Oh the Places We Went!:

Creating and Teaching *Dr. Seuss: Then and Now!*

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

Claire (List) McCullough

Thesis Advisor

Dr. Anthony Edmonds

Ball State University

Muncie, Indiana

May, 2009
Table of Contents

Abstract .................................................................................................................. 1

Acknowledgements .............................................................................................. 2

Artist’s Statement ............................................................................................... 3

Bibliography ......................................................................................................... 27

Appendix A
Syllabus

Appendix B
Assignments

Appendix C
Handouts

Appendix D
Assignment Examples
Abstract:

For my Honors thesis project I chose to create and teach an honors colloquium, *Dr. Seuss: Then and Now!* under the direction of Dr. Tony Edmonds, professor of history. As a social studies education and history major I was grateful to have the opportunity to gain some teaching experience while also broadening my content knowledge. The course focused on the life and works of Theodor Geisel (better known as “Dr. Seuss”) as well as his continuing legacy as a children’s author and illustrator. It was offered during the fall 2008 semester, during which time fifteen students from a wide variety of majors participated in the class. The intention of this course was to help students better understand the significance of Geisel’s works and to develop a greater appreciation for them. In preparing and teaching this course, Claire learned valuable strategies and skills that helped her to become a more effective as well as more knowledgeable teacher.
Acknowledgements:

I would like to thank Dr. Edmonds for all of his guidance, enthusiasm and support during my pursuit of this project. Thank you for being an excellent teacher.

I would also like to thank Dr. Edmonds and Dr. Kevin Smith for generously donating their time to provide guest lectures for the class. They certainly helped the students to place Geisel within the historical context in which he worked.

Thank you to my students who invigorated the course with their discussions and who were willing to work with me as I taught my first class.

Finally, thank you to my parents for first introducing me to the world of Dr. Seuss, to my family and friends who encouraged my pursuit of this project and occasionally learned with me, and to my husband who was forced to listen to my frequent giggling and commentary on Geisel’s brilliance as I prepared for class each week. Each one of you helped me to maintain my own excitement for this long endeavor and I am grateful for your willingness to share in this experience with me.
At first, the thought of completing an Honors Thesis seemed daunting. As a social studies education and history double-major, I certainly was not interested in completing another standard research paper, nor did I think I was capable of constructing a creative project worthy of the Honors college expectations. In all honesty, beyond an early assessment of my interests and talents (or what I perceived to be a lack thereof), I did not think much about my thesis project before I unknowingly began the initial steps in creating it. The inspiration for the Dr. Seuss colloquium, which I had the opportunity to teach during the fall 2008 semester, really came from an off-handed comment I made in response to my roommate’s decision to take a Disney colloquium. I happened to mention that if there was a course on Disney movies, I thought there ought to be one on Dr. Seuss books as well, because I had always enjoyed Dr. Seuss and wanted a legitimate academic reason to revisit the books I treasured in my childhood. A friend of mine then informed me that she knew of other students who had created colloquiums for their theses, and then she helped me along my way by mentioning the idea to Dr. Joanne Edmonds, who was then the associate dean of the Honors College.

Following continued encouragement from my friend and roommate I scheduled a meeting with Dr. Joanne to discuss the details of the assignment. She was very enthusiastic and helped me to gain further interest in the project. She also outlined the process of creating a class as an honors thesis for me. As it turned out, I had begun this process just in time (during the beginning of the spring 2007 semester) because such a thesis project required approximately a year and a half to complete. As an added bonus, she told me that her husband, Dr. Tony Edmonds—a professor in the history department as well as the Honors college—, was also intrigued by the idea. Dr. Edmonds had been my professor for a couple humanities courses that I took during my
freshman year, and I had already hoped to ask him to be my advisor. This remark provided all the further incentive I needed to begin working on the planning for my thesis.

In our initial meeting, Dr. Tony and I began brainstorming ideas for the course and outlining how I would conduct the necessary research. I knew from my elementary studies of Dr. Seuss (whose real name was Theodor Seuss Geisel) that he had written and illustrated many children’s books and had drawn political cartoons during World War II. I also knew that at least one of his books had been published posthumously. This basic knowledge helped me to decide to give the class a blanket focus on any or all types of his works rather than simply on his children’s books. I also wanted to address his legacy, which continues to grow as his books are turned into feature length films and also serve as the basis for literacy programs across the nation. Dr. Edmonds agreed with this approach and also helped me to begin the preliminary research by directing me to two books written by Dr. Philip Nel (a professor at Kansas State University and a highly esteemed authority on Seuss literature)—Dr. Seuss: American Icon and The Annotated Cat: Under the Hats of Seuss and His Cats. Dr. Seuss: American Icon proved to be an excellent resource as it combined both biographical data and in-depth literary analysis without being overbearing or dull. The Annotated Cat then provided a more thorough analysis of Dr. Seuss’ most famous character as he appeared in both The Cat in the Hat and The Cat in the Hat Comes Back.

Before we could plan the class, extensive research was required. I began by reading Dr. Seuss: American Icon and then broadened my investigations with the help of the annotated bibliography provided within it. I also started to do some simple web searches using “Dr. Seuss” and “Theodor Geisel” as the bases for my exploration, just to see the scope of Seussian material available online. This search began during the summer of 2007, with the bulk of it occurring the
following fall. During this time, I read all but a handful of the children’s books written by Geisel (according to availability at Bracken Library and various bookstores) as well as both book and article-length literary criticism of his work, the most helpful of which were Ruth MacDonald’s *Dr. Seuss*, A.O. Scott’s “Sense and Nonsense,” and Timothy Cook’s “Another Perspective on Political Authority in Children’s Literature: The Fallible Leader in L. Frank Baum and Dr. Seuss.” I also viewed his wartime materials: political cartoons, pamphlets and cartoon shorts created by the Educational Division of the Army, in which he served during World War II. My research furthermore focused on investigations of his early work, including his contributions to his high school and college newspapers, the advertisements he created for Standard Oil, as well as his forays into film, painting and sculpting. Finally, I viewed movies, books, articles, lesson plans and websites inspired by his work. I located most of these sources online or in the university library (some via interlibrary loan), although I did also purchase copies of those texts which I knew would be most useful and also those which I simply could not find any other way (i.e. an issue of *Life* magazine in which John Hersey’s article “Why Do Students Bog Down on First R?” appeared and *The Seven Lady Godivas*, which was without a doubt Dr. Seuss’ least successful book). A complete list of these resources is located in the accompanying bibliography.

