

SYLLABUS
LIS 693 Reader's Advisory for Adult Popular Fiction

CONTACT INFORMATION:

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Office Hours: M-Th.; 4-5 p.m.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

An examination of the nature and societal functions of a variety of mass media-generated adult reading materials and their relationship to the contemporary field of library and information studies.

LIS PROGRAM OBJECTIVES: Students will:

3. Apply basic competencies and knowledge that are essential for providing, managing, and designing information services in a variety of information environments;
5. Demonstrate theoretical understanding of and basic competencies in evaluating, selecting and organizing information sources;

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

The course is designed to augment students' awareness of the cultural milieu in which the majority of Americans live, and from which they draw much of their information to understand, influence, and accept their social, political, economic and cultural institutions and agencies.

Students will:

1. Compare and contrast the cultural environment of contemporary mass society with the cultural environment of contemporary library and information agencies.
2. Examine their own reading interests and cultural environment, and assess ways in which they have used it and how it has affected them.
3. Compare and contrast democratic myths and values with the nature of information communicated in the mass media.
4. Examine one or more adult reading interest genres in depth.

COURSE MATERIALS:

REQUIRED OF ALL STUDENTS:

Diana Tixier Herald, Genreflecting: A Guide to Popular Reading Interests 6th Edition. (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006).

Catherine Sheldrick Ross, Lynne E.F. McKechnie, and Paulette M. Rothbauer, Reading Matters: What the Research Reveals about Reading, Libraries, and Community (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006)

COURSE POLICIES:

1. Students are expected to keep up with the course readings and assignments.
2. Students are expected to form their own opinions and express and defend them freely, but in a courteous and friendly way.
3. Students are expected to be courteous and respectful of the instructor and all members of the class.
4. Attendance at all class sessions is required.
5. Assignments may not be submitted after the due date has passed. There is no provision for making up missed assignments.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

- July 23 Introduction: Setting up class responsibilities for semester.
- July 24 Discussion: Genreflecting, Chapters 1-4 (Wiegand, Kimball, Ross, and Herald); Reading Matters, Chapters 1, 4, and Conclusion
- Hand in: 200-word "Personal Reading Profile," at the bottom of which you will identify "Theme" or "Area of emphasis" you will be covering in your journal. Also include your name and mailing address
- July 25 Historical Fiction. Genreflecting, Chap. 5, pp. 43-50. (1A, 2B, 3C)
- July 26 Westerns. Genreflecting, Chap. 6, pp. 81-90. (1B, 2C, 3A)
- July 27 Mystery/Detective Fiction: Genreflecting, Chap 7, pp. 137-145. (1C, 2A, 3B).
- July 30 Adventure: Genreflecting, Chap. 8, pp. 207-214. (1A, 2B, 3C)
- July 31 Romances: Genreflecting, Chap. 9, pp. 253-259. (1B, 2C, 3A)
- Aug. 1 Science Fiction: Genreflecting, Chap. 10, pp. 313-145. (1C, 2A, 3B)
- Aug. 2 Fantasy: Genreflecting, Chap. 11, pp. 371-376 (1A; 2B; 3C)
- Aug. 3 Horror: Genreflecting, Chap. 12, pp. 419-430 (1B, 2C, 3A)
- Aug. 6 Christian Reading: Genreflecting, Chap. 13, pp. 465-472 (1C, 2A, 3B)
- Aug. 7 Comics: Each member of the class will read three comics, or one graphic novel. (Please vary your selections.)
- Aug. 8 Tabloids: Each member of the class will read two tabloids sold at Grocery or Convenient Store (please vary your selections).

Aug. 9 No Class: Work on your Term Papers

Aug. 10 Final Class Discussion "Wrap-Up". TERM PAPERS and READING JOURNALS due on this day

A = To 1980

B = 1981-1999

C = 2000-Present

(I'll explain these letters/dates at the first class session.)

GRADING/EVALUATION: Grading scale: A (93-100) A- (90-92.99), B+ (87-89.99), B (83-86.99), B- (80-82.99), C+ (77-79.99), C (70-79.99), D (60-69.99), F 0-59.99)

1. Reading Journal (40% of total grade)
2. Class Participation (20% of total grade)
3. Term Paper (40% of total grade)

ASSIGNMENTS/RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. **READING JOURNAL (40% of total grade).** At the beginning of the session you will be asked to select a particular theme or area of emphasis that you can then track through the various adult reading interest areas we will be covering. Examples of themes/areas of emphasis include: sports, violence, gender, sexual orientation, death, fashion, marriage, heroes, villains, minorities, parents, divorced people, children, young adults, elderly, leisure, regionalism, religion, physical features. This list is hardly exhaustive; be creative and come up with your own area of emphasis.

