

INLS 842 SEMINAR IN POPULAR MATERIALS IN LIBRARIES

Fall Semester 2018, Wednesdays 12:20-2:45, Room 303 Manning Hall

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One cheats oneself as a human being if one has respect only for the style of high culture.
---Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation*

Rosenberg's First Law of Reading: Never apologize for your reading tastes.
---Betty Rosenberg, *Genreflecting*, 1st Ed.

[I]t is just the literature that we read for "amusement" or "purely for pleasure" that may have the greatest, least suspected, earliest influence on us.
---T.S. Eliot, *Essays Ancient and Modern*

The house of fiction has not one window but a million.
--- Henry James, *The Art of Fiction*

I would be the most content if my children grew up to be the kind of people who think decorating consists mostly of building enough bookshelves.
----Anna Quindlen, *Thinking Out Loud*

"Books to the ceiling, Books to the sky, My pile of books is a mile high." ---Arnold Lobel

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Course Description:

This course will examine the place of popular materials within society and within libraries and will provide students with an overview of popular literature. The relationship of popular materials and libraries will be discussed. The major genres of popular literature will be examined in depth. Attention will be given to the bibliographic sources and the issues of acquisition, storage, dissemination, and preservation of popular materials. Students will also learn about the increasingly important role of "readers' advisor" in libraries and how readers' advisors can help connect readers to the type of literature they wish to read.

Course Objectives:

By the end of the course, it is expected that students will:

- have an awareness of the various types of popular material and their importance in libraries
- have the opportunity to read and become familiar with many types of popular material genres

- examine the role played by reader advisors in libraries; learn techniques for matching patrons and popular materials, and for building popular material collections
- learn how to prepare and deliver a booktalk
- have the opportunity to examine a specific area of popular literature in depth and gain experience in communicating that knowledge to an audience

Required Text:

Saricks, Joyce G. *The Readers' Advisory Guide to Genre Fiction*, 2nd ed. ALA, 2009.

Other course materials will be accessible through Sakai and are on reserve at the SILS Library.

Session Number Date	Topic	Readings Due Dates
Session 1 – <i>August 22</i>	Introduction and course overview; Map out syllabus and assignments; Genre choices	<i>Choose bestsellers sooner rather than later</i>
Session 2 – <i>August 29</i>	Popular culture & its place in libraries	Chapter 1 in text Garrison, chapters 4 & 5
Session 3 – <i>Sept. 5</i>	Non-fiction material Popular Fiction in Academic Libraries	Alpert Dewan <i>Be prepared to discuss a non-fiction book</i>
Session 4 – <i>Sept. 12</i>	Readers & Readers' Advisory Services <i>Guest: Duncan Smith</i>	Look at Novelist website Smith; Smith
Session 5 – <i>Sept. 19</i>	Best-Sellers and Trends in Mass Market Publishing	Miller Pew <i>Best-seller Paper due</i>
Session 6 – <i>Sept. 26</i>	Romance fiction & life on the front line <i>Guest</i>	Chapter 8 in text <i>Read at least one romance from any category</i>
Session 7 – <i>Oct. 3</i>	Genre choice	Booktalk <i>Booktalk Paper due</i>
Session 8 – <i>Oct. 10</i>	Genre choice	Booktalk
Session 9 – <i>Oct. 17</i>	Genre choice	Booktalk
Session 10 –	Genre choice	Booktalk

<i>Oct. 24</i>		
Session 11 – <i>Oct. 31</i>	Genre choice	Booktalk
Session 12 – <i>Nov. 7</i>	Genre choice	Booktalk
Session 13 – <i>Nov. 28</i>	Genre choice	Booktalk
Session 14 – <i>Dec. 5</i>	Genre choice	Booktalk <i>Final Paper Due</i>

Readings:

Session 2:

Garrison, Dee. *Apostles of Culture*, chapters 4 and 5, pp. 67-101.

Session 3:

Alpert, A. (2006). Incorporating Nonfiction into RA Services. *RUSQ* 46(1), 25-32.

Dewan, Pauline. (2013). Reading matters in the academic library. *RUSQ*, Vol. 52(4), 309-319.

Please look at these resources before class:

<http://www.rburgin.com/sites/ranf.html>

<http://www.citizenreader.com>

Session 4:

Smith, Duncan. (2010). Your Brain on Fiction. *RUSQ*, Vol. 49(1), 2010, 38-42.

Smith, Duncan. (2011). Books: An Essential Part of Essential Libraries, *Public Library Quarterly*, 30(4), 257-269.

Session 5:

Miller, Laura J. (2000). The Best-Seller List as Marketing Tool and Historical Fiction. *Book History*, Vol. 3, 286-304.

Pew Research Center (2016). Book Reading 2016.

Session 6:

Chapter 8 in text

One romance from any category

Sessions 7-14: One book from the genre category for the week (or as assigned by the presenter) and the corresponding chapter in the text.