Once the majority of the research was complete, Dr. Edmonds and I began planning the class. After much deliberation, we selected Nel’s *Dr. Seuss: American Icon* as our primary academic text for its ability to provide a detailed analysis of multiple aspects of Geisel’s work while considering it in the context of his life and the world around him without being too cumbersome or dry. It can also be challenging at times, specifically as it delves deeply into the significance of Seuss’ rhyme scheme. While many of the students did not seem to appreciate these challenges, none of them seemed so overwhelmed that they could not grasp the meaning of these selections.
To supplement the reading with more biographical information where we thought it was necessary, we selected excerpts from Judith and Neil Morgan’s *Dr. Seuss & Mr. Geisel*, which is considered the most complete biography written about Ted Geisel. We also incorporated various selections from Ruth K. MacDonald’s *Dr. Seuss*, the first book-length literary criticism of the author’s work, to bolster the academic integrity of the course. Selections from Charles Cohen’s *The Seuss, The Whole Seuss, and Nothing but the Seuss* were also included as they provided more insight into Geisel’s early works than any of the previously mentioned sources. Finally, we used some segments of Richard Minear’s *Dr. Seuss Goes to War* to help the class better understand Geisel’s wartime experiences and how they later influenced the direction of his career. This variety of sources strengthened the course by allowing students to encounter aspects from each of Geisel’s careers and to better understand how his whole life’s experiences shaped his work.

All of these elements and experiences culminate in a specifically “Seussian” style, which is distinctive in its architecture, characters, rhythm and purpose. Something can be described as Seussian if it maintains a particular integrity of design, never sacrificing a line or verse for convenience while still somehow maintaining a simplistic appearance. The shapes for both animate and inanimate objects are somewhat loopy and curvy. The animals typically have large eyes and a furry appearance (even if they are fish). Seussian stories often rhyme, but at the very least they proceed with a specific rhythm that keeps the reader wanting to turn the page. Besides the shapes and rhythms, colors also play an important role in defining the Seussian style. Seussian colors are bold and used intentionally to direct the reader’s focus and to highlight an important aspect of the picture or story. Finally, a Seussian story or cartoon does not insult the reader by blatantly preaching some moral, but rather emphasizes the value of imagination and
individual action, while letting the reader determine precisely what that action should be. Despite the masses of imitators, the ability to create something truly Seussian was unique to Geisel, although the term might occasionally be applied to work that exhibit at least one of these virtues.

The task of selecting specific Dr. Seuss books to assign also required much thought and was primarily influenced by variety, availability, and cost. The initial list of books that I wanted to include was fairly lengthy and would have been quite expensive for the students. There were certain books that absolutely had to be a part of the curriculum, for instance, *The Cat in the Hat* (the book that made “Dr. Seuss” a household name), *And to Think that I Saw It on Mulberry Street* (Geisel’s first children’s book), *How the Grinch Stole Christmas!* (which, thanks to the television special, has become a holiday classic) and *Horton Hears a Who!* (one of Dr. Seuss’ most popular message books). Others, though, were a little more difficult to choose as some present similar themes, as in *If I Ran the Zoo* and *If I Ran the Circus*, and some are almost too familiar for some students (like *Oh, the Places You’ll Go!* thanks to its popularity as a graduation gift). Fortunately, Dr. Edmonds and I found a few different collections of Dr. Seuss books that would enable us to have as many as thirteen texts within one book while keeping the costs minimal. We eventually settled on *Your Favorite Seuss: A Baker’s Dozen by the One and Only Dr. Seuss* because it provided the greatest number of books we considered essential as well as brief essays written by a variety of people who were inspired by (and who sometimes helped to inspire) Dr. Seuss. The authors of these essays include Maurice Sendak (who was applauded by Geisel as the author of *Where the Wild Things Are*, which emphasizes the possibilities of a child’s imagination), Audrey Stone Geisel (Geisel’s second wife), Stan and Jan Berenstain (creators of the Berenstain Bears and also in some ways protégés of Geisel, who had once
advised them that writing an entire series based on bears was a bad idea) and many others ranging from historians to kindergarten teachers.

In addition to the stories included in Your Favorite Seuss, Dr. Edmonds and I also chose to have students read The Butter Battle Book and Hooray for Diffendoofer Day! The former was certainly Dr. Seuss' boldest political book as it boldly portrays the uncertainties that resulted from the nuclear arms race during the Reagan Administration. Along with Yertle the Turtle and The Lorax, The Butter Battle Book exhibits Geisel's influence as a political activist and the passion with which he wrote. Hooray for Diffendoofer Day!, on the other hand, did not take a political stand but rather was simply about a school in which children were taught to think for themselves—a common theme which Geisel emphasized throughout his life. This book was begun by Geisel, but was set aside as he worked on Oh, The Places You'll Go!, which was the last book he saw published. Hooray for Diffendoofer Day! was published posthumously after being finished by Jack Prelutsky and Lane Smith in 1998. The completion of this book certainly proved to be a challenge as Prelutsky and Smith tried to fill in the blanks Geisel left and also to mesh their own unique styles with that of Seuss. The result may not please all lovers of Dr. Seuss, but it does provide insight on how extensive Geisel's influence as a children's author was and also hints about his continuing legacy, which is further bolstered by the ever increasing commercialization of his work.

More or less concurrently with selecting the course reading assignments, Dr. Edmonds and I laid out some basic ideas for writing assignments and creative projects. After I watched the new Horton Hears a Who! movie, I began planning a film critique assignment in which the students would analyze the film's merits based on how well it maintained the integrity of the original children's book and whether or not the changes made were necessary and appropriate. In all
honesty, I was quite proud of this assignment and expected it to be one of the best parts of the curriculum. Unfortunately, I neglected to check the movie’s release date until well into the summer. As it turned out, the DVD was not available until December, which was about two months after I needed it. Because I did not want to completely scrap the assignment, I chose to simply replace the movie with another fairly recent film inspired by Seuss. Over the course of a weekend, I subjected myself to both *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* with Jim Carrey and *The Cat in the Hat* with Mike Myers. Without a doubt, I consider *the Grinch* to be a more enjoyable (read: less painful) movie, but I could not deny that *The Cat in the Hat* better lent itself to academic criticism. There were simply more elements that invited discussion about how Geisel might have regarded the film. For instance, the set and costume designs in *the Grinch* are solidly Seussian, whereas in *The Cat in the Hat* they appear to mix Seuss’s world with the modern era as well as 1950s America. Also, the children in The Cat in the Hat are stereotypical—while there is the same older brother–younger sister duo that appears in the book, the girl has a Type A personality while the boy is constantly getting into trouble. This differs drastically from the nearly silent girl and her brother who tries his best to end the chaos in the book. Although I knew the responses to the film would not be favorable, I selected *The Cat in the Hat* for the assignment and was pleased with the resulting papers, despite the many complaints the students had over their awful viewing experiences.

As for the other assignments, Dr. Edmonds and I chose to have the students submit journals every-other week (except when they had other papers due), complete a “spin-off” paper and presentation and cap off the semester with final projects. We began the journal assignments over the summer (or more likely in the hours before our first class) by sending the students a chapter from *Dr. Seuss and Mr. Geisel* as well as a digital copy of *One Fish Two Fish Red Fish Blue*
Fish, to which the students were to respond. These initial journals were strictly diagnostic to make sure everyone understood the requirements, and also to give me some practice in grading before I had to actually assign points. The students' journals were required to be a minimum of 500 words in length and were to somehow address all of the major reading assignments for that week as well as class discussions where applicable. The specific topics discussed therein, however, were up to individual discretion and interest. Students also had choice in selecting their topics for the spin-off assignment as well as, obviously, with the creative projects.

