

**Carleton University  
Fall 2019  
Department of English/Childhood and Youth Studies**

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

**Other People's Stories: Adoption Narratives**

**Mondays / 2:30-5:30**

**Location: *Please confirm location on Carleton Central***

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

**Instructor: Janice Schroeder**

**Email: [Janice.schroeder@carleton.ca](mailto:Janice.schroeder@carleton.ca)**

**Office: 1924 Dunton Tower**

**Phone: Use email**

**Office Hours: Fridays 10-11:00 or by appointment**

*Carleton University is located on unceded Algonquin territory.*



Image source: <http://blog.bridgemanimages.com/10-orphans-from-literature/>

### **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 *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 juvenile and adult fiction, children's picture books, films, life writing, and adoptee activism. 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
- Summarize, analyze and interpret adoption narratives through class discussion, oral presentation, and writing
- Share the results of research in both oral and written formats with peers and the instructor
- Arrive at a greater understanding of the variety and significance of adoption narratives and the adoption experience in literary, cultural, and media texts

### **Text List**

#### **For purchase**

Mosionier, *In Search of April Raintree* (novel)

Chung, *All You Can Ever Know* (memoir; excerpts)

Choy, *Paper Shadows* (memoir; excerpts)

Winterson, *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?* (memoir; excerpts)

#### **Available on ARES & other platforms**

Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (Chapters 1-10)

Selected folk and fairy tales

Gray, *Little Orphan Annie* (comic strip)

"Finding Cleo" (CBC podcast)

Selected critical readings

#### **In-class readings and screenings (supplied by the instructor)**

Selected children's picture books

Greno and Howard, (dirs.) *Tangled*

Gluck (dir) *Annie* (2014)

Knowlton (dir.), *Somewhere Between* (documentary film)

**Required texts are available at Haven Books, 43 Seneca (at Sunnyside).** Please ensure that you bring the ARES texts to class, either on your laptop or other electronic device, or in hard copy.

### **Assignments at a Glance**

2-page reading commentaries & small discussion groups (40%)

See below for due dates

Final project presentation (10%), due December 2 and 6

Final project (40%), due December 11

Participation and attendance (10%)

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

### **Assignments in Detail**

**Four 2-page commentaries and discussion groups, due September 23, October 7, November 4, November 25.**

The purpose of this assignment is to provide a space for you to formulate your thoughts and questions about the reading material before coming to class, to stimulate discussion in class, and to give you frequent practice with analyzing texts.

You are responsible for bringing a written response on the assigned reading on the dates indicated. You will share your commentary in small groups in the seminar. These are not formal essays, but they should be written in complete sentences and paragraphs, not point-form notes. They should engage specifically with the text and demonstrate your familiarity with it. They may also include questions for discussion that you can raise with your small group and the class as a whole. If you have time during the week to do any secondary reading on the text, you can incorporate your findings into your commentary, but your commentary should focus on your own responses to the reading.

The seminar will be divided into smaller discussion groups that will meet in class to discuss the commentaries you bring to the seminar on the scheduled days. Each group should designate a recorder for your discussion, and the recorder should be prepared to take a few minutes to present your group's discussion to the class. Do not let the role of recorder fall to the same person each week but take turns. I will make note of the recorder from week to week to ensure there is equity within your group.

I will not accept hand-written response papers. I will not accept papers submitted electronically before or after class, unless you have a legitimate reason for missing class.

**Final project: Found Adoption Stories, due Wednesday, December 11 at 4:00**

The purpose of the assignment is to apply your knowledge of adoption narratives in a research project that asks you to seek out an adoption narrative not included on the course, and which you will analyze. Your found adoption story might be drawn from any literary tradition; it might be a recent news story; it might be from someone's personal blog; it might be a children's story or young adult novel; it might be a feature or documentary film; it might even be from your

personal experience (i.e. you could interview someone you know who has some kind of experience with adoption). I will provide a separate list of examples and more instructions about this assignment to help get you started.

The project will unfold in two stages.

