

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: Winter 2018
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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 writings of adults and the play of children. We will start with some "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* and (the first) *Toy Story* movie. 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.

Next, we will explore some case studies in the social history of toys, considering scholarship from the fields of sociology, folklore, museum studies, and consumer studies. We will give special attention to studies of children's play. Students will have several options for their final research projects, including an exercise in field-based research with children.

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 Weights:

(tentative -- subject to change)

minute papers (in class) 20%
quizzes: 30%
midterm: 25%
research project: 25%

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

Gruelle, Johnny. *Raggedy Ann Stories*. Dover, 2015.
Milne, A.A. *Winnie-the-Pooh*. Dutton, 2017.
Waterson, Bill. *Calvin and Hobbes*. McMeel, 1987.
Williams, Margery. *The Velveteen Rabbit*. Doubleday, 2014.

critical readings on ARES / course reserve

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

This course fulfills 0.5 credits of the 20th/21st c. requirement for English majors and minors.