IDH2930 Uncommon Reads:
Lemony Snicket's *A Series of Unfortunate Events*

Fall 2025
Instructor: Maryam Khorasani
Class No.: Little Hall 119
Meeting Time: Tuesdays Period 6 (12:50 P.M. - 1:40 P.M.)

Office Hours: Tuesdays 2 PM – 3 PM, and by appointment
Office Location: Turlington 4325
Course Website: Canvas
Instructor Email: ma.khorasani@ufl.edu

Course Description and Objectives

For more than two decades, Lemony Snicket's *A Series of Unfortunate Events* has amused and unsettled readers through its postmodern absurdity and ethical complexity. This course focuses on four novels (*The Bad Beginning*, *The Carnivorous Carnival*, *The Penultimate Peril*, and *The End*) to investigate how the series challenges the conventions of children's literature through its use of paratexts such as warnings, dedications, illustrations, definitions, and false documents, as well as its refusal of moral closure. Together we will ask: What does it mean to choose the "least terrible" option? How do unreliable narration and contradictory guidance shape a reader's experience? And why has a story so relentlessly bleak remained popular more than twenty-six years after its debut? By the end of the semester, you will have strengthened your ability to connect literature to broader cultural conversations about ethics, social justice, and the marketing forces that shape literary production and reception. You will also design a digital StoryMap that helps you gain experience in digital storytelling and visual design that can serve you beyond this course.

Primary Texts

- *The Bad Beginning* (1999)

- *The Carnivorous Carnival* (2002)

- *The End* (2006)

Assignment Overview

Assignment	Points
Attendance and Participation	150
In-Class Reflections (3)	50x3=150
Perusall Annotations (4)	75x4=300
StoryMap Topic Proposal (1)	50
StoryMap Draft (1)	75
StoryMap Final Project	275
Total	1000 Points

The grading scale is as follows:

A = 4.00 940-1000	B- = 2.67 800-839	D+ = 1.33 670-699
A- = 3.67 900-939	C+ = 2.33 770-799	D = 1.00 640-669
B+ = 3.33 870-899	C = 2.00 740-769	D- = 0.67 600-639
B = 3.00 840-869	C- = 1.67 700-739	E = 0.00 0-599

Important: You must complete all assignments to receive credit for this course. A minimum grade of B is required to earn Academic points towards your Honors Completion Requirements. (Exception: Honors Quest I and II sections require a C). Once you have earned your final grade in this course, please upload the course information and final grade from your Unofficial Transcript into your Honors Canvas Cohort: Honors Completion module to earn Honors Milestone / Completion credit.

Late Assignments: If you need an extension for an appropriate reason, <u>please send me an email with the date that you plan to complete the assignment at least two days in advance of the due date.</u> **<u>I will most likely give you an extension if you talk to me beforehand.</u>** <u>An assignment submitted after the deadline without a valid excuse will result in losing %10 of the assignment's grade, with each day adding %2 to the deducted portion (one day after the deadline %10, two days after the deadline %12, and so on). The same rule applies when you have received an extension but do not submit the assignment on the extended deadline. Please also keep in mind that late assignments without a valid excuse will not receive detailed feedback.</u>

Academic Honesty: Students are required to be honest in their coursework and must properly cite all sources that they have consulted for their projects. <u>Any act of academic dishonesty, including unreferenced use of AI-generated text, will be reported to the Dean of Students and may result in failure of the assignment in question and/or the course.</u>

For the University of Florida's honor code, see https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/

Attendance and Participation

Attendance: <u>Attendance is mandatory and will be monitored by class roll or sign-up sheet</u>. Should you miss a class for any reason, you are responsible for informing yourself as to what was covered in class. Acceptable reasons include illness, religious holidays, military obligations, and the twelve-day rule. <u>You are responsible for providing valid documentation for your absences in order for them to be considered excused</u>. Reasons for excused absences must be communicated with me ahead of time, or within three days afterward in case of unexpected events. <u>After three unexcused absences, each subsequent unexcused absence will result in a letter-grade deduction from your final grade (4 absences: 5% off final course grade, 5 absences: 10% off final course grade). Six unexcused absences will result in the automatic failure of the overall course.</u> For the official University policy on absences, please refer to:

https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx

Participation: You are expected to read the assigned readings before class. Each week will begin with a series of fundamental questions on the contents and the analysis of the assigned readings. <u>The answers you give to these questions, consistent participation in class discussions,</u>

and demonstrated knowledge of the assigned readings will contribute to this portion of the final grade. Take notes while reading and bring a prepared sheet of paper containing key points and questions you wish to discuss during the session.

