B.A. (Honours) in Contemporary English Studies

Course Title: Introduction to Children’s Literature in English
Course Code: ENG3379 / ENG379
Recommended Study Year: 3rd & 4th Year for 4-year System
                              2nd & 3rd Year for 3-year System
No. of Credits/Term: 3
Mode of Tuition: Lecture and Tutorial
Class Contact Hours: 2 hours Lecture/week
                       1 hour Tutorial/week
Category in Major Programme: Disciplinary Elective
Prerequisite(s): N/A
Co-requisite(s): N/A
Exclusion(s): N/A
Exemption Requirement(s): N/A

Brief Course Description

This course introduces students to the important and vast area of children’s literature in English from a contemporary point of view. As well as reviewing the various definitions of children’s literature and surveying the key texts and movements that have shaped this literature, the course will focus on selected readings from children’s fiction which will form the core experiential learning of the course. Thematic focus in the course will vary with the instructor, and may include “alternative worlds”, “children’s literature in English translation”, and so on.

Aims

The course will examine the rich and expanding field of literature for children in English and aims to provide theoretical models from which to understand this sub-discipline. It will provide definitions of what constitutes children’s literature and survey its major types and forms.

Learning Outcomes

Students completing this course will:

1. demonstrate familiarity with major examples of children’s literature in English;
2. be able to define, and reflect critically and flexibly upon various definitions of, what counts as children's literature;
3. demonstrate familiarity and experiential engagement with the psychological, (cross-)cultural, educational, and social uses of story for and by children;
4. have read and responded critically and creatively, in both writing and speech, in short as well as extended interpretive/argumentative and/or creative/readaptive responses to a range of texts written and/or adapted and/or translated for children;
Indicative Content (“alternative worlds” theme)

Definitions of children’s literature and its uses in a child’s development
A brief survey of the history of children’s literature in English
The Fairy Story – a sampling
Early 20th Century classics: Kenneth Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows* (1908); Frances Hodgson Burnett, *The Secret Garden* (1911)
Subversive Fantasy: Roald Dahl, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (1964)

Indicative Content (“children’s literature in English translation” theme)

Definitions of children’s literature and its uses in a child’s development
A brief survey of the history of children’s literature in English translation
*Aesop’s Fables* (first translated in the 15th century, dozens of new translations and adaptations being produced every decade even now)
*Mother Goose tales* (first compiled in the late 17th century in French by Charles Perrault, the creator of the “fairy tale” genre; many new translations and adaptations being produced still today)
*Arabian Nights’ Entertainment* (first compiled from various Arabic sources by the French orientalist Antoine Galland and translated into English from the French in the early 18th century; many illustrious translations since, including Sir Richard Burton’s in the mid-19th century and several throughout the 20th century)
Folk tales of the Brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Andersen (early to mid-19th century)
Carlo Collodi, *The Adventures of Pinocchio* (late 19th century)
Astrid Lindgren, *Pippi Longstocking* (mid-20th century)
*The Ballad of Mulan* (first introduced to the English-speaking world by Maxine Hong Kingston in *The Woman Warrior* [1975], since then adapted for the Disney movie in 1998 and appearing in various other translations and adaptations for both children and adults)

Measurement of Learning Outcomes

Students’ progress towards the learning outcomes outlined above will be measured by continuous assessments on the students’ engagement with the lectures, tutorial discussions, readings, presentations, and written assignments. In addition, students’ knowledge will be assessed by a final examination at the end of the term.

Teaching Method

The course will be largely teacher-centered in the lectures but with a significant proportion of small group and student-centered activities in the tutorials and in some of
the lecture slots. Students will be expected to lead one tutorial section (probably as part of a group) to develop and demonstrate their understanding of the main texts studied.

**Assessment**

Continuous Assessment: 60%
Final Examination: 40%

**Required Readings**

(“*alternative worlds*”:
Kenneth Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows*
Frances Hodgson Burnett, *The Secret Garden*
J.R.R. Tolkein, *The Hobbit*
C.S.Lewis, *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*
Roald Dahl, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*
R.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and The Chamber of Secrets*
Philip Pullman, *The Golden Compass*
Salman Rushdie, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*

(“*children’s literature in English translation*”:
Multiple translations and/or adaptations of specific Aesopian fables, *Mother Goose* tales, *Arabian Nights* tales, Grimm brothers tales, HC Andersen tales, Collodi’s *Pinocchio*, Lindgren’s *Pippi Longstocking*, and the Mulan legend
Short historical and theoretical articles providing background to the various texts, including Jeffrey Garrett, “Of Translations and Tarantulas: What’s at Stake when American Children Read Books from Other Countries” (2006), relevant passages from *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English* and Jorge Luis Borges, “The Translators of *The Thousand and One Nights*”

**Background Readings**