Assignments:

Assignment 1 – Brief paper: Bestselling Fiction – Then & Now

Using a list of bestsellers (several are provided below), choose 2 works of fiction that were bestsellers in the US, one from the period between 1900 and 1950 and one from

the period after 2000. In a brief paper (4 to 6 pages; double-spaced) analyze the books you've chosen describing their content, their settings, and any biases (class, race, gender, age, etc.) they exhibit. Do not attempt a literary analysis; bestsellers are rarely works of literature, so don't examine their literary value. Try to put yourself into the skins of the readers, the people for whom bestsellers are written. Why were these two bestsellers so popular and how do they reflect the age in which they were published?

Best Seller Lists

There is no one list of bestsellers and different lists are compiled using different approaches. Here are a few lists to get you started on choosing a book for this paper:

The Hawes List of NYT bestsellers from the present to 1950.

<http://www.hawes.com/pastlist.htm>

A list that includes US bestsellers from 1900 to 1922.

[http://www.gutenberg.org/wiki/Bestsellers, American, 1900-1922 %28Bookshelf%29](http://www.gutenberg.org/wiki/Bestsellers,_American,_1900-1922_%28Bookshelf%29)

One nice thing about this list is that you can download most of the bestsellers.

Publishers Weekly has restricted access to its historic bestsellers archives to subscribers only but you can see the list from 1900 to 2010 in Wikipedia

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Publishers Weekly lists of bestselling novels in the United States](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Publishers_Weekly_lists_of_bestselling_novels_in_the_United_States)

New York Times Current Bestsellers

<http://www.nytimes.com/best-sellers-books/overview.html>

Also, on reserve: Korda, Michael. *Making the List: A Cultural History of the American Bestseller 1900-1999*. New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 2001.

Assignment 2 – Brief paper: Thematic Booklist and Booktalk

Booktalks are one way that librarians (especially in public and school libraries) introduce new books to potential readers. Imagine you have been invited to present a booktalk to a group. In this assignment, you are asked to prepare and present a booktalk of ten titles. The booktalk should last approximately five minutes (and you may decide you only want to cover five of the ten titles on your booklist in the booktalk as it is so brief).

In your paper choose and define your audience: who they are; what assumptions have you made about them; why you chose this topic for this audience. Define your topic, including information on why you chose the books and how the titles are linked together. Please include a brief discussion of how you compiled your information, what sources you used, books you may have considered and rejected and why, or any other issues that arose. Also provide an outline of the booktalk that you will give. Write a paragraph-long annotation about each of the books you will be including in your oral presentation and attach them to your paper; this is the type of list you would provide

your audience as part of the booktalk. The total length of the paper should not exceed 5-6 pages (double-spaced).

As the final step in this process, you will give this booktalk to the class (who will pretend to be your defined audience). Information about the booktalk is provided under Assignment 3.

On reserve:

Maata, Stephanie L. *A Few Good Books*. Neal-Schuman, 2009.

Assignment 3 – Booktalk in class

The booktalk is "a little piece of pie so good that it tempts one to consume the whole concoction." --Margaret Edwards

A booktalk typically is a discussion of a few books that share a common theme or attribute, such as (nonfiction) sports or mysteries set in a certain locale. A booktalk is neither a book review nor a plot summary. It is a *promotion piece* and is similar to a movie trailers that promotes interest in a film. The booktalk tries to sell a group of books by conveying a bit of information about them. It *creates demand* by readers who want to know more. Since the booktalk is a performance, the most effective ones have some dramatic elements, with the focus on the books and not on the drama.

The SILS library has a number of books on the topic. Although many of them are aimed at children's and YA librarians, there are two intended for booktalks for adults and are on reserve:

Balcom, T. Book Discussions for Adults: A Leader's Guide.

Langemack, C. The Booktalker's Bible: How To Talk About The Books You Love To Any Audience. Libraries Unlimited, 2003

Articles

Look in Information and Library Science Literature to see the large number of articles under the heading of "book talks."

Online

NoveList has a "professional toolbox" that includes a RA toolbox with a variety of resources.

Nancy Keene has a website devoted to book talks. Although mostly aimed at younger audiences there is a lot of useful information here:

<http://nancykeane.com/booktalks/faq.htm> and some useful tips at the same site:

<http://nancykeane.com/booktalks/tips.htm>

Assignment 4 – Class Presentation on Genre

Each student will develop an introductory classroom presentation on one type of genre fiction. Selections will be from those discussed in our text—e.g. adventure, western, mystery, historical fiction, science fiction, fantasy, horror etc. In general, the formal presentation should last for approximately 45 minutes and should cover the following:

Background: How is the genre defined? Does it have specific subdivisions?

History: How has the genre changed over the years?

Key Books in the Genre: What are the books from this genre that should be known by any well-read librarian?