For the spin-off papers and presentations, students were required to find some kind of product that was inspired by Geisel's work, or at least was somehow related to it. In both the papers and the presentations, students had to explain the spin-off, why they chose it and how it relates to Dr. Seuss. The spin-offs students selected ranged from cheap merchandise to theme parks to Seussical the Musical and also included a discussion of how Dr. Seuss' style was potentially a spin-off of the architectural masterpieces created by Antoni Gaudi. Overall, I think the presentations were very entertaining and helped the class to better understand the incredible scope of Seuss-based products. The final projects were also very enjoyable as they typically capitalized on students' talents and in some cases mixed them with Geisel's own. The final assignment required students to either design some kind of creative project based on what they learned during the semester, write a research paper in which they delve further into some aspect of Geisel's life and works, or write a literary analysis of at least two books not previously covered in class. We decided to give students these options to best suit their talents and interests. Most students opted for the creative option (which took a wide variety of forms), although a few did appreciate the choice to just write a paper.
The structure of the class was, unsurprisingly, very colloquial. Each week, students would be assigned between 40 and 80 pages of reading, typically including one or two Dr. Seuss stories, a selection from the Nel book and other supplementary articles where appropriate. These resources would then serve as the basis for the week’s discussion, which focused on everything from Geisel’s personal background and his inspiration for writing his work to his specific style and the acclaim or criticism surrounding it. We would also analyze the children’s books in an attempt to better understand why his work has been so popular and enduring. Most of the time, I would begin with a question, for instance, “Is Marco a liar?” in reference to our study of *And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street!* The students would then have the floor to respond to my question and/or ask one of their own. I made an attempt to occasionally call on those who did not volunteer their responses as a way to keep a handful of students from dominating the conversation. I found early on that some students express themselves best through writing their journals, whereas others are more comfortable sharing their thoughts in discussions. Dr. Edmonds and I had been highly impressed by the journals some of the quieter students submitted and wanted to make sure that the rest of class benefited from their insights, rather than solely from those of their more extroverted peers. I certainly got better at managing the discussions as the semester progressed and quickly found that knowing my students names is crucial to being able to conduct such a class.

Because the class was nearly two hours long, I would break up the discussions by bringing in some new material during class, including videos, guest speakers, other Seuss stories that were not assigned, and artifacts like a handwritten letter from Geisel (compliments of one of Dr. Edmonds’ acquaintances) or additional pieces of his artwork. Constructing class in this way enabled us to cover much additional material in a more enjoyable way than if we simply assigned
the bulk of it as homework. It also allowed us to consider a wide range of his work without unnecessarily increasing students’ book costs. For example, I wanted students to encounter Seuss’ early prose books, so I asked one of the students (who was a theater major) to read *Bartholomew and the Oobleck*. The students enjoyed this story time and were then more alert for the rest of class. Finally, this structure enlivened our discussions as students processed some of the material during our discussions rather than before class began.

Although Dr. Edmonds was officially listed as the instructor of the course he chose to limit his role during class time for both practical and pedagogical reasons. His goal as my advisor was to help me become a better teacher while still insuring that the class lived up to his expectations. He determined (and I agreed) early on that the best way to do this would be to allow me nearly full control of the class, so long as I previously discussed my plans with him. He was always prepared to give me a few recommendations, but never before I presented my ideas. During class time he would volunteer questions and remarks to better inform or direct our discussions without overriding my own purposes for the period. After the first couple classes, Dr. Edmonds intentionally made his attendance sporadic so that the students would view me as their teacher instead of frequently glancing at him to verify everything I said. I think this approach worked well. Although the students occasionally questioned my decisions, they largely accepted what I told them and looked to me for expertise on the subject. Dr. Edmonds also provided the class with a short lecture on the civil rights movement in order to inform our discussion of Dr. Seuss’s outlook on race in America. Outside of class, Dr. Edmonds assisted me with grading, provided feedback on the discussions in which he had participated, asked questions to further my own content knowledge, helped prepare some of the handouts (particularly those from the Morgan book), and checked in periodically to make sure I was staying on top of all of my teaching duties.
For the grading, we split the journals, initially each taking half of the class's papers, but occasionally alternating the weeks in which we graded. For the larger papers, we would both read all of them and then decided on the corresponding grades together. Dr. Edmonds' approach toward this class helped me to determine my own purposes in teaching this course and allowed me to gain the skills and confidence I needed to be successful. I am extremely grateful for all of his guidance and assistance in this project.

My goal in teaching this course was to help others to better appreciate Geisel's work and its significance to American life throughout the 20th century and even into the 21st. Although a few generations have now grown up reading Dr. Seuss books, most people do not realize how revolutionary those books were for their time or why their success is so important. The triumphs of these books, however, must be understood within the context in which Geisel created them. The incredible success of Dr. Seuss came largely as a result of the 1957 publication of *The Cat in the Hat*, which was written in response to John Hersey's article "Why Do Students Bog Down on First R?" published in *Life* magazine on May 24, 1954. In this article, which was included in the class's assigned reading, Hersey describes the deficiencies in the public school system, particularly in regard to students' abilities and willingness to read. Hersey blames the problem on the "namby-pamby school readers" which bore students rather than ignite their imaginations and make them want to read. He asserts that if creative geniuses like Walt Disney and Dr. Seuss would write the primers, children would not be able to put them down. With just a little prodding Geisel accepted this challenge, and despite the many difficulties he faced in writing a book based on a first grade reading list, he produced one of the bestselling children's books of all time. *The Cat in the Hat* was not without critics, however. Many librarians criticized the book's brash nature and bold colors. The edition published by Houghton Mifflin and printed specifically for
school use did not fare nearly as well as anticipated. Children loved the book, though, and begged their parents to buy them copies, which they did gladly. This caused the revenue from the Random House edition to skyrocket, and so, the Dr. Seuss legacy as a paramount children’s writer began, 20 years after the publication of his first children’s book.

