

**ENGLISH 387**  
STUDIES IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE  
Instructor: J. BATTIS [jbattis@sfu.ca](mailto:jbattis@sfu.ca)  
FALL 2006

**The Edge of Seventeen: Sex and Kinship in Teen Literature**

"High school is like a battlefield for your heart."  
- Angela Chase, *My So Called Life*

What makes 'teen literature?' How do we define 'teen angst,' and why does this sense of anxiety over gender roles, sex, and rebellion only seem to apply to teens? Is adolescence something to be gotten over, left behind, or are the deepest facets of our personality and our sexual being actually forged during these radically uncertain years? This course will explore the relationship between sexuality and kinship- loving and belonging - within contemporary teen lit, paying particular attention to how adolescent culture stresses a movement away from parental control, even as it seeks to create family-like peer groups among teens. We will cover a broad spectrum of teen experiences, from the isolation of boarding school (*A Separate Peace*), to the trauma of family violence retold in a poetic memoir (*Splintering*). Along the way, we will interrogate teenlit as a genre, studying its close relationship to children's literature and its keen understanding of pop culture. To supplement the textual material, we will screen episodes from a variety of teen shows throughout the course, including *My So Called Life*, *Dawson's Creek*, and *The O.C.* Since this is an upper-level course, there will also be a coursepack with critical readings.

PREREQUISITES: Credit or standing in two 100-level English courses and two 200-level English courses.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Corrigan, Eirann	Splintering	Push
Knowles, John	A Separate Peace	Scribner
Levithan, David	Boy Meets Boy	Knopf
Selvadurai, Shyam	Funny Boy	M&S
Trope, Zoe	Please Don't Kill the Freshman	HarperCollins
Williams, Bett	Girl Walking Backwards	Griffin

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

0%	Short practice essay
10%	Revision of practice essay
20%	Media response paper (4-6 pages)
30%	Research paper (8-10 pages)
15%	Seminar participation
25%	Final examination

SEMINARS WILL BE HELD THE FIRST WEEK OF CLASSES