

American Adolescence

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Office hours: M 2-4pm & W 10-11am; sign up at mendelman.youcanbook.me

Section 1: MWF 9:10-10am

Section 2: MWF 12:10-1pm

Section 3: MWF 1:10-2pm

What does it mean to “come of age”? How do different Americans imagine the transition from childhood to adulthood? How have cultural notions of this collective phenomenon and individual project changed over the past hundred years? Is there merit to the claim made by recent cultural critics that this developmental stage keeps getting longer?

This course will think through these questions as they are posed by and deliberated in a range of twentieth- and twenty-first-century cultural forms—including advertising, non-fiction essays, novel-length fiction, memoir, and film. As we contemplate how these works narrate the process of coming-of-age, we will pay special attention to how different individuals imagine factors like education, local and national environment, socioeconomic, biochemistry, and key components of identity—especially gender, race, ethnicity, and sexuality—shape this psychosocial phenomenon.

English 102 is an introduction to textual analysis designed to help you develop your critical reading and writing skills. With these aims in mind, we will hone specific strategies of close reading and devote serious attention to the writing process. We will also think together about terms associated with reading, writing, and other text-based enterprises. Like our course’s keywords, these concepts should be familiar (narrative, definition, argument, story, text, image). We will seek to defamiliarize them—to evaluate this language and its referents through a series of lenses that help us think differently (or at least think again) about words whose meanings we tend to take for granted. In so doing, we will aim to learn both about the nature of language and communication, and the material realities these projects seek to describe. Through informed conversation and constructive questioning, we will appraise our course texts in their historical and formal contexts, as well as consider the larger, thematic concerns inherent in any study of what it means to be human.

Required course texts

Available at the Campus Store:

- Bechdel, *Fun Home* (2006)
- Course reader
- Hacker and Sommers, *The Bedford Handbook* 9th ed. (2014)
- Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* (1970)
- Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951)

Available on reserve at Bowman Library:

- *The Social Network* (2010)

- *Inside Out* (2015)

Assignments and grading

- Paper 1: 2 pages (15%)
- Paper 2: 3-4 pages (20%)
- Paper 3: 4-5 pages (20%)
- Final exam (10%)
- Classwork: homework assignments, reading quizzes, oral presentation (20%)
- Participation (15%)

Grade calculus

- A ($\checkmark +$) = 95
- A/A- = 92.5
- A- = 90
- A-/B+ ($\checkmark / \checkmark +$) = 89
- B+ = 88
- B+/B = 86.5
- B (\checkmark) = 85
- B/B- = 82.5
- B- = 80
- B-/C+ ($\checkmark / \checkmark -$) = 79
- C+ = 78
- C ($\checkmark -$) = 75
- C- = 70
- D+ = 68
- D = 65
- D- = 60
- F = 50

Classwork

The required assignments for this course include weekly writing exercises and one oral presentation. The writing assignments will focus on specific aspects of analytical writing (e.g., thesis statements, close reading). These exercises will function as building blocks for each of the course papers. We will work with these assignments in class on their due date, so they must exist, in hard copy, at the start of each class period. Late homework will not receive credit, but **you must complete all class assignments to pass the course.**

The oral presentations will be done in small groups (2-3 students) and will focus on a single course text, beginning in Week 3. These eight to ten minute presentations will initiate class discussion on their assigned day and thus should aim to raise questions rather than provide answers about the given work. I will deliver a sample presentation in our second class.

I will also give infrequent reading quizzes. Quizzes will be given at the beginning of class and will feature three to four straightforward questions about key story elements (e.g., how does the protagonist get to and from work?). So long as you do the reading, you will pass with flying colors. If you miss a quiz on a day when you have an excused absence, your grade will be calculated without it. There will be no make-up quizzes.

Papers

The details of each paper will be discussed as the dates approach. Topics are always flexible (translation: if you have an exciting idea/question/hunch/puzzle, just ask!). Papers should include a well-formulated, argumentative, focused thesis (a.k.a. debatable claim) and ample, pertinent textual support (a.k.a. close reading). Papers must also be typed, double-spaced, MLA- or APA-formatted with a proper heading, margins, and Works Cited. We'll review citation guidelines early in the semester; if you have questions or concerns about this protocol (or about anything else), I'm happy to talk in office hours.

