

# Picture Books as Multimodal Texts

**Inter-domain General Education Course  
Humanities (GH) and Arts (GA) - 3 credits  
SYLLABUS**

## Course Description:

Children’s picture books are often described as fundamental in nurturing the development of young children into engaged readers and fearless writers. Many adults have a special place in their hearts for picture books they loved as children; books they read over and over again, books that spoke to their hearts and minds, and which helped them figure out the mystery of written language.

In this inter-domain course, we will take a close look at children’s picture books and explore their magic through integrating humanities and the arts. We will read many, many books of different genres to examine how the written text and illustration work together to compose a work of art that we read, understand, enjoy and connect to. We will explore the criteria by which we judge the literary and artistic quality of picture books and will become acquainted with resources that can help us find exceptional books. We will also consider the significance of children’s literature representing diverse perspectives and will work to deconstruct the values and biases implicit in texts written for young children.

Much of the course will be organized in a workshop format through which we will learn about the authoring and illustrating techniques and processes used by notable authors and illustrators of modern children’s picture books, while also experimenting with the same techniques through drafting and developing our own picture books. Our end goal will be to thoughtfully weave linguistic and visual composition elements to craft original multimodal texts for children.

## Course Objectives:

The course will attend to the General Education Objectives of: Key Literacies, Critical and Analytical Thinking, Integrative Thinking and Creative Thinking. In addition, as an inter-domain course incorporating humanities (GH) and the arts (GA), the course will attend to the domain-specific student learning criteria listed below.

Specifically, through their experiences in this course, by the end of the semester, students will be able to:

1. List robust quality criteria for exceptional children’s picture books and apply them in evaluating picture books and composing book reviews.
2. Articulate the need for children’s picture books representing diverse perspectives and identify several such exceptional books.
3. Utilize a critical literacy perspective in interrogating the values and biases implicit in picture books written for young children.

4. Trace, describe and evaluate the use of visual representation techniques and elements of visual grammar in book illustrations, with particular attention to cultural aspects.
5. Trace, describe and evaluate various authoring techniques, styles and conventions involved in the linguistic aspect of picture books
6. Describe and evaluate the combination of visual and linguistic elements in constructing multimodally composed meaning in picture books.
7. Weave linguistic and visual composition elements to craft original multimodal texts for children (picture books)

In regards to the Humanities (GH) Domain, the students will:

- ✓ Demonstrate competence in critical thinking about topics and texts in the humanities through clear and well-reasoned responses.
- ✓ Critically evaluate texts in the humanities– whether verbal, visual, or digital– and identify and explain moral or ethical dimensions within the disciplines of the humanities.
- ✓ Become familiar with groups, individuals, ideas, or events that have influenced the experiences and values of different communities.

In regards to the Arts domain (GA), the students will:

- ✓ Demonstrate competence in the creation of works of art and design
- ✓ Demonstrate competence in analysis, critical thinking and interpretive reasoning through the exploration of creative works
- ✓ Identify and explain the aesthetic, historic, social, and cultural significance of important works of art and critically assess creative works, their own or others', through evaluative processes of analysis and interpretation.

## Course Assignments

### 1. Double Entry Learning Journals

To determine the attainment of the learning objective of Key Literacies, through the semester, the students will keep a Double Entry Learning Journal to record their responses and connections to course readings on linguistic authoring techniques, aspects of visual representation in illustration, and multimodality.

- ✓ **General Education Objectives:** Key Literacies
- ✓ **GH Student Learning Criteria:**
  - Demonstrate competence in critical thinking about topics and texts in the humanities through clear and well-reasoned responses
  - Become familiar with groups, individuals, ideas, or events that have influenced the experiences and values of different communities

### 2. Book Reviews

The students will write reviews of children's picture books utilizing criteria informed by scholarly resources and their developing knowledge of authoring and visual composition techniques. Special attention will be given to the detection and discussion of bias.

- ✓ **General Education Objectives:** Critical and Analytical Thinking
- ✓ **GA Student Learning Criteria:**
  - Demonstrate competence in analysis, critical thinking and interpretive reasoning through the exploration of creative works
  - Identify and explain the aesthetic, historic, social, and cultural significance of important works of art and critically assess creative works, their own or others', through evaluative processes of analysis and interpretation.
- ✓ **GH Student Learning Criteria:**
  - Demonstrate competence in critical thinking about topics and texts in the humanities through clear and well-reasoned responses.
  - Critically evaluate texts in the humanities– whether verbal, visual, or digital– and identify and explain moral or ethical dimensions within the disciplines of the humanities
  - Become familiar with groups, individuals, ideas, or events that have influenced the experiences and values of different communities

### 3. Original Children's Picture Book with Author's Notes

The students will utilize visual and linguistic techniques and semiotic conventions as well as multimodal design principles to (a) create original picture books and (b) compose author notes explicating their use.

- ✓ **General Education Objectives:** Creative Thinking and Integrative Thinking
- ✓ **GA Student Learning Criteria:**
  - Demonstrate competence in the creation of works of art and design
  - Identify and explain the aesthetic, historic, social, and cultural significance of important works of art and critically assess creative works, their own or others', through evaluative processes of analysis and interpretation.
- ✓ **GH Student Learning Criteria:**
  - Demonstrate competence in critical thinking about topics and texts in the humanities through clear and well-reasoned responses

### 4. Peer Reviews

The students will utilize their knowledge of visual and linguistic techniques and semiotic conventions and of multimodal design principles to offer feedback to peer-authored original picture books

- ✓ **General Education Objectives:** Critical and Analytical Thinking
- ✓ **GA Student Learning Criteria:**
  - Demonstrate competence in analysis, critical thinking and interpretive reasoning through the exploration of creative works
  - Identify and explain the aesthetic, historic, social, and cultural significance of important works of art and critically assess creative works, their own or others', through evaluative processes of analysis and interpretation.
- ✓ **GH Student Learning Criteria:**
  - Critically evaluate texts in the humanities– whether verbal, visual, or digital– and identify and explain moral or ethical dimensions within the disciplines of the humanities

### 5. Final Reflection

The students will write a Final Reflection Paper in which they discuss their understanding of picture books as multimodal texts. In addition, they will discuss how an understanding of multimodal composition can help inform their reading and composition of texts beyond picture books.

**General Education Objectives: Integrative Thinking**

#### Major Topics

	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Approximate Length of Time</b>
<b>1</b>	What is multimodality and what does it mean to read a multimodal text?	1 week
<b>2</b>	Exceptional children's picture books: Historical Evolution, Criteria of quality and important awards	1 week
<b>3</b>	Library and other resources (Horn Book Online, Children's Literature Comprehensive Database)	1 week
<b>4</b>	Children's literature representing diverse perspectives	1 week
<b>5</b>	Critical Literacy in reviewing picture books	1 week
<b>6</b>	Authoring techniques, styles and conventions (linguistic aspect)	4 weeks
<b>7</b>	Visual representation techniques and elements of visual grammar	4 weeks
<b>8</b>	The complex interrelationships between written language and illustration in constructing multimodal semiotic content	2 weeks