After selecting the area of emphasis for which you will be responsible (which can also be the subject of your term paper, if you wish), you will be expected to read types of genre fiction covered in class with that area in mind. In class, you will be counted on to articulate how the works you read treat your observations. Your task here will be made considerably easier if you **PAY SPECIAL ATTENTION TO DETAIL** (i.e., on what does the author spend much or little literary effort. And **REMEMBER**—lack of detail about your particular theme or area of emphasis may tell you as much as an abundance of detail). This should enable you later to make better connections between popular fiction genres and the people who read them.

To assist you in this task, you will be expected to maintain a “daily” journal (it’s OK to skip a day or two, but any less will put you behind schedule very quickly), and fill it with your observations, and reflection on required readings, the various genres assigned, and class discussions, especially as they relate to the course objectives.

In your journal be sure to cite specific titles, points of discussion (and the people in class who made them) and assigned readings upon which you are basing your observations. **THIS JOURNAL WILL BE DUE THE LAST DAY OF CLASSES.**

2. **CLASS PARTICIPATION AND DISCUSSION (20% of total grade).** In a course that is primarily discussion based (as this one obviously is), you are expected to contribute orally. Since you will be responsible for focusing your observations on a particular area of emphasis, it is important that your classmates benefit from your observations so they can develop a more holistic perspective of how adult reading interests fit into

library and information science practice.

To make class discussion manageable, I may be dividing you into groups at the beginning of the semester so you read across genre/fiction chronologically, but also subdividing you into smaller groups within your larger groups so each smaller group becomes an “inner circle” that will primarily be responsible for discussing that particular genre that particular class session. Because each of you will be in an “inner circle” at least once, each of you will have an opportunity to participate in class discussion.

3. **TERM PAPER (40% of total grade).** Choose any area of adult reading interests we have covered in class. Read at least one history of that genre; then read four to six examples of the genre. (If possible, choose examples that cover a fairly long chronological time span.) Apply the knowledge and expertise you have developed in content analysis to prepare a double-spaced 10 page paper (excluding bibliography) in which you:
 - a) define the genre you have chosen (1-2 paragraphs)
 - b) describe how the 6-8 examples you have chosen fit that genre (2 pages)
 - c) describe changes you see as having occurred over a period of time (at least 20 years) (2 pages)
 - d) explain the popularity of the genre, analyze the information (both cultural and practical) content of the genre, and measure how libraries or information agencies are or are not at present filling this information need (6 pages)

YOUR TERM PAPER IS DUE THE LAST DAY OF CLASSES.

OTHER TITLES YOU MIGHT WANT TO CHECK FOR COURSE ASSIGNMENTS CAN BE FOUND ON THE VERSO OF THE FLYLEAF TO GENREFLECTING, AND IN THE BIBLIOGRAPHIES AND NOTES OF THE CHAPTER INTRODUCTIONS.

And on the Internet you will find hundreds (if not thousands) of genrefiction and website chat rooms. Surf away, and talk to a “real” genrefiction reader about what s/he gets from the cultural texts with which s/he is interacting.

EXAMPLES OF WEBSITES

<http://www.lu.com/RAOnline> (Libraries Unlimited’s Rader’s Advisory Online)

<http://www.iwillfollow.com/dorothy1> (mystery)

<http://www.aamystery.com/> (African American mystery)

<http://listserv.kent.edu/archives/rra-l.html> (romance)

<http://theromancerreader.com> (romance)

<http://www.webrary.org.rs/FLmenu.html> (Fiction-L)

<http://www.loc.gov/cgi-bin/lwgate/SF-LIT> (science fiction)

<http://www.darkecho.com/darkecho/index.html> (horror)

<http://www.mostlyfiction.com/west.html> (westerns)

COURSE CONTENT AND OUTLINE:

1. Introduction
2. Discussion: Herald (Chaps. 1-4); Ross, et al, (Chaps. 1, 4, Conclusion)
3. Historical Fiction
4. Westerns
5. Mystery/Detective Fiction
6. Adventure
7. Romances
8. Science Fiction
9. Fantasy
10. Horror
11. Christian Reading
12. Comics
13. Tabloids
14. Wrap-Up

(This syllabus and other class materials are available in alternative format upon request.)

SYLLABUS CHANGE POLICY:

This syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advanced notice.