

**Carleton University
Winter 2021
Department of English/Childhood and Youth Studies**

**ENGL [4115C]: Culture and the Text /
CHST [4001]: Advanced Topics in
Child Studies**

Other People's Stories: Adoption Narratives

Prerequisite(s): fourth-year standing or permission of the department

Asynchronous online course via cuLearn,
First class meets synchronously, Wednesday, January 13, 9:30 a.m. via Zoom

Instructor: Professor Janice Schroeder
Email: Janice.schroeder@carleton.ca

Office Hours: By appointment via Zoom or via email

Carleton University is located on unceded Algonquin territory.

Course Description

This course explores literary representations of adoption and foster care in a range of genres and global contexts, focusing on the role of language and personal story-making in the lives of adopted children, adoptive parents, and birth parents. As a literary theme, adoption has deep roots, stretching back to folk tales, fairy tales, and religious and mythological traditions in many cultures. We'll begin the course with a sample of these, then move on to examine the romanticized figure of "the orphan" together with the role of the state and the adoptive family in classic Anglo-American adoption narratives such as *Jane Eyre* and *Little Orphan Annie*. We will consider the powerful influence of the tropes of abandonment, neglect, rescue, belonging, and attachment in these texts and how they have shaped contemporary meanings of adoption. We will then move on to a consideration of the way adoption and adoptive identity is figured in recent fiction, podcast storytelling, blogs, social media, and documentary films. Our discussions will be informed by a consideration of the political contexts underpinning contemporary adoptive family making, such as anti-child-trafficking law and the rights of the child, China's one-child policy, and the 60s Scoop in Canada. Examining our course readings in connection within these frameworks will allow us to see how the adoption experience is never just one person's story but is often a global network of other people's stories.

Goals of the course

- Read a broad sample of adoption narratives from a range of cultural contexts in diverse genres
- Connect personal adoption stories to the social, cultural, and political contexts informing these stories

- Analyze and interpret adoption narratives in weekly online discussion forums
- Share the results of research on adoption in different writing assignments
- Arrive at a greater understanding of the experience and perspective of adopted children, youth, and their families via adoption narratives

Course Format

This will be a primarily asynchronous course. Each week students will be asked to complete one unit, which will consist of a reading or readings, and at least two contributions to a small group discussion forum on cuLearn. I will also post brief lecture slides on the weekly readings in cuLearn each week.

In addition:

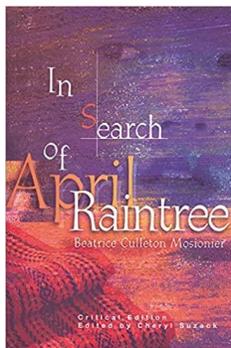
- We will meet synchronously via Zoom three times during the term: January 13, February 24, and April 7.
- The link and password to these meetings will be emailed to you and they will be posted on cuLearn.
- We will meet at 9:30 EST on these days, for no more than two hours.
- These meetings will be recorded for those who are unable to attend.
- It is recommended that you use an ethernet connection if you have one, rather than a wifi connection.
- If you are comfortable keeping your camera on for these meetings, please do so.

Text List

Most of the course readings are available for free on ARES or on our cuLearn page. However, there are two books to purchase for the course. They are available from online booksellers and in bookstores.

Beatrice Mosionier, *In Search of April Raintree*, Critical Edition (novel)*
 Nicole Chung, *All You Can Ever Know* (memoir)

*If possible please purchase the Critical Edition of the novel, edited by Cheryl Suzack.



Assignments at a Glance

50% Weekly contributions to discussion forums on cuLearn

Plus

50% Five research reports due throughout the term (due weeks 4,7,9,11,13)

Or

50% Final research proposal (due March 10 or earlier) and project (due by April 14)

All assignments are mandatory. You cannot complete the course without completing all of the assignments.

Assignments in Detail

Discussion Forums (50%)

You will be assigned to a small discussion group of about 5 or 6 people. You will remain in this group throughout the term. Each week I will post prompts for discussion on the discussion board page for the week, related to the week's reading assignment. Each week there will be a discussion leader for each group, whom I will assign on a rotating basis. Your contributions to the discussion forums should be about a paragraph in length and you are responsible for posting at least two contributions to the forum each week. **Please see document posted on cuLearn for further instructions, due dates, and rubric for this assignment.**

Research Reports (50%)

On specified weeks throughout the term, submit a report on a critical scholarly article or book chapter related to the topic of adoption or adoption narratives. You still submit five reports in total, worth 10% each. I will post two lists of articles to choose from. Your research report should be approximately two to three pages, double-spaced. **Please see the document posted on cuLearn for further instructions, due dates, and rubric on this assignment.**

OR

Research proposal and project: Found Adoption Stories (50%)

This project asks you to seek out an adoption narrative not included on the course, and which you will analyze.

