English 21a

Young Adult Literature

The Young Adult writer Philip Pullman says that he writes for young adults because they care more about the fundamental joys and challenges and depth of literature than most older readers. They care what happens and who it happens to, and they care when those things are of genuine importance to what it means to be a person (human or otherwise). There’s a very significant way that Young Adult literature is the purest form of story-telling now being created.

This means that if you understand Young Adult literature you’ll understand literature in general, and you’ll also think about and wonder about what it means to be a human being and what it means to interact with other human beings.

Since this is a summer class we'll have a lot of flexibility and we can come up with a set of readings together. Right now I am imagining we'll pick some of them from the following list:

- Rowling: Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban
- Cooper: The Hunger Games
- Stevenson: Kidnapped
- Pullman: The Golden Compass
- Lewis: The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe
- Valente: Space Opera
- Lowry: The Giver

If people want to we can compare one of these works to its film adaptation.

Depending on interest we could also discuss fan-fiction, and you can use one of your two written assignments to write a piece of fan fiction if you like.

The course will require two papers of 1,000-1,500 words each. Class participation will always help you, though it is not mandatory.