kim (eds), *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2013)

Whitehead, Stephen M and Barrett, Frank (eds), *The Masculinities Reader* (Oxford: Polity, 2001)

Suggestions for general reading

Appleyard, J. A., *Becoming a Reader: the Experience of Fiction from Childhood to Adulthood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990)

Bradford, Clare, Mallan, Kerry, Stephens, John, and McCallum, Robyn, *New World Orders in Contemporary Children's Literature: Utopian Transformations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008)

Chambers, Aidan, *Booktalk: Occasional Writing on Literature and Children* (London: Bodley Head, 1985)

Grenby, M. O., *Children's Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008)

Joosen, Vanessa, and Vloeberghs, Katrien (eds), *Changing Concepts of Childhood and Children's Literature* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2006)

Knowles, Murray and Malmkjær, Kirsten, *Language and Control in Children's Literature* (London: Routledge, 1996)

Lesnik-Oberstein, Karín (ed), *Children's Literature: New Approaches* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004)

Mallan, Kerry and Pearce, Sharyn (eds), *Youth Cultures: Texts, Images and Identities* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003)

McCallum, Robyn, *Ideologies of Identity in Adolescent Fiction: The Dialogic Construction of Subjectivity* (New York: Garland, 1999)

McCallum, Robyn and Stephens, John, *Retelling Stories, Framing Culture. Traditional Story and Metanarratives in Children's Literature* (New York and London: Garland, 1998)

Nikolajeva, Maria, *Children's Literature Comes of Age; Towards a New Aesthetic* (New York and London: Garland, 1996)

- *From Mythic to Linear; Time in Children's Literature* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2000)

- *Aesthetic Approaches to Children's Literature: an Introduction* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2005)

- *Power, Voice and Subjectivity in Children's Literature* (New York and London: Routledge, 2009)

Nikolajeva, Maria and Scott, Carole, *How Picture Books Work* (New York and London: Garland, 2001)

Nodelman, Perry, *Words About Pictures: The Narrative Art of Children's Picture Book* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1988)

Nodelman, Perry, *The Pleasures of Children's Literature*, 2nd. edn. (New York: Longman, 1992/1996)

Tucker, Nicholas, *The Child and the Book: A Psychological and Literary Exploration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981)

Warner, Marina, *Managing Monsters; Six Myths of Our Time* (London: Vintage: 1994)

Zornado, Joseph L., *Inventing the Child. Culture, Ideology, and the Rise of Childhood* (New York: Garland, 2001)

Online Journals: (available through Library website) *These are really useful!*

The Lion and the Unicorn

Children's Literature in Education

Children's Literature Association

International Research in Children's Literature Men and Masculinities

Websites:

www.irscl.com

www.childrensbooksireland.ie

Please note:

- Curricular information is subject to change.
- Information is displayed only for guidance purposes, relates to the current academic year only and is subject to change.