A few other guidelines: I will not answer content-related emails in the 24 hours preceding the paper deadline (trust me, this policy benefits everyone involved). Your paper is due in hard copy at the beginning of class and must be uploaded to Turnitin.com *before* you arrive that day. Papers cannot be submitted via email. Late papers will be penalized one third of a letter grade for every day past the deadline, including weekend days.

Writing is really about rewriting. To encourage you to keep revising your work beyond deadlines that are necessary but arbitrary, I invite you to submit any course assignment to the Menlo Oak Press. If your piece is selected for publication and you work with the editors to revise and publish the piece, I will grade your new product. You will either earn this new grade on the assignment (replacing your former grade) *or* augment your former grade by one third of a letter—whichever comes out in your favor.

Participation

The success of our seminar depends on the active participation of every student. Accordingly, participation constitutes a large portion (15%) of the final grade for the course. I will calculate it as follows: I will not keep track of the number of times you raise your hand; I will attend to the evidence that you actively, regularly engage with the material, share your insights and questions with the class, and incorporate these thoughts as well as my feedback into the course assignments.

I have a no-small-screens policy in class. Laptops and iPads are acceptable for reading course texts and note-taking practices only (wifi must be disabled). If I see you on your phone, email, or Facebook during class, it will drastically affect your participation grade. The same rubric applies to your physical classroom presence: arrive on time; stay for the entire session; do not take bathroom breaks unless absolutely necessary. (Although there is not a separate grade for attendance, if you are late or absent, you cannot participate. Absences and tardiness will therefore significantly lower your participation grade.)

The chance to attend to one subject for fifty minutes, with a community of other people, is a rare opportunity; take advantage of it.

Academic Integrity Policy

“Menlo College expects that students will do their own work and that their quizzes, tests, examinations, lab work, research papers, essays, projects, internships, and all other assignments honestly reflect their own learning and knowledge in the course. [V]iolations of this policy [include]: copying from another student during an exam; having another person write a paper [on a student’s behalf]; any form of plagiarism or cheating; etc. Students found in violation [of the policy] are given a failing grade on the assignment. Students found in violation during a final examination, final project, or related final evaluation [or] assignment will receive a failing grade for the course” (*Menlo College Academic Procedures Manual*, 17).

Also note that a student who fails a course as a result of violating this policy will not be allowed to withdraw from the course, and that all violations of the Academic Integrity Policy will be recorded through the Office of Academic Affairs. Repeat offenders will be subject to disciplinary action as determined by the Academic Dean. Such disciplinary action will normally result in the expulsion of the offending student from Menlo College.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is unacceptable. I define plagiarism as presenting someone’s words, ideas, or any other work that can be considered intellectual property as if it was your own. If you use someone else’s work without quoting or citing completely, you have committed plagiarism. Do not copy and paste text from any source without quotation; do not paraphrase without citation or adapt information from Cliff’s Notes or Wikipedia; do not submit versions of the same paper more than once—all of these are considered plagiarism.

If you have questions about whether you may be inadvertently committing plagiarism, there are many resources available to help you. Professor Austin will be hosting an academic integrity workshop early in the semester. You may also visit any of the centers listed below. I am also always happy to talk about these or any concerns.

Resources

On campus:

- The Writing and Oral Communication Center:
 - All students are required to visit the Writing Center to workshop the first course paper. Written confirmation of this appointment must be attached to your submitted final draft.
 - Students who make additional appointments at the Writing Center over the course of the term and who document these sessions with written confirmation from the Center will receive a 24-hour extension on the assignment due date.
 - Students who make use of the Oral Communication Center for their in-class presentation and who document this session with written confirmation from the Center will increase their presentation grade by one third of a letter.