Geisel’s influence on American life, however, began long before 1957. Beginning in 1927, Geisel launched a successful 17-year advertising career with Standard Oil and coined the popular phrase, “Quick, Henry, the Flit!” He also played an instrumental role in US involvement during World War II. Between 1941 and the beginning of 1943, Geisel drew political cartoons for PM magazine, largely aimed at getting American forces involved in the war, boosting support and convincing Americans to buy war bonds. Despite some disturbing depictions Geisel drew of the Japanese and Japanese-Americans during this time, the messages of his cartoons frequently emphasized individual responsibility for the progression of the war. For example, the March 17, 1942 cartoon, “Awkward Predicament… for YOU to Solve,” portrays a figure defined as “You” being crushed inside a world atlas by the efforts of Adolf Hitler and a Japanese man (not necessarily Hideki Tojo or Emperor Hirohito). Although Geisel believed his work in cartooning was important for the war effort, by January of 1943 he felt that he was not doing enough to help the cause. He joined the Army and began to work with the Educational Division in producing educational pamphlets and cartoon shorts for the troops. His work during this period helped to educate American soldiers about how they could avoid unnecessary danger during the war without having to sit through dull lectures. These efforts, combined with his continuing legacy as a children’s author, have allowed Geisel to affect millions of American lives. By focusing on the many facets of Geisel, my class was better to appreciate his work and the way it has helped to shape our nation.
Overall, I am pleased with how the class went throughout the semester, although there are certainly elements of the class that I would change if I ever have the opportunity to teach this course again. I believe this will be the case for any class I ever teach because part of being a good teacher includes reflecting on choices made and adjusting the curriculum to better match the needs and goals of the class. For my first change, I would substitute *Horton Hears a Who* for the *Cat in the Hat* as the subject of the movie analysis. Perhaps because the creators stuck with animation instead of trying to mold a Seuss creation into a live-action movie, *Horton* is much more enjoyable than the *Cat* (based on my own analysis as well as that of a few of my students who had seen the film). There also appears to have been a greater attempt to remain “Seussian” with this recent film, as can be seen in the figures of the characters as well as the scenery. There are, however, a plentitude of aspects in the film that lend themselves to criticism. JoJo, for instance, the child hero whose “Yop!” breaks through the speck’s sound barrier and in effect saves the entire Who civilization from destruction, is a stereotypically misunderstood pre-teen in the movie who dresses in shades of black. Horton and the Who mayor have also seen some character changes, making both appear at times incompetent to the viewers as well as to their rivals in the film. Aside from character adjustments, there is also an occasional use of gimmicks to get a laugh, which Geisel arguably would have detested. On the other hand, the animators did a remarkable job recreating Geisel’s landscapes and architecture and also remained true to his message that each person must stand up for what he knows is right, regardless of the consequences. Obviously, turning a children’s book into a feature length film is no easy task and requires some adjustments; whether or not these changes were appropriate would fuel an interesting debate in class and commentary in the students’ papers.
Other adjustments I would elect to make in the course would focus more generally on the topics and books selected. First of all, I would place a greater emphasis on Geisel’s illustrations and other artwork than I did during this semester. Geisel’s style is remarkably distinctive with its impossible loops and curves in architecture and the happily dazed looks on his furry characters that qualify as neither animal nor human. This style certainly deserves some special attention.

Unfortunately, art is not an area of my expertise, and at the time I taught the course I was unprepared to focus very heavily on this important element of Geisel’s work. To fix this deficiency in the course, I would first of all increase my own knowledge base of the significance of the artwork and the intricacies of its details, but I would also make an effort to bring in a guest speaker who would be better able to explain Geisel’s meticulous nature in creating his drawings and why such an apparently simplistic style is actually quite difficult to mimic.

Secondly, I would eliminate, or at least shorten, a couple of the reading assignments and replace them with more supplementary material. The reading assignment for the week we covered Geisel’s experiences with World War II was unfortunately redundant and received many complaints from students who were upset with an already longer-than-usual reading assignment. While I do not apologize for the length of the reading, I do know that I could make a better attempt to insure that each of the pages I assign has a greater significance and does not simply repeat material the students have previously read. There are plenty of academic articles focusing on Geisel’s work, so finding a wider variety of supplementary reading would not be difficult. Several of the students mentioned that they would have enjoyed learning more about Geisel’s personal life, so I would also include more supporting biographical information for them to gain a better understanding of the man behind the Dr. Seuss name and image.
The last definite change I would make would be to adjust the reading list slightly, specifically to include some of Geisel’s lesser-known works, such as those written under the names “Theo. LeSeig” and “Rosetta Stone.” Geisel used these names for works he did not consider to be worthy of the “Dr. Seuss” name, yet they are still valuable in understanding the extent of his work. There also needs to be more inclusion of Geisel’s early works, such as those completed for the Dartmouth Jack-O-Lantern literary magazine and Judge. Various examples from each of these will help students to better understand the progression of Geisel’s art as well as ideas. This is particularly true in instances where Geisel drew caricatures of various races. African Americans in his early work were generally portrayed as being simple-minded with a simian appearance. Similarly, Geisel characterized the Japanese during World War II as looking identical to each other with round glasses and evil smirks. Geisel later repented for these depictions and tried to influence how other Americans viewed racial differences, particularly through publication of Horton Hears a Who!, which emphasizes that “a person’s a person, no matter how small,” and The Sneetches, which teaches that regardless of appearances, “Sneetches are Sneetches/And no kind of Sneetch is the best on the beaches. In teaching students about Geisel’s early work, it will be of the greatest importance to stress that the derogatory Dr. Seuss images were not created out of a personal malice or hatred for certain groups of people, but were rather products of their times. Thankfully, Geisel did what he could to help Americans move beyond such intolerance and into greater understanding.

One potential change I might make if given the opportunity to teach this course again would be to give the students an even more active role in the class by having each of them sign up to lead the class’ opening discussions on specific topics at some point throughout the semester. Students would sign up for these assignments on a first-come, first-serve basis over the course of
the first week of classes. That way, students would have the opportunity to receive their syllabi from other classes and plan out their schedules accordingly. This strategy would also enable them to generally select a topic that they find most interesting. Although I would certainly have to iron out the details, I would have each of them plan on leading the discussions for the first half hour of the classes to which they were assigned. I think this would help students to better invest themselves in the reading and to come prepared with more questions and comments than they might otherwise. I also think this strategy provides a valuable opportunity for me to gain further insight on which topics matter most to my students, which would then help me to adjust the class as necessary.

Throughout my experiences in creating and teaching this course, I learned many invaluable lessons about teaching. First of all, I learned that creating a class takes a lot of time, effort and research. It was certainly difficult at times, but I gained pride in knowing that I could successfully organize a coherent course that was reasonably well organized and prepared. Granted, there were plenty of snags throughout the semester, but now at least I know how I can better prepare for classes and can, therefore, avoid some of the problems. For instance, prior to running into some attendance issues, I did not think to lay out specific procedures for what students should do if they have to miss a class. Although most of them understood that it was important to email or call me if they had to be absent, a couple failed to do so. To fix this problem, I will now always be sure to outline such procedures in the syllabus. If a student has to miss a class, I must receive an email or phone call by the start of class that day, including the student’s reason for being absent as well as any assignment that was supposed to be turned in for that class. They also need to have a plan for getting any handouts from class. This would have been especially helpful since I only came to campus twice a week last semester and had a
difficult time meeting with students to give them work that they missed. Failure to comply with these requirements would result in a loss of points for the week. I also know now that I need to be stricter with deadlines in order to limit my own stress and to prevent (to the best of my ability) students’ tendencies to procrastinate. The only time this was really an issue was with the final projects. I had intended to have each student tell me his or her plans at least two weeks in advance so that I would not have two students doing the same project or paper topic, unless they worked as a team, and also so that I could be certain everyone was prepared by presentation day. Unfortunately, I did not include this in the handout or the syllabus. It was simply something I stated in class, which means that students were less likely to remember it. While several of them did email me with their project ideas, many failed to do so, even after I reminded them. Being a little clearer with my expectations while assigning a project will certainly help me to eliminate, or at least minimize, these scenarios.

I also benefited greatly from learning to deal with the hassle of coming from my own classes at the opposite end of campus and transitioning into teaching mode. I had completely underestimated how difficult it could be to shift gears and be completely prepared when class started. The difficulties were compounded when I had occasional technical problems or when multiple students were asking me questions as I was also trying to set up. I sincerely believe that any effective teacher has to be excellent with multitasking, so I am glad I had the opportunity to practice. As the semester went along, I certainly improved and was able to have actual conversations with the students in the time before class started instead of simply giving them brief responses to their questions. I also learned to minimize the tasks that I needed to complete in the time before class, like preparing handouts, so that I could spend more time focusing on my plans for that day or student concerns instead of hectically throwing materials together.
My interactions with the students during class also improved as the semester progressed. One of the first lessons I absorbed was that in order to begin a successful discussion, a quality prompt or question must be presented. Simply asking the class, “What did you think about this book?” is a very easy way to kill any possibility of genuine discussion. Asking students more pointed questions, like “How would you characterize the mother in The Cat in the Hat?” is much more likely to engage the students and result in an interesting conversation. These questions do not always come easily, though, especially if students do not respond well to the initial phrasing. To help the class proceed more smoothly, I began writing out potential questions the day before class so that I would be prepared to change directions if necessary and also to prevent me from completely losing my train of thought. Doing so certainly made the discussions more productive, although it took me a few weeks to learn to organize my notes and questions effectively.

One difficult, but incredibly beneficial lesson that I learned was that just because I am interested in a topic does not guarantee that my students will have the same enthusiasm for it. Our focus on World War II illustrates this point well. Going into the semester, I was more excited for this class than just about any other. I personally think that Geisel’s war cartoons are some of his most fascinating work, and the thought of him collaborating at Fort Fox with men like Frank Capra and Chuck Jones was thrilling for me. I had also scheduled a guest speaker for this day and had located one of the Private Snafu cartoon shorts to show. At the time, I thought that my planning was impeccable and that my students would love this class. I was wrong. I learned that day that not everyone loves history like I do, and since that class period focused almost entirely on history, my students were largely bored and unhappy by the end. By the time we got to Private Snafu, they were already uninterested. I was initially crushed by the apparent failure of this lesson, but by the time I made my long drive home I realized that this one day did
not seal my fate as an inadequate teacher. Rather, it provided me with a valuable lesson that I will try better to incorporate in all my classes: know your students and their interests. This does not mean that I think subject matter should be avoided if it does not immediately excite my students; on the contrary, I now better understand that it is important to know my students’ interests so that I can help them to appreciate the content from their own perspectives instead of looking at everything through my own eyes. That said, I also learned that some students will complain about topics and assignments no matter how well planned they are. In teaching this course, my skin thickened to criticism a little bit so that I could consider student complaints without taking them personally. I have also been able to acknowledge that students were not always aware of my own goals within teaching the course, so I should make a greater effort to clarify them. I have learned that I simply will not be able to please everyone (nor do I think the effort is even worthwhile), but I have also learned that so long as I strive for clarity and cohesion with the material, I can organize a solid class in which students can find benefits, even if they do not agree with every one of my decisions.

More importantly than all of these details, though, I learned that I love teaching. Leading a class is invigorating, and I would frequently leave more energized than I was when I arrived. I love knowing that I can contribute to someone else’s knowledge and that I can help them to appreciate new things. I also love how much I learn from my students. Frequently, they would make comments that would cause me to consider a topic from a different perspective than I previously had or that would require me to extend my own research before the next class. For instance, one of my students took note of the curves and towers that are characteristic of Dr. Seuss’s buildings and asked whether Geisel had been influenced by the eccentric architect Antoni Gaudi. As I was unfamiliar with Gaudi, I could not give her a sufficient answer. As an
architecture student, she had a better background on this topic than I did and chose to enlighten
the class through using this as her prompt for the spin-off assignment. During fall break another
student found a copy of If I Ran the Rainforest, a book supposedly based on the work of Dr.
Seuss (complete with the use of the Cat in the Hat, Things 1 and 2, and a brother-sister duo), and
emailed me a few key pictures from it. I had not previously heard of this book, but it was a
perfect example of how books supposedly inspired by Dr. Seuss do not necessarily adhere to his
standards of quality. This particular book is geared toward teaching children specific concepts
and ideas, including the various levels of the rainforest and the importance of protecting the trees
from profiteering lumberjacks. Such preaching would likely have irritated Geisel who hated to be
called a moralistic writer. The comments these students made helped me to better understand my
own role as a teacher, and although I will likely never again teach an entire class of students who
are all my age, I now understand that I can learn just as much from my students as they learn
from me. I believe this will help me to always enjoy teaching, in spite of its many difficulties,
because every class is new and my own approach in teaching it will be somewhat different
because of the individuals within it and my new experiences from year to year.

In most ways, this course met my expectations—at least to the extent that I was able to form
them in the first place. I think at times, though, I expected the class to be more exciting and
energetic, without forming a clear plan for making it this way. I think that I previously had a
specific vision of my classroom environment, but I failed to realize that this cannot occur simply
because I want it. Rather, I know now that I have to make very deliberate efforts to shape and
direct the course in order to see the results I desire. If I want there to be a spirit of collaboration
within the course, I need to initiate it by calling on a variety of students for their opinions,
whether or not they are willingly offered, and have them also respond to what their classmates
have said. If I want to emphasize a sense of mutual respect within the classroom, I need to make sure that students are not cut off when speaking and that others listen to what they say. My students, who were also my peers, were very gracious in helping me to learn these lessons. Although I could certainly sense their exasperation at times, they were usually patient and willing to learn with me.

In some ways, teaching my peers presented more challenges than I anticipated, but in other ways it was easier. Particularly at the beginning, I did not feel like I was getting the respect that I had anticipated as a teacher. On the first day, especially, I frequently caught the students looking toward Dr. Edmonds to see if he would contradict what I had said. There were also instances in which students would email Dr. Edmonds with concerns for the class without copying it to me as well. Since he was not able to attend every single class, this occasionally caused some confusion as I did not always have a chance to check for emails from him before class began. It would not be until after class had dismissed that I would find out why a student was absent or turned in a late assignment. As the semester progressed, however, most of these issues improved and the students seemed to place more trust in my judgment. Teaching my peers was easier than anticipated in the respect that they all understood the effort involved in completing the honors thesis, so they were typically willing to respect my endeavors and to acknowledge that, due to drastic differences in experience, my grading was usually slower than Dr. Edmonds’. I also was greatly aided by the fact that all of the students had chosen the course, and almost all of them already had an interest in studying Dr. Seuss. I was, however, shocked to learn on the first day that one of my students did not like Dr. Seuss books at all, but chose to take the class anyway (partly because as a family and consumer science major she felt that she should better understand the books, and partly because it was the only colloquium that fit into her schedule nicely). I was
pleased to hear that by the end of the semester, she had an appreciation for Seuss that she had not previously thought possible.

