Course Description: English 356: “Young Adult Literature” typically meets on a twice a week schedule for 75-minute sessions or three times a week for 50-minute sessions. The class will also meet for a 2-hour final examination. Students are expected to complete a significant amount of weekly reading of primary and/or secondary source material that will cover the historical scope of the field. The weekly reading will be accompanied by such assignments as reading quizzes, in-class and out-of-class writings, and class presentations. The amount of writing will average between 16-24 pages over the semester and will, at times, require substantial research. The required outside of class workload will average 6 hours per week.

Course Introduction: In this course we will explore the field of Young Adult Literature from a cultural, historical, and theoretical perspective with the end goal of coming to a general understanding of the field. We will begin our semester working towards an understanding of what it means to be young adult (is it age? Maturity? Cultural? Etc.) and when the “concept” of the young adult and young adult literature came to be. This discussion will lead us to generating questions concerning and topics about YA culture that we expect to find in our literary study. Finally, we will move to investigating how these ideas and issues are explored and problematized by a variety of authors. It is important to note that this will be a critical study and dependent on critical conversation and analysis; in other words, while I understand that many of us do read for pleasure and it is even more common for adults to turn to the field of YA literature for reasons of pleasure, when reading and discussing these texts we must do so with a critical eye that actively questions each text in terms of genre, style, character, purpose, theme, etc. We must remember that the greatest respect that we can give to an author is to recognize his/her contribution to culture AND to art.
Program Learning Outcomes:
As this course can either fulfill an elective for the English major OR is a requirement for the English/Secondary Education major, the following PLOs will be achieved:

1. The student will demonstrate the ability to read complex texts, closely and accurately.
2. The student will demonstrate the ability to comprehend both traditional and contemporary schools/methods of critical theory and apply them to literary texts to generate relevant interpretations.
3. The student will demonstrate the ability to effectively conduct literary research.
4. The student will demonstrate the ability to write clear, grammatically correct prose for a variety of purposes in regard to literary analysis.

We will accomplish these goals through the reading of primary, secondary, and tertiary materials and we will be tested on our understanding of said materials; we will write several critical essays that will require us to engage primary texts through a provided critical lens; and, we will write a longer, research driven argument that will be due near the end of the semester.

Required Texts:
John Green, *Looking for Alaska*
Nonieqa Ramos, *The Disturbed Girl’s Dictionary*
E. Lockhart, *Fly on the Wall: How One Girl Saw Everything*
Robert Cormier, *The Chocolate War*
Neil Schusterman, *Challenger Deep*
Ashley Hope Perez, *Out of Darkness*
Justina Ireland, *Dread Nation*
David Levithan, *Boy Meets Boy*
Libba Bray, *Going Bovine*

Course Requirements:
--A midterm and final exam (each will be worth 100 points)
--Two (short) critical essays. Each short essay will be worth 100 points.
--A process driven Group Seminar Project. This will be worth a total of 200 points (it will be based on 100 points, but counted twice). A separate handout will explain the requirements of this project.

Final Grade
At the end of the semester, one will have had the opportunity to earn a total of 600 points. As everything is weighted the same in terms of overall percentage, this will be the required number of points one must have to earn a specific grade.

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You can figure your grade out at any point in the semester by simply adding up the total number of points that you have earned up to that point and dividing it by the total number of points possible at that point.
Course Assignments:

Reading:
As you will see from the calendar, you will be expected to complete a good deal of reading for each week of class. I have divided the class calendar into small units. At the start of each unit, we will read a series of theoretical essays about the unit. These essays will give us a foundation for the next several weeks of discussion and a discourse that we may employ. Then, in the two weeks following each introduction, you will be expected to complete a novel and set of secondary readings for each class period. The success of the class will largely depend on your having completed all the required readings and thought about the possible conversations to emerge from all of our readings.

Should it become clear that the class is not completing the weekly reading assignments, I reserve the right to add weekly reading tests to the syllabus and the grade criteria. I understand and do expect that there will be times when you struggle with comprehending the exact argument being made or theory being put forward, but this does not mean that you quit reading. Instead, as you read, write down your questions and bring those to class or post them to D2L discussion areas that I create.