Perusall Annotations (350 words for each article)

In this assignment, you will engage with four articles relevant to our course material on Perusall, a collaborative annotation platform. Please note that you can find the link to the Perusall account for our course on the course navigation bar on Canvas, and you do not need to go directly to the website.

Instructions:

1. **Choose your Articles:**
   - Go to the course's navigation bar and select "Perusall 1.3". The articles are in the "Library" section on the course's Perusall.

2. **Read the Article:**
   - Start by reading the article carefully.

3. **Annotate it:**
   - Use Perusall's annotation tools to engage with the text. Highlight key passages, comment on what you find interesting, and note any elements that resonate with you.

Important: Make sure to write in full sentences and support your ideas with solid evidence from the text. Double-check for spelling mistakes and use correct punctuation in your comments. Make sure to stay within the range of the word limit.

4. **Respond to Peers:**
   - Engage in discussions with others. Respond to their annotations, ask questions, and offer additional perspectives.
   Important: When you ask questions or respond to peers, try to spark a discussion instead of just looking for a "yes" or "no" answer. Your annotations will be visible alongside those of your classmates in real time, allowing you to engage and respond

by "mentioning" a classmate using the @ symbol followed by their name. Aim to (a) annotate comprehensively by addressing multiple parts of the reading rather than just a few sections, and (b) provide thoughtful, well-reasoned insights in your annotations.

You should choose **four articles** for this assignment and submit the list by 11:59 PM on September 5th. Annotations are due by 11:59 PM on the night before each scheduled meeting.

In-Class Reflections

Three times during the semester, you will complete a short in-class reflection. I will give you a prompt made up of either one or two questions. These prompts will ask you to reflect on the material we have covered so far, including our discussions of the novels, the adaptations, and the scholarly articles we have read. The reflections are a chance to pause and make connections across different parts of the course. They allow you to bring together ideas from the books and their adaptations with the perspectives we've encountered in criticism and in our class conversation. Your responses will be graded on your comprehension of the course materials and your effort to engage thoughtfully with the questions, not on polished writing.

StoryMap Project: Adaptation in *A Series of Unfortunate Events*

This project invites you to explore how *A Series of Unfortunate Events* has been adapted across different media, including the original novels, the Netflix series, and the 2004 film. You will analyze how stories change or stay the same when retold in a new form, and you will present your findings through an interactive digital StoryMap. Along the way, you will practice visual design and digital storytelling, which are useful skills beyond this class.

1. Topic Proposal (Week 5)

Submit a short paragraph of about 200 words describing your planned focus for the StoryMap. You may choose to work with one of the novels we have read together in class or with another title from the series. Identify the adaptation (Netflix episode or movie) you will compare, and the aspect of adaptation that interests you most, such as tone, visuals, characterization, narrative style, or audience. Include at least one possible secondary source.

List of visual elements you can use for the project:

Each stop in your StoryMap must include at least one (audio)visual element. These visuals will help illustrate your analysis and make your project more engaging. You may use:

- Screenshots or short clips from the Netflix series
- Stills or short clips from the 2004 film
- Brett Helquist's illustrations from the novels
- Book covers from different editions or translations
- Promotional materials such as posters, or ads
- Fan-made art with credit

You must include at least two different types of visuals overall in your final StoryMap.

Crediting Visuals

Just like with quotes from books or articles, visuals need to be credited. This means:

1. **Identify the source clearly.** Example: Netflix, "The Bad Beginning, Part Two," 2017.

2. **Credit the creator.** For fan art, always include the artist's name or username and the site you found it on. Example: Artwork by @username on DeviantArt.

3. **Cite in your Works Cited.** Every visual you use must appear in your final Works Cited section. Follow MLA guidelines as closely as possible.

If you're not sure how to cite a visual, include a caption underneath (for instance, Film still from *The Bad Beginning*, Netflix, 2017) and double-check with me before submitting.

2. Practice Stop / First Draft (Week 9)
Create one draft stop for your StoryMap. Your stop should include one to two paragraphs of analysis comparing the novel with the adaptation, at least one visual element such as a screenshot or video, and a citation. This draft will help you practice using the StoryMap platform while developing your ideas.

3. Workshop Draft (Week 13)
Bring a complete draft of your StoryMap with four to five stops. Each stop should include

analysis, visuals, and clear connections between book and adaptation. The draft should also include at least two different visual elements overall such as a screenshot, or a video clip and a preliminary Works Cited section. You will receive feedback from your peers and from me to guide your revisions.