The course evaluations the students submitted at the end of the semester were very favorable and gave me a better perspective on their experiences with the class. The average for the scores on all seven of the criteria exceeded four points out of five, with results for three of those criteria reaching 4.90. The elements of the class that students rated the best were the consistency in grading, the clear presentation of expectations and assignments, and the meeting of students' expectations. No student marked anything lower than a three for any of the seven elements. While my own evaluation of the course did not rely on these responses, they did provide me with much affirmation and gave me confidence in the success of the course, as well as a better understanding of the aspects that need to be improved. I also greatly appreciated the open-ended comments the students left. A couple of them complained that the amount of work required for the class was too great for a two-credit course. The most common complaint focused on the amount of reading required for the class. While I believe that some of them did have to read more for this colloquium than for some of their three-credit courses, I do not think that the work load was excessive, particularly for its Honors designation. I think that some of the students approached the class assuming that the bulk of their reading would be in children’s books and were disappointed when we had more academic texts to study.

Regardless of these few protests, most of the students' remarks were very positive and helpful. One student suggested that I include more of Geisel’s lesser-known works in the reading list, for instance, *You’re Only Old Once!* If I ever have the opportunity to teach this course again, I will certainly take this recommendation into consideration since this is an example of Geisel writing to entertain himself, and happening to create a successful book in the process. A
couple students also mentioned that they would like to have the entire Morgan book instead of just excerpts from it, particularly if this could replace Nel as the primary text. In creating the course, I had initially considered having students buy the Morgan book and giving them portions of *Dr. Seuss: American Icon* to supplement it. After further consideration, however, I determined that there was nothing in the Nel book I wanted to omit. At this point, there is not a book on the market that I would consider as a replacement to *Dr. Seuss: American Icon*. The blend of biography and analysis is simply too great to justify its elimination from the course reading assignments. I might, however, choose to incorporate a couple more excerpts from *Dr. Seuss & Mr. Geisel* (or maybe from Charles Cohen’s *The Seuss, the Whole Seuss, and Nothing but the Seuss*) to provide the class with a better understanding of how Geisel’s life influenced his works. A couple students pointed out the occasional redundancy in the reading; one mentioned that he or she would like to have more discussion on the Dr. Seuss “message books;” and several hoped I would change the movie for the film analysis. Between my own analysis of the course and the comments the students added, I think I could greatly improve the course, should I ever have the opportunity to do so. Regardless, of whether or not I get to teach this particular class again, I do now have a better idea of all the many aspects that go into teaching and I think I will be a more effective teacher because of my experiences with this thesis project.

I am extremely grateful for this opportunity to create and teach my own course with exceptional freedom to do so as I thought was appropriate. I may never have such liberty to form a course in the secondary level, but I certainly benefited from knowing that I can. I also enjoyed the opportunity to focus specifically and extensively on a topic that interested me so much. I have loved most of my history classes at Ball State, but this experience helped me to see the history of the 20th century in a whole new light by focusing on one man’s involvement in it.
rather than investigating it from a typical historical perspective. Doing so has helped me to better connect with the aspects of history that most students enjoy, namely the stories that are involved in the telling of history. Thanks to the two years I spent working on this project, I now have many stories to tell my future classes about a man who helped to shape the 20th century, but more importantly, I have had an experience that has helped me to better understand what being a good teacher requires and what I can do to become one.
Bibliography

Books:


Films:

*Dr. Seuss' The Cat in the Hat*. Directed by Hawley Pratt. Universal Studios, 2003 (26 min).

*Dr. Seuss' The Cat in the Hat*. Directed by Brian Grazer. Universal Studios, 2004 (82 min).
*Dr. Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas!* Warner Bros., 2006 (26 min).
Dr. Seuss’ *How the Grinch Stole Christmas!* Directed by Brian Grazer. Universal Studios, 2001 (105 min).


*Grinch Grinches the Cat in the Hat, The.* Universal Studios, 2003 (50 min).


*Lorax, The.* Universal Studios, 2003 (52 min).

*The Political Dr. Seuss.* Directed by Ron Lamothe. Terra Incognita Films, 2004 (84 min).


### Websites:

Hotchkiss, Eugene III. “Dr. Seuss Keeps Me Guessing.”


Articles:

Cook, Timothy E. “Another Perspective on Political Authority in Children’s Literature: The Fallible Leader in L. Frank Baum and Dr. Seuss.” *The Western Political Quarterly*, June 1983.


La Ferle, Cynthia G. “Oh, the places Dr. Seuss has taken us!” *Christian Science Monitor*, March 2, 1998.


Children's Books Written and Illustrated by Dr. Seuss:


*And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street.* New York: Vanguard Press, 1937


Oh, the Thinks You Can Think! New York: Random House, 1975.


One Fish Two Fish Red Fish Blue Fish. New York: Random House, 1960.


Other Books Written by Dr. Seuss:

Books Co-written by Dr. Seuss:

Books Written Under the Name Theo. LeSieg:


Books Written as Rosetta Stone:
Dr. Seuss Books Published Posthumously:


Appendix A:
Syllabus
Dr. Seuss: Then & Now!
Honors 390G
Ball State University
Honors College
Fall 2008

Class Meetings: Thursdays 4:00-5:40
Location: CA 106

Dr. Tony Edmonds
Office: BB 217
Phone: 765-285-2779
Email: aedmonds@bsu.edu
Office hours: 2-4 pm MW

Claire (List) McCullough
On campus T/Th
Phone: 260-579-0915
Email: celist@bsu.edu

*I will be available 30 minutes before class and immediately afterwards.

Required Texts


Dr. Seuss Books:
- The Butter Battle Book
- Hooray for Diffendoofer Day!
- Your Favorite Seuss: A Baker's Dozen from the One and only Dr. Seuss
  (And to Think that I Saw it on Mulberry Street, McElligot's Pool, If I Ran the Zoo,
  Horton Hears a Who!, The Cat in the Hat, How the Grinch Stole Christmas!, Yertle the
  Turtle, Happy Birthday to You!, Green Eggs and Ham, The Sneetches, Dr. Seuss's Sleep
  Book, The Lorax, Oh, the Places you'll Go!)

Nature of the Course

Welcome to Honors 390 G, Dr. Seuss: Then & Now! In this colloq we will discuss Dr. Seuss in many forms, including films, cartoons, biographies, criticisms, artwork, advertising, toys, pranks, and obviously through his books. Ted Geisel, as he was known to those close to him, arguably had more influence on how Americans have learned to read since the 1950s than anyone else, but he did much more than simply change reading primers. Whether he wanted to be a political figure or not, Mr. Geisel’s life’s goal was to make Americans think, regardless of whether they were four or 94. Often his work had political implications, particularly in the cartoons he drew for PM magazine and his later “message books” like The Lorax and The Butter Battle Book.