Furthermore, the essays that you are provided with should also act as writing examples. In other words, when working on your own academic writing and interpretation, these essays should be used as examples of strong and weak critical arguments. These outside sources will be available electronically through modules in D2L. It is my expectation that you have the texts available to you during our class meetings (either print them out or bring in an electronic device—not your phone—on which you can bring up the document). I expect that you will make notations on these texts and thus not spend class time searching for textual references.

Exams:
As you will see from the course calendar, we will have a final exam. The exam will be cumulative in nature. You will be asked to answer four essay questions. When producing the answers to each question, you will be required to make use of the majority of texts that we cover during the semester.

Critical Essays:
During the course of the semester, every student will be responsible for completing two critical essays. I will break the class into groups and each group will be assigned to write on a specific text/secondary source. For these short essays, you must write on the text(s) that you have been assigned. The short essay IS NOT a summary of the primary or secondary text; it IS NOT a space where you share your own gut reaction to either the primary or secondary text; it IS NOT a space where you simply go off on a tangent that is barely connected to an aspect of the primary or secondary text. Instead, the short essay IS to be an argumentative essay; as the author, you
ARE to assume that I have read the same primary and secondary sources and thus you can reference those works but do not need to offer full summaries; the argument MUST BE supported through the analysis/discussion of textual evidence, not just your own statements (reactions, responses, opinions).

As noted late in the syllabus, your writing is to be viewed as academic in purpose and thus follow all the “rules” and “requirements” for academic writing. Each of these shorts essays is to be 4 pages in length (this does not include the works cited page), and you are not allowed to go over 4 pages. The purpose in such a length requirement is that you will need (at minimum) 4 FULL pages to introduce your argument, set up your support, provide developed analysis, and conclude your discussion and there will not be room for you to get lost on tangents; this forces us to be precise readers and writers which encourages a great deal of thought to be put into the pre-writing stage.

**Group Seminar Project**
This final project—completed in pairs—will be due on the last day of class (April 28th). A handout will be provided describing the project, how the pairings will be made, and a list of bench mark dates. This project will count double in terms of your final grade; in other words, whatever your group earns out of 100 will be counted twice.

**General Grading Standard:**
A: 90-100: Students earning the grade of an A on any assignment will have completed work that obviously demonstrates a more than average understanding of the course material and fulfills all aspects and requirements of the assignment. The grade of an A is reserved for that work which expertly displays one’s ability to engage the ideas at hand, recognize and dialogue about the complications of such ideas, and translate such dialogue into clear, academic prose that is free of stigmatized errors.

B: 80-89: Students earning the grade of a B on any assignment will have completed work that demonstrates a more than average understanding of the course material and fulfills all aspects and requirements of the assignment. The grade of a B is reserved for that work which adeptly displays one’s ability to engage the ideas at hand, recognize and dialogue about the complications of such ideas, and translate such dialogue into clear, academic prose that is free of stigmatized errors. However, the level of thought, while still above average, may fluctuate in terms of analytic abilities and expression.

C: 70-79: Students earning the grade of a C on any assignment will have completed work that demonstrates an average understanding of the course material and fulfills all aspects and requirements of the assignment. The grade of a C is reserved for that work which displays one’s ability to engage the ideas at hand (more so through summary and response rather than analysis), recognize and dialogue about the complications of such ideas (however, the complications recognized will focus more on surface level issues rather than the greater whole), and translate such dialogue into clear, academic prose that is free of stigmatized errors. As can be seen from this description, the level of thought will be acceptable and display that a student has read the assignment, but his/her analytic abilities and level of expression will not be nearly as complicated nor developed. Instead, C work will display a student’s hold to traditional methods
of expression (simpler construction of sentence and paragraph development) and a struggle to display complex, critical thinking skills.

D: 60-69: Students earning the grade of a D on any assignment will have completed work that demonstrates a below average understanding of course material and may not fulfill all aspects and requirements of the assignment. The grade of a D is reserved for that work which displays one’s struggle or refusal to engage the ideas at hand, simply summarizes the work under study with no actual recognition of or dialogue about the complications of such ideas, and the translation of ideas into writing is completed in such a convoluted manner that the audience will have difficulty following the conversation.

