

Representation in Young Adult Literature



Why is representation in Young Adult Literature an important topic?



- “Providing an opportunity for a book to serve as a mirror provides a sense of acceptance” (*Teaching Young Adult Literature Today*, 104).
- “We know the power of seeing ourselves in a text (mirror), but we also understand the importance of seeing others (windows and sliding glass doors), other ways of life, and other possibilities” (*Teaching Young Adult Literature Today*, 118-119).



Why is representation in Young Adult Literature an important topic? - Classroom

- “Human lives cannot be explained by taking into account single categories, such as gender, race, and socio-economic status” (*Hankivsky*, 3).
- “When teachers are better educated and more inclined to act, students feel safer, attend school more, and achieve greater success” (*Teaching Young Adult Literature Today*, 103).



Who is this course designed for?



- This course is for undergraduates.
- An entire semester (~14 weeks).
- Many legislations when it comes to teaching in high school.
- Some undergraduates may want to go into education.
- Many undergraduates are still figuring out their identity as they enter the world.
 - “Teens are caught between two worlds, childhood and adulthood, and in YA, they can navigate those two worlds and sometimes dualities of the other words” (Strickland).

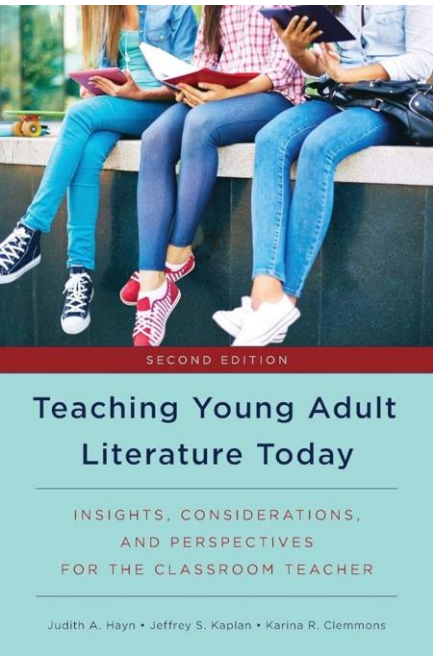
Modules in this course



- What is YA Literature?
- Sexuality in YA Literature
- Race/Civil Rights in YA Literature
- International YA Literature

Week 1 & 2: What is YA Literature and who is it for?

- Classroom book = *Teaching Young Adult Literature Today*



- First two weeks are going over:
 - What is YA Literature?
 - Who are young adults?
 - Who is YA literature for?



Ted Talk: “The Danger of a Single Story” by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

- To understand the importance of representation in YA literature, students will watch Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s Ted Talk “The Danger of a Single Story.”
- The link to Adichie’s Ted Talk:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9lhs241zeg>



Book Selections



- Students are given a list of books for each module and have the ability to pick which one they want to read.
 - “Units are at their most successful when students play a role in the direction they take” (*Teaching Young Adult Literature Today*, 178).



Sexuality and Gender in YA Literature

In this module, students will explore sexuality and gender in YA literature.