Throughout the course of this semester, we will look not only at Mr. Geisel’s work but also at how the society around him influenced his messages, meter, and style. In the same way, we will look at how his messages, meter and style helped to shape American society in the 20th century. To aid our discussions we will be reading selected books by Dr. Seuss, as well as selections from biographies/analyses of his life and work. We will also be reading articles of historical interest to help us understand the time in which Geisel wrote.
Requirements:

1) Journals: Every other week you will be asked to submit a journal entry (min. 500 words) in which you are to reflect on your insights gained through assigned reading as well as class discussions from the previous week. Please send them as e-mail attachments to both of us. See the schedule for exact due dates. (6 graded, 7 total) x 50 pts = 300 pts).

2) An oral presentation on your choice of a Seuss spin-off (10 minutes) along with a 500 word paper in which you discuss the spin-off, why you chose it, and how it relates to Dr. Seuss (100 points).

3) A 750 word analysis of the The Cat in the Hat movie, taking into consideration Dr. Seuss’ original book as well as other elements of his life’s work (200 points).

4) A typical/atypical Honors College final project. More detail on this later (400 points).

5) Unless an apparent need develops, we will not be taking quizzes or tests. Because of the nature of this course, we may need to make some adjustments to the syllabus as the course progresses. If this is the case, we will notify you both in class and via email. Otherwise, the course content will be addressed as follows:

- **Week 1 (8/28) Who is Dr. Seuss?**
  Due: Diagnostic Journal
  Required Reading:
  o *One Fish Two Fish, Red Fish Blue Fish*
  o Judith and Neil Morgan, Prologue and Chapter 1

- **Week 2 (9/4) Who is Dr. Seuss? (cont.)**
  o *And To Think That I Saw It On Mulberry Street (Your Favorite Seuss pp. 10-23)*
  o Morgan, Chapters 5, 6, 7 (pp. 56-89) (handout)

- **Week 3 (9/11): World War II**
  Due: Journal reaction to readings for weeks 2 and 3
  Required Reading:
  o Handouts from *Dr. Seuss Goes to War: The World War II Editorial Cartoons of Theodor Seuss Geisel* by Richard H. Minear (p. 73-80; 183-194)
  o Nel, Chapter 2 (pp. 39-62)
  o Morgan, Chapter 9 handout (pp. 101-117) (supplemented by cartoon handouts from [http://orpheus.ucsd.edu/speccoll/dspolitic/Frame.htm](http://orpheus.ucsd.edu/speccoll/dspolitic/Frame.htm))

*Dr. Kevin Smith, Associate Professor of History: “Dr. Seuss and World War II”

- **Week 4 (9/18): Cat in the Hat (anarchy/revolution)**
  Required Reading:
  o “Why Do Students Bog Down on First R?” by John Hersey (handout)
  o Nel, Chapter Intro, 1 (pp. 1-38)

*Dr. Peggy Rice, Associate Professor of English, mini-lecture on rhyming and reaction to Geisel’s style*
• **Week 5 (9/25): The Cat in the Hat (cont)**
  Due: Journal reaction to weeks 4 and 5
  - Nel Chapter 3 (pp. 63-97)
  - "How Orlo Got His Book" (handout)
  - "My Hassle With The First Grade Language" (handout)
  - *The Cat in the Hat (Your Favorite Seuss pp. 118-157)*
  - Morgan Chapter 13 (pp.153-167) (handout)

• **Week 6 (10/2): Seussian Logic and Humour**
  Required Reading:
  - Nel, Chapter 4
  - Morgan Chapter 14 (pp. 169-180) (handout)
  - *U.S. News & World Report* interview (handout)
  - *Green Eggs and Ham (Your Favorite Seuss pp. 236-263)*

• **Week 7 (10/9): Dr. Seuss Spin-offs**
  Due: Spin-off Projects
  Required Reading:
  - Nel, Chapters 5, 6

• **Week 8: (10/16) Dr. Seuss Spin-offs presentations continued**
  Due: Spin-off papers

• **Week 9 (10/23): The Cat in the Hat (Film with Mike Myers)**
  Due: Journal on spin-off projects/presentations
  Required Reading:
  - Handouts from *The Annotated Cat: Under the Hats of Seuss and His Cats* by Philip Nel
  - Students will watch film in class

• **Week 10 (10/30): “Message Books”**
  Required Reading:
  - *The Sneetches (Your Favorite Seuss pp. 264-281)*
  - Morgan pp. 135-137 and chapter 12 (pp. 140-152) (handout)
  - "Chapter 16: Shunning His Frumious Brand of Sneetch" from *The Seuss The Whole Seuss And Nothing But The Seuss* by Charles D. Cohen (handout)
  - Civil Rights Movement Handouts
    Civil Rights WWII cartoons
  *Dr. Edmonds mini lecture on civil rights

• **Week 11 (11/6): “Message Books” (cont) plus Anomalies and Speculation**
  Due: Journal reacting to weeks 10 and 11
  Required Reading:
  - *Yertle the Turtle (Your Favorite Seuss pp. 190-207)*
  - *Horton Hears a Who! (Your Favorite Seuss pp. 84-117)*
  - *McElligot’s Pool (Your Favorite Seuss pp. 24-55)*
“Another Perspective on Political Authority in Children's Literature: The Fallible Leader in L. Frank Baum and Dr. Seuss” (handout)
Cohen Chapter 22 (pp. 336-361). (handout)

- **Week 12 (11/13):** Bold Old Man
  Due: Horton Analysis
  Required Reading:
  - Nel, Epilogue
  - Morgan p 209-212; 249-256 (handout)
  - "Star Wars"/Nuclear proliferation handout
  - *The Lorax* (*Your Favorite Seuss* pp. 304-337)
  - *The Butter Battle Book*
  - "Richard M. Nixon, Will You Please Go Now!" (handout)

- **Week 13 (11/20):** Dr. Seuss Now
  Due: Journal reacting to Weeks 12 and 13
  Required Reading:
  - *Hooray for Diffendoofer Day*
  - "Sense and Nonsense" (handout)
  - Listen to selections from *Seussical*
  - Go over project assignment/field questions

- **Week 14 (11/27):** Thanksgiving

- **Week 15 (12/4):** Grinch
  Required Reading:
  - *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* (*Your Favorite Seuss* pp. 158-189)
  Film: *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*
  *Begin presentations

**Week 16 (12/11):** Presentations

**Week 17 (Time and day TBA):** Finish Presentations
  - Reaction journal and artist's statement on project due Friday, December 19 by 5:00 pm of exam week as e-mail attachments to both of us. In journal, react to at least three projects, including your own

*SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS:* If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, if you have emergency medical information to share with us, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with one of us as soon as possible. The information you need to contact us is given at the top of the first page of this syllabus. If you need to request an accommodation, you should also visit the Disabled Student Development Office, Student Center 307, phone 285-5293.
Appendix B:
Assignments
Dear Seuss Enthusiasts,

Does this long summer break leave you feeling obtuse? Well, you can now begin work on *Curriculum Seuss*! We have so many stories and tales you will like, And great social matters through which we will hike!

We’ll discuss cats in their hats and parades on the street! And have lectures, and projects and speakers to meet! There will be assignments of reading and writing Each week to ensure that your thoughts are igniting.

