

## Preliminary Web Course Description

\*Please note: This is a preliminary web course description only. The department reserves the right to change without notice any information in this description. The final, binding course outline will be distributed in the first class of the semester.

### School of English and Theatre Studies

Course Code: ENGL*3880	Course Title: Literary and Cultural Studies: Toy/Story	Date of Offering: W'19
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Course Instructor: J. Schacker	Course Format: lecture
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#### Brief Course Synopsis:

In this course we will be exploring various ways in that toys generate narratives -- both in the cultural forms created by adults and in the creative play of children. We will start with some exploration of interdisciplinary "toy studies," and then look at "classic" works of early 20th-century children's literature that feature toys as central characters: these include Johnny Gruelle's *Raggedy Ann Stories* (1918), Margery Williams's *Velveteen Rabbit* (1922), and A.A. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1926). We will juxtapose our studies of these texts against a couple of later 20th-century treatments of the "sentient toy" paradigm (Bill Waterson's *Calvin and Hobbes*, (the first *Toy Story* movie) and a more recent children's book with a Gothic sensibility (Holly Black's *Doll Bones* [2013]). We will consider the ways in which such texts imagine the place of toys in children's lives and their play spaces -- as well as the use of cross marketing strategies to sell a variety of products. Along the way, we will look at some case studies in the social history of toys, considering scholarship from the fields of sociology, folklore, museum studies, and consumer studies.

What significance do particular toys have, and how is that measured? What can they tell us about cultural values, constructions of identity, and patterns of social change? In what (perhaps unexpected) ways do real children engage with toys, and what kinds of narratives do they create in the process? How might a child- and action-oriented approach to studying these items of material culture shift our critical perspectives, as adults? These are some of the questions we will explore this semester.

#### Methods of Evaluation and Weight:

[subject to change; be sure to check the course outline at the beginning of the semester]

object analysis	20%
quizzes	30%
midterm exam	25%
take-home final (with research component)	25%

#### Texts and/or Resources Required (e.g. Internet access, specific textbook title, lab kit, etc.)

Black, Holly. *Doll Bones*. McElderry, 2013.  
Gruelle, Johnny. *Raggedy Ann Stories*. [facsimile ed.] Dover, 2015.  
James, Allison and Adrian James. *Key Concepts in Childhood Studies*, 2nd ed. Sage, 2012.  
Milne, A.A. *Winnie-the-Pooh*. Dutton, 2017.  
Waterson, Bill. *Calvin and Hobbes*. McMeel, 1987.  
Williams, Margery. *The Velveteen Rabbit*. Doubleday, 2014.  
+ critical readings downloadable from ARES/electronic reserve

#### Other information that you wish to share about the course (optional):

For students completing an English specialization under the old academic calendar, this course can serve as 0.5 credits of 20th/21st c. literature.