F: 0-59: Students earning the grade of a F on any assignment will either (a) not have completed the assignment, (b) will have completed the assignment but not followed the guidelines, or (c) will have completed the assignment and demonstrated a total misunderstanding of the course material. In this case, it will be obvious that the student has either not completed the required reading and/or given him/herself enough time to develop the work. The grade of a F is reserved for that work which does not engage the issues at hand, offers a base (not complete) summary of the work at hand with no critical engagement, and the translation of ideas into writing is either incomplete or the audience will be unable to follow the conversation. It is important to remember that a student can receive 0 out of 100 points. In the case that a student only partially completes an assignment (in terms of page length, but not purpose), s/he may receive 0 points.

**Course Policies:**

*Attendance and Late Work:*

While attendance may not be mandatory in all of your classes, I do hold to an attendance policy. As much of your success will depend on the deepening of your critical thinking and writing skills and such skills will be tested daily in class, attendance is imperative. This being said, you will be allowed one absence without any penalty (other than missing any work that is done in class that day). However, if you miss two classes, your end grade may be no higher than a C; if you miss three classes, your final grade may be no higher than a F. Remember, though, if you miss a class period, your grade may be damaged due to the fact that you may not complete specific assignments that were given during that period; in other words, any work completed during a class period will not be able to be made up.

As for late work, I do my best to return all work in a prompt manner. In order to do so, though, I must have all assignments turned in on time. This being said, any assignment that is turned in late will be dropped one half of a letter grade (5 points) for each day that it is late. Assignments will be turned in at the start of class, and any student turning in the assignment any time after the class period may incur the penalty of one day late. If a student turns in a work after the first 15 minutes of class, it may be considered one day late. Finally, if you are going to miss a class and you have a paper due, it is still due (unless we have reached other arrangements—and these arrangements CANNOT be made after the class meeting, but must be made before).

*Academic Integrity (A-9.1):*

Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members
promote academic integrity in multiple ways including instruction on the components of academic honesty, as well as abiding by university policy on penalties for cheating and plagiarism.

Stephen F. Austin State University defines academic dishonesty as:

**Definition of Academic Dishonesty**
Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes but is not limited to (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) the falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism are (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one's own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from an Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one's paper without giving the author due credit. Please read the complete policy at:  http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp

In terms of this class, any student caught blatantly and purposely plagiarizing or cheating will automatically receive 0 points for the assignment. Furthermore, the incident may be reported.

**Cell Phones:**
Unless instructed otherwise, all cell phones will be put up in your school bag or purse at the start of class. They will remain there for the period.

**Free Speech and Class Conduct:**
In order to help improve our critical thinking and writing skills, we will regularly engage in class discussions and writings. The purpose of such work will be to recognize that while many of the students in the class may be similar in terms of age or year, there are different academic abilities in the classroom and different ways to look at an issue or piece of writing. In other words, one can always learn from his/her peers. In order for this to happen, students should come to class ready to engage in discussion and debate. Our goal is not to “win” an argument or roll over our peers, but to critically engage the texts and our own responses to these texts. This is a space where one must feel comfortable to express his/her ideas and be willing to question those same ideas. During any discussion, I will encourage debate, but I will not allow any student to employ sexist, racist, or homophobic speech, to commit a threatening action toward any peer, or to purposely work to silence or roll over peer.

**Acceptable Student Behavior**
Classroom behavior should not interfere with the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to learn from the instructional program (see the Student Conduct Code, policy 10.4). Unacceptable or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Students who disrupt the learning environment may be asked to leave class and may be subject to judicial, academic or other penalties. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including electronic,
classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The instructor shall have full discretion over what behavior is appropriate/inappropriate in the classroom.

In the case of this course, disruptive behavior will include the following: consistent use of cell phones/texting during class, consistent participation in side discussions that are not part of classroom dialogue, referring to your teacher or peers in an inappropriate way or verbally assaulting your teacher or peers, physically threatening your teacher or peers, and completing homework assignments for another class. Students participating in such activities can be asked to leave the class and will be counted as absent.

*Withheld Grades:*
Ordinarily, at the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average.”
For the complete policy, http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/semester_grds.asp

*Students with Disabilities:*
To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building Room 325, 468-3004/468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices.