

## CHILDHOOD IN AMERICA

GLSP: HUMS 609, Tues. 6:30-9, CAMS 3

Professor Indira Karamcheti  
Office hours: Wed., 4:30-5:30,  
and by appointment

#205, Center for the Americas,  
255 High Street, X 860-685-3625

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Probably the first literature we fall in love with, children's literature shapes individuals and cultures. This course will examine the construction of childhood, and the ways children have been taught and amused, through an examination of children's literature, supplemented with work from scholars such as Bruno Bettelheim, Jack Zipes, and Maria Tatar.

TEXTS: The following texts are available for purchase at Broad Street Books. Some of these books are past copyright and may be found on line, for instance, on the Project Gutenberg site at [www.gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org). You are welcome to use this resource, which often has very interesting versions of these texts. For instance, look at the HTML version of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, published in 1884. However, some of the texts available for purchase through Broad Street Books are special editions which contain critical articles and supplemental material; I will have them put on Reserve at Olin. If you already have copies of these books, you are free to use them. Materials available on Moodle are marked with an (M).

*Tom Sawyer*, Mark Twain  
*Little Women*, Louisa May Alcott  
*A Little Princess*, Frances Hodgson Burnett  
*The Light in the Forest*, Conrad Richter  
*The Little House on the Prairie*, Laura Ingalls Wilder  
*The Watsons Go to Birmingham*, Christopher Curtis  
*The Borrowers*, Norton  
*Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, J.K. Rowling  
*The Classic Fairy Tales*, Maria Tatar

Additional readings on Moodle (indicated by an "M")

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: Three short papers of 4-5 pages each, and take-home final. One class presentation.

### SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

You will see below some titles which are neither at Broad Street Books for you to buy, nor included on Moodle. I will show portions of these texts in class for us to discuss. If you have copies already, please feel free to read them in advance and/or bring them to class.

#### **Week 1**

Jan. 27: Introduction

***Education for Children***  
*New England Primer* (M)  
(in class: *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom*  
*Fun With Dick and Jane*  
*The Cat in the Hat*)

## **Week 2**

### ***Language and Other Fables***

Feb., 3: Immel, "Children's Books and constructions of childhood" (M)

(in class: *Amelia Bedelia*

*Madeline*

*The Very Hungry Caterpillar*

*Mother Goose*

*Liza Lou and the Yeller Belly Swamp*)

### ***Fairy Tales***

"Cinderella," Perrault and Grimm

Rowe, "To Spin a Yarn"

Warner, "The Old Wives' Tale"

"Bluebeard," Perrault and Grimm

Tatar, "Sex and Violence"

"The Bloody Chamber," Angela Carter (M)

## **Week 3**

Feb. 10: ESSAY # 1 DUE IN CLASS

"Little Red Riding Hood"

Shavit, "The Concept of Childhood and Children's Folktales" (M)

"Hansel and Gretel"

"Setting Standards for Civilization Through Fairy Tales," Jack Zipes (M)

"Who's Afraid of the Brothers Grimm?"

### ***Hans Christian Andersen***

"The Little Mermaid"

"The Little Match Girl"

"Hans Christian Andersen and the  
Discourse of the Dominated" (M)

## ***Country Boys***

### **Week 4**

Feb. 17: *Tom Sawyer*

## ***Republican Daughters***

### **Week 5**

Feb. 24: *Little Women*

From Sicherman, *Well-Read Lives* (M)

Tatar, "Scenes of Storytelling" (M)

Recommended: look through Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress*

<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/131/131-h/131-h.htm>

## ***Otherness***

### **WEEK 6**

Mar. 3: ESSAY # 2 DUE IN CLASS

*The Borrowers*

Vallone, "Ideas of Differences in Children's literature" (M)

*Little Black Sambo*

*The Story of Babaji*

*Sam and the Tigers*

*Nappy Hair*

"What Has Happened to the 'All-White' World of Children's Books?" (M)

### **MIDSEMESTER RECESS MAR. 7-23**

***Frontier Daughters***

**WEEK 7**

Mar. 24: *Little House on the Prairie*

***Playing Cowboy***

**WEEK 8**

Mar. 31: *Light in the Forest*

Recommended: take a look at the beginning of Rowlandson, *Captivity and Restoration*

<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/851/851-h/851-h.htm>

Green, "The Tribe Called Wannabee: Playing Indian in America and Europe" (M)

***Daughter of Empire***

**WEEK 9**

Apr., 7: *A Little Princess*

*The Story of Babar*

"Of Elephants and Ducks," Dorfman (M)

***American Empire***

**WEEK 10**

Apr. 14: ESSAY # 3 DUE IN CLASS

*The Watsons Go to Birmingham*

***Heroic Boys***

**WEEK 11**

Apr. 21: *Harry Potter*

From Striplhas, *The Late Age of Print* (M)

***Visual Pleasure***

**Week 12**

Apr. 28: *The Stories of the Champions of the Round Table*, Howard Pyle

<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/10745/10745-h/10745-h.htm>

**Week 13**

May 5: *My Neighbor Totoro* (shown in class)

TAKE-HOME EXAM DUE: May 15

**Disability Resources**

Wesleyan University is committed to ensuring that all qualified students with disabilities are afforded opportunity to participate in and benefit from its programs and services. To receive accommodations, a student must have a documented disability as defined by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and provide documentation of the disability. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact Disability Resources as soon as possible.

If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact Dean Patey in Disability Resources, located in North College, Room 021, or call 860-685-2332 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations.