ENGLISH 108M
YOUTH AND ADOLESCENCE
(WINTER, 1998)

A) PARTICULARS:

Instructor: Cameron Reid
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Office Hours: MONDAY & WEDNESDAY: 2-4 p.m. (or by appointment)
Meeting Time: TUESDAY & THURSDAY: 4:00 - 5:30 p.m. (AL 207)

B) REQUIRED TEXTS (read in order given):

Anne Frank, The Diary of a Young Girl (Bantam)
Sylvia Plath, The Bell Jar (Faber & Faber)
Lee Maracle, Ravensong (Press Gang)
Toni Morrison, The Bluest Eye (Plume)
Shyam Selvadurai, Funny Boy (McClelland & Stewart)
William Maxwell, So Long, See You Tomorrow (Vintage)

NOTE: You might also pick up the department of English's recommended essay and style guide entitled THE LITTLE, BROWN HANDBOOK (especially if you need to improve your writing skills); there are copies available in the BOOK STORE ("all royalties go to the Department of English scholarship fund"); also, check out the USED BOOK STORE(s) for old copies of these books as they have all been taught before.

C) COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1.) "Summary Cards" (see below for details): 40% (1 page each)

2.) End of Term Test (last week of classes -- details to follow; you will be tested on the 2 books that were not submitted as "SUMMARY CARDS" as well as upon your own questions from those submitted): 20%

3.) Paper Proposal (due just before/after reading week -- you MUST come and talk to me during my office hours before you hand in your PROPOSAL and in some cases after, as well): 10% (1-2 pages)

4.) Final Paper (due April 6): 30% (4-5 pages)

5.) I also reserve the right to slightly modify grades (one way or the other, no more than 5 percent), given your attendance, participation, enthusiasm, etc.
D) COURSE MANDATE:

Our course, "YOUTH AND ADOLESCENCE," examines a crucial and often difficult period in an individual's social, psychological and personal development. Clearly, this is a time of profound transformation. And so this 'rite of passage' from childhood into adulthood is typically fraught with a great sense of confusion and disorientation in the face of the conflicting cultural and familial forces at work on the collective psyche of the youth. For some analysts, the study of, say, youth, childhood development, adolescence, or young adulthood has been (and continues to be) carried out in fields such as psychology and sociology; but our course allows us to examine this area of personal development and social transformation through the lens of literature and literary representation. We will consider what exactly an uniquely literary perspective brings to the subject of 'Youth and Adolescence'; and I would hope that this type of study might complement (or, in some cases, even conflict with) work that some of you might be doing in other fields. Throughout the course we will be looking at issues of: rebellion, isolation and alienation, cultural knowledge, gender roles, sexuality and sexual orientation, emotional turmoil, self-representation, self-construction, identity, and memory.

E) WEEKLY BREAKDOWN OF CLASSES & ASSIGNMENTS DUE:

Jan. 6, 8, 13: Introduction; general discussion about our theme; group "SUMMARY CARDS"; some suggestions about our first "SUMMARY CARD."

Jan. 15, 20, 22: First "SUMMARY CARD" due for THE DIARY OF A YOUNG GIRL (on the 15th); class & group discussions.

Jan. 27, 29, Feb. 3: Second "SUMMARY CARD" due for THE BELL JAR (on the 27th); class & group discussions.

Feb. 5, 10, 12: Third "SUMMARY CARD" due for RAVENSONG (on the 5th); class & group discussions; you may hand in your PROJECT PROPOSAL on the 12th if you wish.

Feb. 16-20: READING WEEK.

Feb. 24, 26, Mar. 3: Fourth "SUMMARY CARD" due for THE BLUEST EYE (on the 24th); class & group discussions; ALL remaining PROJECT PROPOSALS are due in the last week of February.

Mar. 5, 10, 12: Fifth "SUMMARY CARD" due for FUNNY BOY (on the 5th); class & group discussions.

Mar. 17, 19, 24: Sixth "SUMMARY CARD" due for SO LONG, SEE YOU TOMORROW (on the 17th); class & group discussions.

Mar. 26: REVIEW CLASS.

Mar. 31, Apr. 2: FINAL TEST.
F) Summary Cards:

1.) You are asked to compose a one-page "Summary Card" for 4 of the 6 books that we examine throughout the semester.

2.) Respectively, each "Summary Card" will be worth 10% of your FINAL grade.

3.) The "Summary Cards" are due, in class, on the DAY that we, as a class, deal with the work. PLEASE HAND IN TWO COPIES OF YOUR "SUMMARY CARDS": ONE FOR MY FILES AND ONE TO BE RETURNED TO YOU WITH ANY COMMENTS I HAVE. THAT IS, IF YOU WANT COMMENTS AND NEED THE SUMMARY CARDS BACK (you will for reasons outlined below) HAND IN TWO COPIES.

4.) The "Summary Cards" will be typed, single or double-spaced (depending on how much you have to say), and FULLY complete.

5.) The "Summary Cards" will be composed of THREE separate sections:

FIRST, I want a one or two paragraph summary of the primary events within the book, to show me that you have read it (I'm not expecting a fully realized composition but will expect more than just "there was a family, they had lots of adventures"; though they might have had 'lots of adventures,' I want a little DETAIL that shows me that you know what is going on in the story).

SECOND, I want a one-paragraph 'discussion point' that shows your critical engagement with the book (we will practice this activity, in groups, in our third class by way of a "YOUTH AND ADOLESCENCE" selection that I hand out that day). How does the book suggest the time and place in which it was written? Comment on its use of settings in that regard. How does the book relate to your evolving understanding of our theme "YOUTH and ADOLESCENCE"? How does the author use language? What literary style or genre does the author use? And how is the author's use of language and/or style different from (or similar to) other books that we have read (or other books that you might have read from this same period)? Do you detect some sort of experiment in the author's construction of his/her characters or plot? and so on. Of course, I offer these various points of engagement with the books as suggestions only; you CHOOSE how you wish to proceed. Also, you should always try and show me evidence from the text of what you are saying.

THIRD, I want you to ask yourself two critical questions about the book (again, we will be practising this activity in our third class). Usually, the questions should be different from the 'discussion point'; they may relate to (or build upon) whatever issue you have proposed in the second section, as long as you seem to extend the discussion a little further, in a slightly enhanced or even different direction. So, using the above stated criteria ask questions THAT YOU THINK YOU CAN ANSWER about the book. That is, question the author's construction of its subject, construction of our theme of YOUTH AND ADOLESCENCE; ask questions about the period in which it was written, the book's writing style, its use of characters, its themes, its relationships with other works that we have studied, or whatever.
6.) So again, type up a one-page "Summary Card" and hand it on the day of the class that we are dealing with the given book. (The first "Summary Card" will be due on JANUARY, 15 at the beginning of the class on The Diary of a Young Girl; from there, consult your "weekly breakdown of classes" to know exactly when each card is due.)

7.) I will not accept hand-written, "slipshod" pieces of work that appear as if they were slapped together in a few minutes before class. You MUST complete the assignment, as requested, and give it the time it needs to do it properly (not alot of time, but some time).

8.) For each day late, you will lose 2 marks (up to 5 days). If you hand it in 2 days late, you will lose 4 marks; 4 days late, 8 marks ... etc.

9.) After 5 days you will not receive marks for the assignment but still must hand in the "Summary Card." For, the "Summary Cards" are the center-piece of this course, both in terms of class discussion and in terms of individual development. I see these cards as preliminary exercises that take each of us towards the writing of the term test, the paper proposal, and the final paper: in other words, to not hand them in tells me that you are not ready to write the final paper. If you do not hand in any of the 4 "Summary Cards," I will not mark your final paper. Also, the "question" portion of the "Summary Card" will be the basis for the largest part of your exam. That is, I will select 2 or 3 of the best questions that you have individually asked on your "Summary Cards" throughout the semester and use them on your own personal exam (every student will therefore write a different exam). So again, to not hand in any or all of the "Summary Cards" means that you will not write an exam for there will be insufficient questions (compared with your other classmates) from which to choose. Clearly, it is to your advantage that "Summary Cards" be handed in, and handed in on time. Even still, you must submit "Summary Cards" for 4 books before you can proceed in our course to the final assignments.

10.) While you can workshop these issues with other students, you cannot reproduce the work of others on these "Summary Cards": I reserve the right, in this instance, to give a "0" to all students involved -- with still a necessary re-write of the "Summary Card" expected -- if the work is plagiarized.