

Syllabus for “Odd Girl Out” Online Book Discussion Group  
WVIZ/PBS ideastream®

**Session/Segment 1**

Approximate Time of Involvement: 4

Topics to be Addressed: **Week 1**

Introduction

Pg 3 “Our culture refuses girls access to open conflict, and it forces their aggression into nonphysical, indirect, and covert forms. Girls use backbiting, exclusion, rumors, name-calling, and manipulation to inflict psychological pain on targeted victims.”

- In what ways do you think that “our culture refuses girls access to open conflict?” Is this a concern at your school? Do you think that these alternative aggressions differ according to race or socioeconomic status? Provide some anecdotal evidence to support your belief.

Chapter 1: the hidden culture of aggression in girls

Pg. 22 “Some alternative aggressions are invisible to adult eyes. To elude social disapproval, girls retreat beneath a surface of sweetness to hurt each other in secret. They pass covert looks and notes, manipulate quietly over time, corner one another in hallways, turn their backs, whisper and smile. These acts, which are intended to escape detection and punishment, are epidemic in middle-class environments where the rules of femininity are most rigid”

- As a teacher, have you observed these forms of “alternative aggression?” How difficult is it to identify and resolve these issues, hidden as they are behind a veneer of friendship?

Pg. 30 “The centrality of relationship and attachment in girls’ lives all but guarantees a different landscape of aggression and bullying, with its own distinctive features worthy of separate study.”

- Do you agree that relationships are more central to the lives of girls than boys? What experiences have you had that support or contradict this thesis?

**Session/Segment 2**

Approximate Time of Involvement: 4

Topics to be Addressed: Chapter 2: intimate enemies

Pg. 56 “When meanness and friendship become inextricable, girls lose the ability to distinguish between them. They may come to understand meanness as a component of friendship, learning to explain it away and even justify it. When abuse permeates friendship, some girls lose their ability to defend themselves against it.”

- What was your level of awareness of this particular form of relational aggression? Describe a relevant previous experience.

Chapter 3: the truth hurts

Pg 69 “Alternative aggressions, and the nonassertive behavior they suggest, are as embedded in the daily lives of girls as makeup, boys, and media. A girl learns early on

that to voice conflict directly with another girl may result in many others ganging up against her. . . She learns to connect with conflict through the discord of others, participating in group acts of aggression where individual ones have been forbidden.”

- Have you personally witnessed these “group acts of aggression,” either from personal experience in your own childhood or classroom experience as a teacher? What were the circumstances of the aggression? What was the result?

Chapter 4: she’s all that

“Giving girls a chance at success means giving them full, equal access to the tools of the game: to the acts of competition and desire required to excel and to the knowledge that relationships can survive them. When competition and desire cannot be enacted in healthy ways and when girls are expected to give priority to care and relationship, resentment, confusion, and retribution follow shortly behind.” Pg. 126

- As an educator, what does “full, equal access to the tools of the game” mean? How can you, as a teacher or administrator, assist girls in this?

### **Session/Segment 3**

Approximate Time of Involvement: 4

Topics to be Addressed: **Week 3**

Chapter 5: the bully in the mirror

“By washing our hands of our own capacity to injure, we perpetuate the stereotype that females are nonaggressive. We become accomplices in the culture’s repression of assertive women and girls by making aggression pathological, private, and hidden. We also help silence the public discussion of the ways and reasons girls are mean to each other. . . because to put it out there would mean we have to admit to ourselves that inside we are all mean, that inside we are all aggressive. And girlfriends, we are.” Pg 151

- Have you, either yourself or in a student you observed, witnessed the aggression of females from the perspective of the bully? Did your observations match the authors? Please describe.

Chapter 6: popular

“Many parents have asked me to decipher the power these girls exercise over their daughters. The only answer I have is the one the girls give me: the bully controls her victim by controlling her version of events.” Pg. 173

- What could a teacher do in the classroom to help control “the version of events” that aids bullies in controlling their victims?