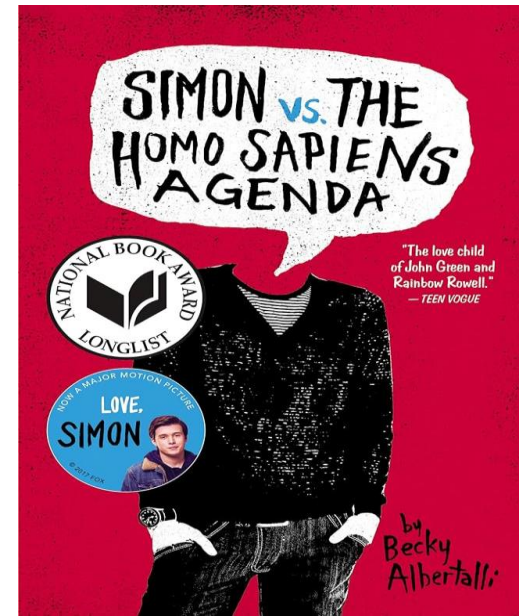
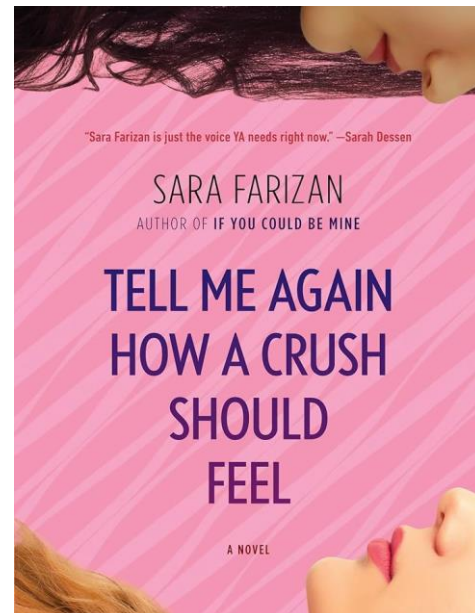
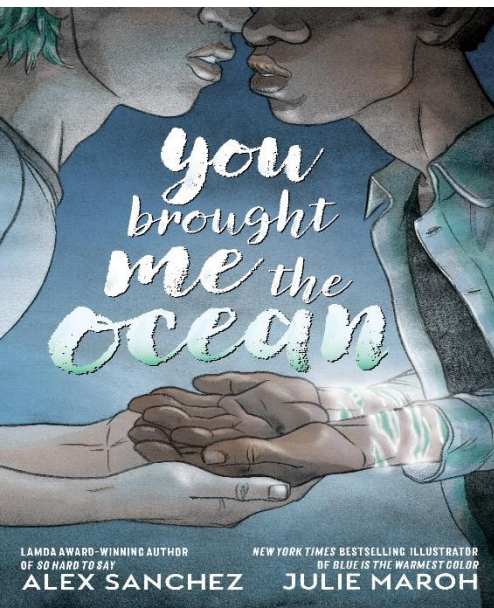


- Students will reflect on the importance of adolescents seeing themselves mirrored in YA literature.
- Students will reflect on the importance of adolescents seeing a viewpoint of a life they may not be familiar with.
- “Hostile school environments where students who identify as LGBTQ are bullied, assaulted, isolated, perform worse in academics, and are overall singled out for their sexuality or gender expression” (*Teaching Young Adult Literature Today*, 101-102).

Sexuality and Gender in YA Literature : Book Selection



- *You Brought Me the Ocean* by Alex Sanchez
- *Tell Me Again How A Crush Should Feel* by Sara Farizan
- *Simon vs The Homo Sapiens Agenda* by Becky Albertalli



Race/Civil Rights Representation in YA Literature



In this module, students will reflect on the importance of Race/Civil Rights Representation in YA Literature.

- Students will reflect on Race/Civil Rights representation in YA literature.
 - How important are these representations?
 - What have students learned previously about the civil rights movements?
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- “Providing students a safe place to talk and discuss can help combat racism, injustice, and inequality” (*Teaching Young Adult Literature Today*, 143).

George Takei's Ted Talk: Why I Love a Country That Once Betrayed Me.”