**Stage One:** In the final class or two, everyone will be asked to share their research to date: that is, introduce us to the story you've found and plan to write about. Play us a short clip, read us an excerpt, tell us about it, and briefly explain how your found story picks up on some of the course themes, issues, and keywords. This is stage one of the project. The length of the presentation will be determined by the number of participants in the seminar. **Due: December 2 (possibly) and 6.**

**Stage Two:** The second stage of the project is a 6-8 page paper in which you critically engage with the story you've found and introduced in class, providing greater detail, background research, and information about it. You **must also compare and contrast your story with at least one of the major course texts we have studied in class together.** Demonstrate how the insights you've gained from the course text and our discussion help you to interpret your found story. You should also **situate your found story in relation to a minimum of two secondary research sources that have some bearing on the issues informing your found story.** For example, if your found story relates in some way to the 60s Scoop, you should consult and refer to at least two scholarly sources on the 60s Scoop. All papers must include a Works Cited list. **Due: Wednesday, December 11. Please email your assignment to me in a Word doc.**

### **Participation**

Class attendance is mandatory and I take it seriously. An attendance sheet will be sent around at the beginning of every class. Frequent, unexplained absences will result in a grade of zero on the participation assignment and will also affect your grade on the commentaries and group discussion assignment. Participation is one of the course assignments, and attendance is a component of the participation grade. If you don't attend class, you are not participating in the seminar and are therefore not completing one of the course assignments. All assignments are mandatory.

Class participation will be evaluated as follows:

- Did you attend class regularly?
- Have you read the assigned texts?
- Did you arrive with questions and comments about the reading?
- Did you respond to or engage with other students in class discussion?
- Did you participate effectively in your small-group discussions?
- Did other students and/or the professor learn from your contributions?

### **Course Policies**

#### **Using laptop computers and other electronic devices in class**

When you use laptops and phones in class for non-course related activities you become a distraction to the instructor and your peers. Please turn your phones off before class and keep them off the desk, out of sight. Thank you for your cooperation and for contributing to a productive, respectful seminar space for all.

### **Contacting me**

I am available during my **office hour on Fridays from 10:00-11:00 in 1924 Dunton Tower** to discuss any aspect of the course. If this time conflicts with your schedule, I would be happy to schedule an appointment. You can also send me a message by e-mail and I will do my best to respond promptly. **Please use your Carleton e-mail account when contacting me.** University policy stipulates that we discuss course-related matters using university accounts.

### **What to call me**

My name is Jan Schroeder. You can call me Jan or Professor Schroeder; use whatever name you feel comfortable with. I try hard to learn everyone's name; please know and use mine when you address me in person or in an email.

### **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."

#### **Plagiarism**

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/>

#### **Requests for Academic Accommodation**

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

### **Pregnancy obligation**

Please contact your instructor 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, visit the Equity Services website: [carleton.ca/equity/wp-content/uploads/Student-Guide-to-Academic-Accommodation.pdf](https://carleton.ca/equity/wp-content/uploads/Student-Guide-to-Academic-Accommodation.pdf)

### **Religious obligation**

Please contact your instructor 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, visit the Equity Services website: [carleton.ca/equity/wp-content/uploads/Student-Guide-to-Academic-Accommodation.pdf](https://carleton.ca/equity/wp-content/uploads/Student-Guide-to-Academic-Accommodation.pdf)

### **Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

If you have a documented disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) at 613-520-6608 or [pmc@carleton.ca](mailto:pmc@carleton.ca) for a formal evaluation or contact your PMC coordinator to send your instructor your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term. You must also contact the PMC 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 your instructor as soon as possible to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. [carleton.ca/pmc](https://carleton.ca/pmc)

### **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 its 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: [carleton.ca/sexual-violence-support](https://carleton.ca/sexual-violence-support)

### **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. Please contact your instructor 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>

## **Reading Schedule**

### **September 9**

Course introduction and orientation

### **September 16**

Selected fairy tales and folk tales

Novy, Introduction to *Imagining Adoption*

In-class screening: *Tangled* (excerpts)

**September 23**

Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, Chapter 1 to Chapter 10

**Due:** 2-page commentaries and discussion groups

**September 30**

Gray, *Little Orphan Annie*, Chapter 1 and 2

In-class screening of 2014 reboot of *Annie* (excerpts)

**October 7**

Mosionier, *In Search of April Raintree*

**Due:** 2-page commentaries and discussion groups

**October 14**

Statutory holiday; no class

**October 21**

Fall reading break; no class

**October 28**

CBC, *Finding Cleo*

Sinclair, "Identity Lost and Found: Lessons from the Sixties Scoop"

**November 4**

Choy, *Paper Shadows*: pp. 1-17; pp. 232-242; pp. 277-338.

Chung, *All You Can Ever Know*

**Due:** 2-page commentaries and discussion groups

**November 11**

Selected readings on international adoption and the one-child policy

**November 18**

Documentary film screening: *Somewhere Between*

**November 25**

Winterson, *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?:* pp. 1-32; 58-64; 104-114; 155-160; 178-230.

**Due:** 2-page commentaries and discussion groups

**December 2**

In-class activity: Children's picture books on adoption (supplied by instructor)

Short presentations based on found stories about adoption

**Friday, December 6** (classes follow Monday schedule):

short presentations based on found stories about adoption

Course wrap-up and evaluation