- The **proposal (10%)** requires two double-spaced pages that introduce your found adoption story and some of the major questions and themes in the story that you plan to analyze.
- The **final project (40%)** can take any number of forms.

Please see the document posted on cuLearn for more details and instructions, due dates, and rubric for this assignment.

Office Hour

I am available for synchronous discussion using a recurring meeting link on Zoom. The link will be posted on our cuLearn page. You can email me to set up a meeting time, then we'll join the

recurring meeting at the agreed-upon time. I'm also happy to use Chat in cuLearn for one on one meetings with you. Phone calls are also fine with me, and I actually prefer them over Zoom.

Course Schedule

Subject to minor changes, which I will announce ahead of time

January 13 Unit 1: Introduction to the Course (via Zoom)

Readings

- the Syllabus and Assignments. Posted on cuLearn.
- Adoption positive language. Links posted on cuLearn

Activities

- Introduce yourself to the members of your discussion group
- Rotating schedule of discussion group leaders will be determined
- "Tour" of course materials on cuLearn

January 18-24 Unit 2: Introductory readings in Critical Adoption Studies

Readings

- Marianne Novy, "Introduction" to *Imagining Adoption* (ARES)
- Amanda L. Baden, "Do You Know Your *Real* Parents?" and Other Adoption Microaggressions." *Adoption Quarterly*. Vol. 19, No. 1, 2016, 1-25. (ARES)

Activities

- Post minimum two contributions to your small group discussion forum

January 25-31 Unit 3: "The Orphan Hero" in Fairytales and Folktales

Readings

- Selected fairytales and folk tales (posted on ARES; please see list on cuLearn)

Activities

- Post minimum two contributions to your small group discussion forum

February 1-7 Unit 4: Failed Adoption and Institutionalization of the “problem child”

Reading

- Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, Chapters 1-10

Activities

- Post minimum two contributions to your small group discussion forum
- First **research report** due (if doing this assignment)

February 8-14 Unit 5: Serial placement

Reading

- Harold Gray, *Little Orphan Annie*, Chapters 1 & 2

Activities

- Post minimum two contributions to your small group discussion forum

**February 15-21
Reading Week**

February 22-28 Unit 6: Forced Apprehension

Reading

- Beatrice Mosionier, *In Search of April Raintree*, Chapters 1-9

Activities

- One-hour synchronous class meeting, 9:30 EST, Feb. 24 (via Zoom)
- Post minimum two contributions to your small group discussion forum
- Second **research report** due (if doing this assignment)

March 1-7 Unit 7: Lost and Found

Reading

- CBC Podcast *Finding Cleo* (audio or transcript)

Activities

- Post minimum two contributions to your small group discussion forum

March 8-14 Unit 8: Color Blindness and Identity Formation

Reading

- Nicole Chung, *All You Can Ever Know*

Activities

- Post minimum two contributions to your small group discussion forum
- Third **research report** due (if doing this assignment)
- **Project proposal** due March 10 (if doing this assignment)

March 15-21 Unit 9: Adoptee Life Writing

Reading

- Sample of adoptee blogs/life writing (list posted on cuLearn for you to choose from)

Activities

- Post minimum two contributions to your small group discussion forum. See special instructions for this week's forum contributions on cuLearn

March 22-28 Unit 9: "Perfect families" and the curated life

Reading

- Clips from the Stauffer case and the Hart case (YouTube; Facebook; podcast—links posted on cuLearn)

Activities

- Post minimum two contributions to your small group discussion forum.
- Fourth **research report** due (if doing this assignment)

March 29-April 6 Unit 10: Divided Identities

Reading/viewing

- *Somewhere Between* (documentary film; access TBA)

Activities:

- Post minimum two contributions to your small group discussion forum

April 7 Class Wrap-up (via Zoom)

Readings

- No required readings

Activities

- TBA
- Fifth **research report** due (if doing this assignment)

Note: Final research projects due by April 14 or earlier.

University Policies

Final grades

"Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean."

Required plagiarism statement

The University Senate defines plagiarism as "presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one's own." This can include:

- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else's published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one's own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another's data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another's works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs.

Plagiarism is a form of intellectual theft. It is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly with the course's instructor. The Associate Deans of the Faculty conduct a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include failure of the assignment, failure of the entire course, or suspension from a program. For more information please go to: <https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-integrity/>

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request, the processes are as follows:

Pregnancy obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details click [here](#).

Religious obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details click [here](#).

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520- 6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (if applicable).

Survivors of Sexual Violence

As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: <https://carleton.ca/equity/sexual-assault-support-services>

Accommodation for Student Activities

Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. <https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>