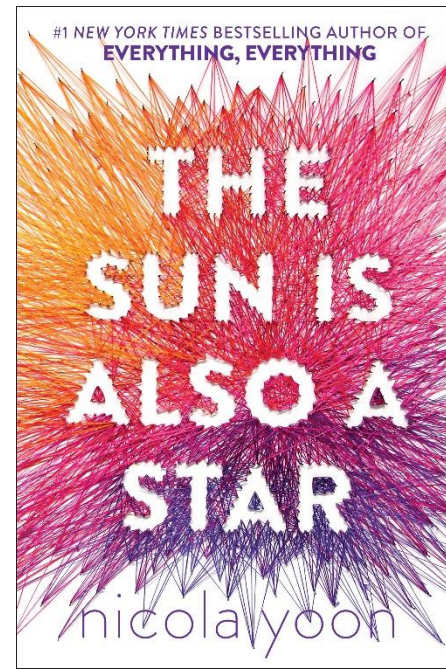
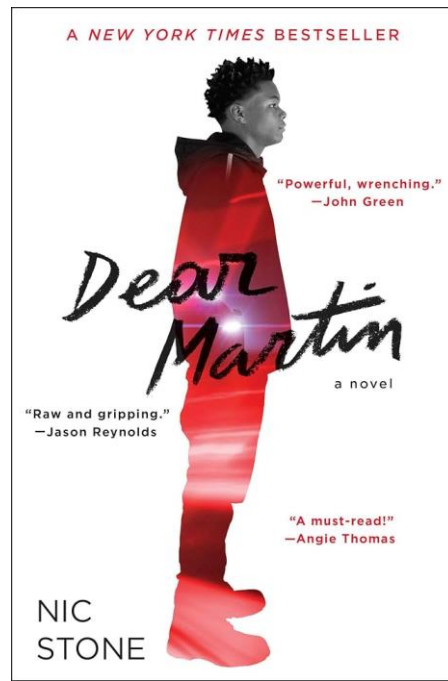
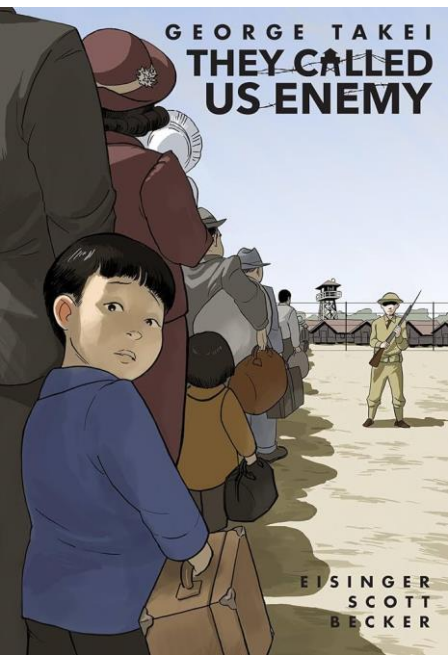
- To understand the importance of this module, students will watch George Takei's Ted Talk: “Why I love a Country That Once Betrayed Me.”
 - The link to Takei's Ted Talk:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LeBKBFPwNc>



Race/Civil Rights in YA Literature: Book Selection



- *They Called Us Enemy* by George Takei
- *Dear Martin* by Nic Stone
- *The Sun is Also a Star* by Nicola Yoon



International YA Literature



In this module, students will reflect on the importance of adolescents reading international YA literature.

- What international YA stories have you heard of?
- Why is it important for adolescents to read international YA literature?
- How would you promote YA literature?



Trevor Noah's talk on CBS Morning: "Trevor Noah on taking 'Born a Crime' from the page to students' ears."