4. Final Project (Week 15)

Submit your completed StoryMap. Your project should highlight a central argument about adaptation, make thoughtful use of both primary and secondary sources, and integrate at least tfour visual elements. A complete Works Cited section must appear at the end of your StoryMap.

Feedback

You are welcome to send me drafts or portions of your StoryMap before the deadlines if you would like additional feedback. I encourage you to make use of this option to strengthen your project as you develop it.

Schedule

Week	Date	Reading	Perusall Annotations	Assignment Due
1	Tuesday Aug. 26	Introduction to the Course and Syllabus		
2	T Sep. 2	*The Bad Beginning* Chapters 1-5		
	Friday Sep. 5			Perusall Article Selections Due
3	T Sept. 9	*The Bad Beginning* Chapters 6-10 Netflix Episode: *The Bad Beginning, Part One* Introduction to StoryMap (short demo)	"He's behind you!": Reflections on Repetition and Predictability in Lemony Snicket's *A Series of Unfortunate Events*	
4	T Sept. 16	*The Bad Beginning* Chapters 11-13 Netflix Episode: *The Bad Beginning, Part Two*		

5	T Sept. 23	Movie: *Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events* (2003)		In-Class Reflection 1
	Friday Sept. 26	N/A		StoryMap Project Proposal Due
6	T Sept. 30	*The Carnivorous Carnival* Chapters 1-5		
7	T Oct. 7	*The Carnivorous Carnival* Chapters 6-10 Netflix Episode: *The Carnivorous Carnival, Part One*	"Lemony Snicket's 'A Series of Unfortunate Events': A Cautionary Tale for Those Who Believe in Comforting Lies"	
8	T Oct. 14	*The Carnivorous Carnival* Chapters 11-13 Netflix Episode: *The Carnivorous Carnival, Part Two*	"The Man Behind Lemony Snicket Talks About Writing For Kids And His Childhood Fears"	
9	T Oct. 21	*The End* Chapters 1-5	"It's off-book!": Developing Serial Complexity across Media in *A Series of Unfortunate Events*	In-Class Reflection 2
	Friday Oct. 24	N/A		StoryMap Draft Due
10	T Oct. 28	*The End* Chapters 6-10	"Daniel Handler Works His Melancholy	

			Magic"	
11	T Nov. 4	*The End* *Chapters 9-14* *Netflix Episode: The End*	"Performative Metafiction: Lemony Snicket, Daniel Handler and The End of *A Series of Unfortunate Events*"	In-Class Reflection 3
12	T Nov. 11	No Class		
13	T Nov. 18	StoryMap Workshop and Peer-Review		
14	T Nov. 25	No Class		
15	T Dec. 2	Final Thoughts		
	Friday Dec. 5	N/A		Final StoryMap Projects Due

Important: I reserve the right to adjust the schedule/assignments as needed to accommodate course goals and to better meet student needs.

Classroom Policies

Cellphones: Cellphone checking during meetings is **not permitted**. Doing so will result in being marked "absent" from the class. Emergencies are exceptions.

Headphones/Earbuds: Using headphones or earbuds during class is not permitted and will result in being marked "absent" from the class.

Personal Computers: Using computers for any reason other than engaging with the course material will result in being marked "absent" from the class.

Late Policy: Class roll will be called at the beginning of class. Frequent lateness distracts other students and the instructor and will affect the student's final participation grade. Three lates

constitute one absence.

Classroom Conduct: Please keep in mind that students come from diverse cultural, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. Many of the texts we discuss and write about engage controversial topics and opinions. Diversified student backgrounds combined with controversial texts require that you demonstrate respect for ideas that may differ from your own. Disrespectful behavior will result in dismissal and, accordingly, being marked "absent" from the class.

Honors Program Contact Information

Honors Program, 201 Walker Hall, 352-392-1519

- Quick questions for an Honors advisor? Email advisor@honors.ufl.edu
- Need an Honors advising appointment? Schedule via Microsoft Bookings: https://bit.ly/ufhonorsadvising

UF's Policy on Harassment: The University of Florida is committed to providing a safe educational, working, and residential environment that is free from sexual harassment or misconduct directed toward all members of the community:

https://titleix.ufl.edu/about/title-ix-rights/

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student, who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Contact the Disability Resources Center (https://disability.ufl.edu/) for information about available resources for students with disabilities.

Counseling and Mental Health Resources: Students facing difficulties completing the course or who are in need of counseling or urgent help should call the on-campus Counseling and Wellness Center (352 392-1575; http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/).

Course Evaluation

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on

how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at:

https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/

Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/.