- Bowman Library:
 - We'll do a research orientation at Bowman on Wednesday of Week 4. I encourage you to make use of this excellent resource throughout the term.
 - We will also visit Bowman for two workshops related to the course research paper on Wednesday of Weeks 12 and 13. Following the second workshop, every student is **required to meet individually** with a librarian to further your independent research. The calendar of 15-minute appointments will be available at the second workshop and then at the Library's circulation desk. It is your responsibility to claim a slot and then keep your appointment; the librarians (who are wonderful people!) will email daily attendance rosters to me.
- Academic Success Center (ASC):
 - The ASC, located between the Bookstore and the Library, is open Monday through Friday from 9am to 6pm. Students may drop in for assistance at any time, but appointments are recommended.
 - The ASC also runs a drop-in Peer Tutor Lab from 2:30 to 5pm, Monday through Wednesday and 7pm to 9pm Sunday through Wednesday.

Online:

Be wary of online sources, especially Wikipedia. Always consult more than one source and look for consistency. Here are a few reputable sites for cross-checking purposes:

- CCTC's Grammar Site: cctc.commnet.edu/grammar/index
- Purdue University's Online Writing Lab: owl.english.purdue.edu
 - Includes MLA and APA formatting and style guides
- Google Scholar: scholar.google.com
 - Features a variety of critical commentary (books, journal articles)

Weekly schedule

With the exception of Monday August 22, all texts should be read and all writing assignments must be completed *prior* to the indicated class.

Narrative

Week 1: Narratives of reading, writing, and college English classes

M 8/22: Collins, "Introduction to Poetry" and "Marginalia"

W 8/24: Fadiman, "Inset a Carrot" and Lamott, "Shitty First Drafts"

F 8/26: Writing diagnostic: *OED* definition of "adolescence"

Definition and Argument

Week 2: Advertising

M 8/29: Assa Berger, "How to Analyze An Advertisement"

W 8/31: OWL, "Visual Rhetoric: Analyzing Visual Documents"

F 9/2: Writing workshop: Media analysis

Weeks 3-4: Journalism

W 9/7: "Do We Need to Redefine Adulthood?," *New York Times*, articles 1-4

F 9/9: "Do We Need to Redefine Adulthood?," *New York Times*, articles 5-7

M 9/12: Colbert, "The Terrible Teens"

W 9/14: Bowman Library research orientation
F 9/16: Writing workshop: Op-Ed draft
* Paper 1 (Op-Ed) due Monday 9/19

Story and Text

Weeks 5-7: Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*
W 9/21: Chapters 1-6
F 9/23: Writing workshop: Thesis statement
M 9/26: Chapters 7-12
W 9/28: Chapters 13-18
F 9/30: Writing workshop: Close reading paragraph
M 10/3: Chapters 19-End

Weeks 7-9: Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*
W 10/5: To the end of the first chapter in “Autumn” (p. 32)
F 10/7: Writing workshop: Thesis statement
M 10/10: To the end of “Winter” (p. 93)
W 10/12: To the end of the second chapter in “Spring” (p. 131)
F 10/14: Writing workshop: Analytical essay outline (thesis statement & first body paragraph)
M 10/17: To the end of “Spring” (p. 183)
W 10/19: To the end of “Summer” (p. 206)
F 10/21: Writing workshop: Analytical essay draft

* Paper 2 (Analytical essay) due Monday 10/24

Image

Weeks 10-11: Bechdel, *Fun Home*
W 10/26: Chapters 1-2
F 10/28: Writing workshop: Research question & hypothesis
M 10/31: Chapters 3-5
W 11/2: Chapters 6-7
F 11/4: Writing workshop: Revised research question & hypothesis

Week 12: *The Social Network*
M 11/7: Watch film prior to class
W 11/9: Research workshop: How to answer research questions
F 11/11: Writing workshop: Source analysis

Week 13: *Inside Out*
M 11/14: Watch film prior to class
W 11/16: Research workshop: How to refine research based on initial findings
F 11/18: Writing workshop: Research essay outline (thesis statement & two body paragraphs)

Weeks 14-15: Research essay workshops, conferences, and presentations
* Paper 3 (Research essay) due Saturday 12/3

Final exam: In-class rewrite of Paper 1. Saturday 12/3 10am-12:30pm. Location TBD.