

**Carleton University
Winter 2022
Department of English/Childhood and Youth Studies**

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

Adoption Narratives

**Time: Tuesdays, 11:35 a.m. – 2:25 p.m.
Location: *Please confirm location on Carleton Central*
Format: In-person**

**Instructor: Professor Jan Schroeder
Email: Janice.schroeder@carleton.ca Phone: Use email**

Office Hours: 1813 Dunton Tower or via Zoom, by appointment

Carleton University is located on unceded Algonquin land

Course Description

This course explores literary and popular 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 language of abandonment, neglect, rescue, belonging, and attachment in these texts and how they have shaped contemporary meanings of adoption and family. We will then move on to a consideration of the way adoption and adoptive identity are figured in recent juvenile and adult fiction, children's picture books, narrative journalism, social media, documentary films, and life writing, with a focus on transnational and transracial adoption. Enfolded into our discussions will be a consideration of the political frameworks that structure contemporary adoptive family making, such as the Sixties Scoop in Canada, anti-child-trafficking law and the rights of the child, China's former one-child policy, international migration, and the overrepresentation of racialized children in child welfare systems. Examining our course readings in light of these contexts will enrich our understanding of the complexities that underpin adoptive kinning and identity formation.

Goals of the course

- Read a broad sample of adoption narratives from a range of cultural contexts in diverse genres

- Connect literary, popular, and personal adoption stories to the social, cultural, and political contexts informing these stories
- Analyze and interpret adoption narratives in small groups in class and in online forums
- Share the results of reading and research on adoption in different writing assignments
- Arrive at a greater understanding of the experiences and perspectives of adopted children, youth, and their families via adoption narratives

Course Format

You are responsible for reading the assigned weekly texts outside class time. In-class activities will consist of brief lectures, small in-class discussion groups guided by prompts to analyze the readings, class discussion, and in-class writing. It will be helpful if you bring a laptop with you to class. The main goal outside class time is reading the assigned material from week to week and preparing for in-class discussion, as well as working steadily on your other term assignments at your own pace.

Text List

Please purchase the following. They are in stock at Haven Books at Bronson and Sunnyside, near Carleton.

Beatrice Mosionier, *In Search of April Raintree*. Critical Edition. Ed. Cheryl Suzack. Portage and Main Press, 1999. (discussion on Feb. 15)

Nicole Chung, *All You Can Ever Know*. Catapult, 2018. (discussion on March 8)

All other readings (see schedule of readings below) are available on ARES, or are posted on Brightspace.

Assignments at a Glance

50% Weekly contributions to discussion groups, in-class and on Brightspace

50% Five research reports due throughout the term on the following dates: February 1; February 15; March 8; March 22; April 12

OR Final research proposal (10%, due March 8 or earlier) and project (40%, due April 12 or earlier)

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

Note: 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.

Assignments in Detail

Discussion Groups (50%)

Small group interaction is a key component of almost any seminar. Seminars work best when participants have a chance to share their ideas, expertise, and questions about a text or a topic. But sometimes small group discussion can feel like it's going nowhere or doesn't result in anything. This assignment asks each small group to produce two outcomes from your discussion about the text: **an insight statement and a critical question**. These will be followed by individual **reflection paragraphs** submitted separately by each member of the group. I will supply weekly prompts as starting points for your discussion. Please see the document posted on Brightspace with further instructions and a rubric for this assignment.

Research Reports (5x10% each)

On specified weeks throughout the term, submit a report on a critical scholarly article related to the topic of adoption or adoption narratives. I will post a short list of articles to choose from, or you are free to choose one yourself from a list of appropriate scholarly journals and books I will provide. Your research report should be approximately two to three pages, double-spaced. Please see the document posted on Brightspace with further instructions and a rubric for this assignment. **Note:** you have a choice of titles within certain limits. Please see more detailed instructions on Brightspace.

OR

Research proposal and project: Found Adoption Stories (10%+40%)

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 Brightspace with more details and instructions and a rubric for this assignment.

Office Hour

I am available to meet right after class on Tuesdays. Otherwise, I am happy to set up Zoom meetings or phone calls by appointment.

Schedule of Readings and In-class Activities

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

January 11: Introduction to the Course

Readings

- Review course syllabus and assignments

Activities

- Introduce yourself to the members of your discussion group
- Rotating schedule of discussion group leaders will be determined

- “Tour” of course materials on Brightspace
- Knowledge pooling exercise: what do we already know, or think we know, or know we don’t know, about adoption, adoptees, and adoptive family-making?

Unit 1 January 18: Introductory Readings in Critical Adoption Studies

Readings

- Marianne Novy, “Introduction” to *Imagining Adoption* (ARES) (academic book chapter)
- Amanda L. Baden, “Do You Know Your *Real* Parents? and Other Adoption Microaggressions” (academic article) (ARES)

Activities

- Discussion Groups and silent writing time

Unit 2 January 25: The Orphan Hero in Fairytales and Folk Tales

Readings

- Selected fairytales and folk tales (posted on ARES; please see list on Brightspace) (short stories)

Activities

- Discussion Groups and silent writing time

Unit 3 February 1: Failed Adoption and Re-Homing of the “Problem Child”

Reading

- Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, Chapters 1-10 (novel)

Activities

- Discussion Groups and silent writing time
- **First research report due (if doing this assignment)**

Unit 4 February 8: Serial Placement

Reading

- Harold Gray, *Little Orphan Annie*, Chapters 1&2 (comic strip; ARES)

Activities

- Discussion Groups and silent writing time

Unit 5 February 15: Forced Removal

Reading

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

Activities

- Discussion Groups and silent writing time
- **Second research report due (if doing this assignment)**

February 22

Reading Week; no class

Unit 6 March 1: Lost and Found

Reading

- *Finding Cleo* (podcast audio or transcript)

<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/findingcleo>

Activities

- Discussion Groups and silent writing time

Unit 7 March 8: Transracial Adoption, Colour Blindness, and Adoptee Identity

Reading

- Nicole Chung, *All You Can Ever Know* (memoir)

Activities

- Discussion Group and silent writing time
- Third research report due (if doing this assignment)
- Project proposal due (if doing this assignment)

Unit 8 March 15: The Adoptee Next Door

Readings

- Sample of adoptee blogs (list posted on Brightspace for you to choose from) (digital storytelling)

Activities

- Discussion Group and silent writing time

Unit 9 March 22: Adoption Fantasy and Social Media

Readings

- Clips from the Stauffer case and the Hart case (YouTube; Facebook; Instagram) (links posted on Brightspace)
- “Myka Stauffer: An Adoption Fantasy Unravelling” from *Red Thread Broken* blog (posted on Brightspace)

Activities

- Discussion Groups and silent writing time
- Fourth research report due (if doing this assignment)

Unit 10 March 29: International Adoption and The Search

Reading/Viewing

- *Somewhere Between* (documentary film; posted on ARES)

Activities

- Discussion Groups
- Guest Speaker: Hanna Stewart

April 5

No class; I will be away at a conference

April 12

Readings

- Children's picture books about adoption (material supplied by instructor to be read and discussed in class)

Activities

- Class wrap-up/overview/informal feedback
- Course evaluation (required by the University)
- Fifth research report due (if doing this assignment)
- Final research projects due (if doing this assignment)

University Regulations

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 the following:

- 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: 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 accommodation regarding a formally-scheduled final exam, you must complete the [Pregnancy Accommodation Form](#).

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/focus/sexual-violence-prevention-survivor-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 will 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>