Appeal of the genre: Explain the popularity of the genre. What are the appeal factors of this genre? Can you characterize the individuals who are most attracted to this type of fiction? Why do people read this genre rather than another? Using whatever sources seem appropriate, including contacts with subject or genre enthusiasts if they are available, why is this genre popular?

Current Awareness: How can you keep up in this genre with new content, authors and creators, and the like? With what print and web resources should Readers' Advisors be familiar?

Prizes and Awards: Does the genre have a means of recognizing the "best" examples of the genre?

Libraries: How well do libraries do in providing information about and developing collections of this genre? What collections development tools are most useful? Are there any specific libraries with outstanding holdings in this genre that we should be familiar with?

Special Issues: Does this genre present any special problems or challenges in readers' advisory?

After the presentation, the presenter will lead the class discussion including talking about the books representative of the genre that have been read by their classmates for that date.

This assignment will allow you to become an "expert" on one type of genre fiction and will also give you experience in preparing and presenting a unit on popular fiction.

Prepare a reading list on your genre. Post a .pdf version in Sakai. Length: no more than (2) pages.

Elements of the List:

- Title of the Genre
- Your name (best in a footer) • Date of preparation (best in a footer)
- Top 5-10 authors in the genre (list of names) • 5-10 Classic Titles in the Genre (please note sub types if needed)
- Provide title, author and book cover image, as well as a 2-4 sentence summary of the book.
- What is popular right now? Make sure you include a couple of current titles.

Assignment 5 – Final Paper: Analysis of Readers' Advisory Services in a Public Library

This paper will provide an opportunity to gain first-hand knowledge of RA service in a public library. How does the RA offered in a real public library compare to what we have been reading about?

Choose a public library to visit; it should be large enough to offer RA service either as a separate service or as part of another service, such as reference. You may gather the information for the paper by a variety of means, but you are required to make at least one visit in person to the library and have an encounter with a librarian or librarians working in RA. You may choose any library you wish for this assignment.

The report should be written from the point of view of a consultant who has been hired by the library to evaluate and improve readers' services in that library. Begin with an assessment of the readers' advisory services offered and address topics such as: does there appear to be a commitment to RA, as evidenced by: marketing the service, budgeting, staffing, training, collection development, and available RA resources (including electronic resources). What ancillary aspects of RA (e.g. book clubs) are provided?

Your task is to assess the readers' advisory services that the library provides both in person and via its webpage. In the final portion of the paper, provide recommendations for how RA might be evaluated in order to improve or increase the readers' advisory offered there. The paper should be approximately 8-10 pages in length (double spaced; 12 pt. font).

Grading:

Assignment 1 – 15%

Assignment 2 – 15%

Assignment 3 – 15%

Assignment 4 – 20%

Assignment 5 – 20%

Class Participation – 15%

Based on the UNC Registrar Policy for courses

(<http://regweb.unc.edu/resources/rpm24.php>) semester grades will be H, P, L or F for graduate students. Grades for individual assignments will be based on points obtained on each assignment, weighted by percentages listed above, to calculate final grades. Numerical grades for the course as a whole will roughly translate into the following letter grades:

96.0-100% = H (High Pass)

80.0-95.9% = P (Pass)

65.0-79.9% = L (Low Pass)

< 64.9% = F (Fail)

If you have any concerns or questions about your grades (or any other issues) at any time, please feel free to discuss with me.

Students at the School of Information and Library Science are expected to follow the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Honor Code. Essentially, the Honor Code states that all students shall “refrain from lying, cheating, and stealing... all students are expected to actively support and protect the ideals of the Honor System at Carolina. These responsibilities must not only be met, but exceeded, for Carolina’s Honor System to continue to thrive.” For more information, see: <http://honor.unc.edu/>. For all assignments, students are required to submit original work and to give credit through citation to any sources/resources they used.

If you feel you may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability, please contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. Also, please contact UNC Disability Services at (919) 962-8300 or disabilityservices@unc.edu at the Student and Academic Services Buildings, located in Suite 2126, 450 Ridge Road, to formally coordinate accommodations and services.

Diversity Statement

In support of the University’s diversity goals and the mission of the School of Information and Library Science, SILS embraces diversity as an ethical and societal value. We broadly define diversity to include race, gender, national origin, ethnicity, religion, social class, age, sexual orientation and physical and learning ability. As an academic community committed to preparing our graduates to be leaders in an increasingly multicultural and global society we strive to:

- Ensure inclusive leadership, policies and practices
- Integrate diversity into the curriculum and research
- Foster a mutually respectful intellectual environment in which diverse opinions are valued
- Recruit traditionally underrepresented groups of students, faculty and staff
- Participate in outreach to underserved groups in the State.

The statement represents a commitment of resources to the development and maintenance of an academic environment that is open, representative, reflective and committed to the concepts of equity and fairness.

August 2018