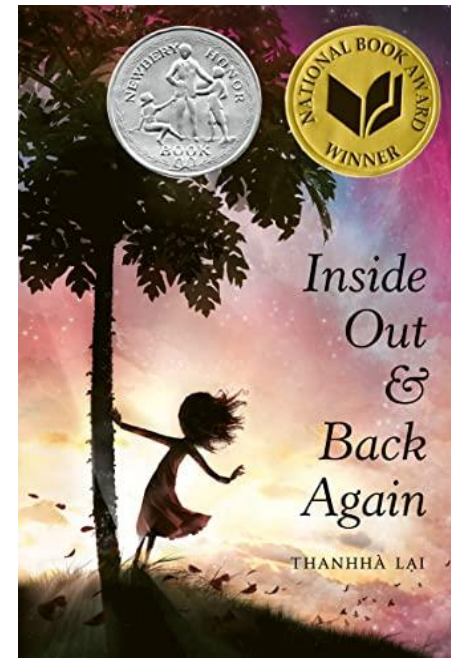
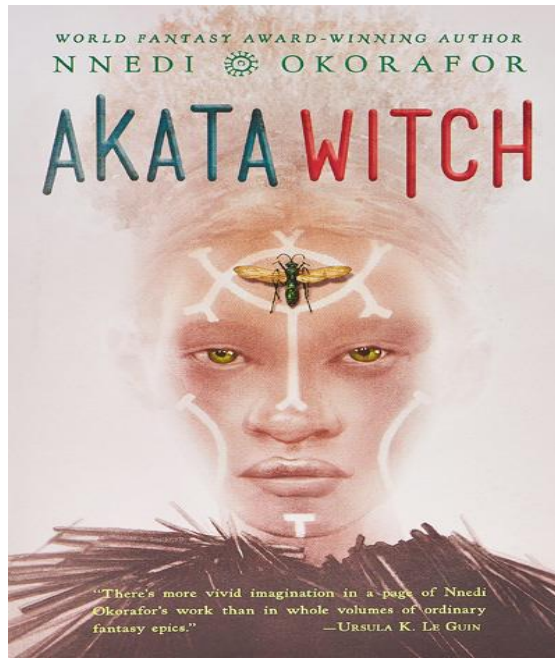
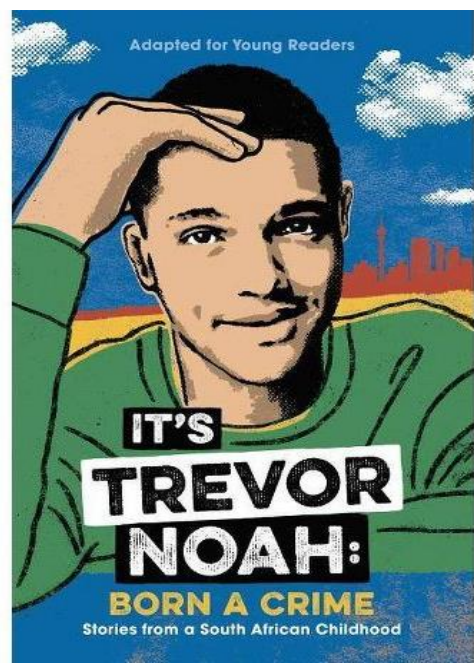
- Students will watch Trevor Noah's discussion on his book *It's Trevor Noah: Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood*.
 - Link to Trevor's Noah talk: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L2x1kmOqoNo>



International YA Literature: Book Selection



- *It's Trevor Noah: Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood* by Trevor Noah
- *Akata Witch* by Nnedi Okorafor
- *Inside Out & Back Again* by Thanhha Lai



Other articles to use through out this course:



- Their, Michael: “Cultural Awareness Logs: A Method for Increasing International Mindedness Among High School and Middle School Students.”
- Strickland, Ashley: “A Brief History of Childhood and Literature for Youth.”

Classroom Activities



- CAL
 - “Cultural Awareness Logs (CALs) target elements within texts, helping students find meaning and insights from cultural behaviors, beliefs, values, and thoughts of others” (Their, 47).
- Discussion posts due before class.
- Analyses of books read (~1 page).
- Classroom discussions/small group discussions

Classroom Reflections

- Near the end of the semester, students will reflect on the course.

Reflections on:

- Why representation is important in YA Literature;
- How to connect to students;
- What types of YA do you connect to;
- What you took out of this course;



Final Assignment



- Students will write a final reflection paper on what they have learned from this course, their experiences, and how they would teach adolescents.
- Questions:
 - What have you learned from this course?
 - What have you related to in this course?
 - What was your favorite reading material you have read in this course?
 - How would you take what you have learned and connect it to teaching YA literature to adolescents?



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- “Why I love a country that once betrayed me.” *YouTube*, uploaded by TED, 4, July 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LeBKBFPwNc>.
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