But for now, all it is that you have to complete Is not so much homework as a nice pre-class treat! You’ll read a book about fish and the colors they come in And a couple small chapters that may leave you hummin’!

Lastly, you’ll write a short journal of sorts Concerning the readings that made you to snort Or to smile or cry, or ask yourself why You’re taking a class on this Ted Geisel guy.

This journal should hold at least 500 words (really this request is not that absurd) Just a short little paper to give us a clue Of the Seussian matters that matter to you.

Should you have any questions before the class starts You can reach me by email, though we’re far apart A phone call would also suffice I must say I’m usually available most of the day

I hope that you are all enjoying your break And maybe relaxing some time on the lake! I will see you soon (if you like it or not) But for now enjoy summer and don’t get too hot!

Claire (List) McCullough
celist@bsu.edu
260-579-0915
For those who fear rime, here is a bit of prose. So read the enclosed assignment, write a journal about the assignment, submit it on day one, and be ready to discuss the material. Although we’ll write comments on the journal and give it a “grade,” the grade won’t count. Oh, and I am Claire’s assistant teacher, Dr. Tony Edmonds, aedmonds@bsu.edu)

And if you can’t “read” the cd we have enclosed, let us know and we’ll get you a hard copy.
1) We are asking you to write a series of journal entries for this course. Entries should be a minimum of 500 words, sent to us as e-mail attachments by 4:00 pm the day they are due, as indicated on the syllabus. **BE SURE TO SAVE THE JOURNAL ENTRIES.**

2) These are not summaries of the book. You can assume that your audience (us) has read the material. These are also not formal essays but rather your personal, educated reactions to your reading. But go beyond such generalizations as, "OOOO, I surely thought this was neat," or "Gosh, this sucked." We want specific examples to support OOOness and suckiness. You need to include a few brief, pertinent quotations as well. Be sure to put page number after "direct quotations" (72).

3) We won't be grading for grammar, spelling, or mechanics, although we do expect the entries to be coherent with sentences and paragraphs connected by smooth transitional devices. We will highlight egregious writing errors in yellow. If you don't understand the error, contact whoever graded the paper.

4) Connect, when appropriate. It would be nice if you could relate readings to each other and to films we watch in class. Although this is not a requirement, such connections could increase your grad somewhat, say from an A- to an A.

5) Don't be afraid to say that you have questions or don't understand a point, but at least try to figure it out
Journal standards:
Seuss Colloq
For students

A- to A: Includes good, very specific examples and brief pertinent quotations.
Understand material well. Covers all material. Overall balance. Personal reflections. In
other words, it is personal, reflective, complete, pertinent, and specific.

B- to B+: A bit too much summarizing (the most common problem) and not enough
evaluating or reflecting Some specific examples and one or two brief quotes. Leaves
out something. Not as well balanced as A answer. May connect to course themes but not
enough to earn an A.

C- to C+: Gets main ideas pretty well but badly misunderstands something important.
Badly out of balance. Leaves out something important out. Tendency to summarize ok
but little analytical reaction. Possible tendency to rant.

D-to D+: Way too short, obviously doesn’t understand many main points. Almost total
summary.

Note: Most important quality is reacting to text intelligently and supporting reaction,
with specific examples and brief pertinent quotations. Connections to other texts and
themes can make a somewhat weaker paper stronger but are not absolutely required.
The Cat in the Hat Movie Analysis Guide

After viewing The Cat in the Hat (2004), you will be writing a thorough analysis considering the following questions:

• How do the characters involved relate to/differ from the characters in Dr. Seuss’s The Cat in the Hat and The Cat in the Hat Comes Back? You may also include the Chuck Jones TV special.
• How might the producers of the Mike Meyers’ film justify the changes in character/plot/scene? Do you think these changes were appropriate?
• How does the plot of the movie compare/contrast with the book? (Primarily with The Cat in the Hat)
• Would Geisel have approved of this production?
  o Is this film consistent with Geisel’s worldview and messages within his books?
  o Is it good enough for the “Dr. Seuss” name?

In answering these questions you must use specific instances from the film as well as citations from course reading and discussions. This paper needs to be a minimum of 750 words and is worth 200 points.

Rubric

• “A” paper- includes several citations (7 minimum, including movie scenes) from a wide variety of course readings as well as material that was covered in class. Contains minimal or no writing errors. Considers specific events in the movie as well as whether the overall picture was consistent with the Dr. Seuss quality of work.

• “B” paper- includes some citations (5-6) from a variety of course readings as well as material covered in class. Contains a few writing errors that do not substantially detract from the paper’s readability. Considers specific events in the movie as well as whether the overall picture was consistent with the Dr. Seuss quality of work.

• “C” paper- includes very few citations (4 or less) from a couple readings. Contains writing errors that substantially detract from the paper’s readability. Considers specific events in the movie, but does not address “the big picture.”
Dr. Seuss Final Projects/Presentations

For this assignment, you may choose one of three approaches: (1) original creative project; (2) research paper; (3) literary analysis of books not discussed in class. Any of these options may be completed by individuals or as small groups (no more than 3). Each project is detailed below.

Original Creative Project:
The results of this approach are virtually unlimited, so long as they are classroom appropriate. A 500 word author's statement must be turned in by each person at the time of presentation. This author’s statement must be completed individually, regardless of whether or not the project was created by the group. In the author’s statement you must include a brief description of the project and the inspiration behind it, as well as an explanation of your role in its creation. Finally, discuss how your project might be addressed by Nel, Cohen, or the Morgans if they were to view your presentation. Consideration of what Geisel might have thought about it is also encouraged.

Some possible questions to address when creating your final project...
- What themes might Geisel have written about today if he were still alive?
- What makes something “Seussian?”
- How might you Geisel’s art and/or ideas be translated into new artistic mediums?

Research Paper
This paper should be 1500 words in length and can focus on any aspect of Geisel’s life, works and reputation. A bibliography of at least 3 sources (in addition to Nel’s Dr. Seuss: American Icon) must be included. Some possible topics to consider are his level of influence on Americans during WWII, a thorough analysis of how rapidly and to what extent his literary revolution killed the Dick and Jane primers, or an investigation of his artwork not found in children’s books or magazines.

Literary Analysis
This paper should focus on a minimum of two Dr. Seuss, Rosetta Stone, or Theo. LeSieg books that are connected by a common theme or characteristic. The analysis should exhibit original thought as well as commentary from reputable sources (see especially Philip Nel and Ruth MacDonald). Students should select books that have not yet been discussed in class as their primary focus, although they are encouraged to tie in ideas from books that have been a part of the curriculum. This analysis should be 1500 words in length and contain a bibliography of at least 3 sources in addition to the children’s books themselves.

Some questions to consider when writing this analysis....
- What was Geisel’s motivation for writing this book?
- Who are the main characters and what do they represent?
- Who is the target reader?
- Is there a specific message conveyed? If so, what is it?
- What other interpretations of this work exist?
- How does this book exhibit recurrent themes in his work?

Presentations of papers and projects will begin on December 4. Papers and author’s statements are due at the time of presentation.
Appendix C:
Handouts