Chapter 7: resistance

“Parents attempts to empower their children were evident in my discussions with urban girls. I was struck by the extent to which many of them were socialized to defend themselves physically. In some instances, girls reported being struck by their parents for returning home beaten.”

- Is there a circumstance in which physical fighting is preferable to non-confrontation in a school setting? Expand on your beliefs.

“Scuffles between boys, though met with swift punishment, are nevertheless seen as a predictable side effect of male adolescence. Yet when girls fight physically, their aggression is seen as a sign of deviant behavior. This double standard has grave consequences, suggesting to girls that their aggression will be more acceptable if only they keep it indirect or covert.”

- Is there another alternative? As an educator, is there a way to teach direct confrontation without physical aggression? How?

#### **Session/Segment 4**

Approximate Time of Involvement: 4

Topics to be Addressed: **Week 4**

Chapter 8: parents and teachers

“No one should have to rely on ad hoc moments of compassion or personal experience to confront an epidemic. It is only through enforceable public rules that we will begin to scratch the surface of this problem. If we don’t make alternative aggressions a clear responsibility of school officials, children will continue to be vulnerable to bullying and abuse.”

- What is your reaction to this quote? Do you agree or disagree? How could school officials play a proactive role in diminishing these alternative aggressions?

Chapter 9: the road ahead

“An anti-bullying program that attends to relational crises might carve out regular time for conflict resolution. Most importantly, we should involve girls every step of the way and allow them to lead us through their underground. We can get there no other way. Teachers cannot do this without the support of their principals and superintendents. Teachers must feel that time spent on these issues is neither wasted nor stolen but instead important to their students’ days and development.” Pg 251

**Assignment:** Create an anti-bullying plan that takes into account alternative aggressions. In the context of your classroom or school, write a 3-page plan delineating how to combat the unique ways in which girls use aggression against one another. This paper should be double-spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font, and at least 3 pages in length. It may be structured in a way that makes the most sense to your school and situation. It may include bullet points but should be a paper rather than an outline or list.

Conclusion

“I believe our task now is to give every girl, every parent, and every teacher a shared, public language to address girls’ conflicts and relationships. A world that acknowledges the hidden culture of girls’ aggression would empower girls not only to negotiate conflict, but to define relationship in new and healthier ways.” Pg. 261

Rubric for Course

80 – 100% is S  
 Below 80% is U

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Total Point Value</b>	<b>Breakdown of Point Value</b>
<b>Week 1</b> Week One Discussion	20	10 – The discussion question is answered completely, with all elements discussed. 5 – The response to the discussion question reflects critical thinking and a deep grasp of the reading material. 5 – The response to the question is properly formatted, with correct grammar and spelling, and is clearly at the graduate level in terms of quality of work.
<b>Week 1</b> Responses to Other Learners' Comments from Week One Discussions	30	10—The learner responds with at least 3-4 sentences to each of 3 other learners' comments. 10—These responses are well-thought-out, and complex in terms of their thought process. 10—These responses are properly formatted, with correct grammar and spelling, and is clearly at the graduate level in terms of quality of work.
<b>Week 2</b> Week Two Discussion	20	10 – The discussion question is answered completely, with all elements discussed. 5 – The response to the discussion question reflects critical thinking and a deep grasp of the reading material. 5 – The response to the question is properly formatted, with correct grammar and spelling, and is clearly at the graduate level in terms of quality of work.
<b>Week 2</b> Responses to Other Learners' Comments from Week Two Discussion	30	10—The learner responds with at least 3-4 sentences to each of 3 other learners' comments. 10—These responses are well-thought-out, and complex in terms of their thought process. 10—These responses are properly formatted, with correct grammar and spelling, and is clearly at the graduate level in terms of quality of work.
<b>Week 3</b> Week Three Discussion	20	10 – The discussion question is answered completely, with all elements discussed. 5 – The response to the discussion question reflects critical thinking and a deep grasp of the reading material. 5 – The response to the question is properly formatted, with correct grammar and spelling, and is clearly at the graduate level in terms of quality of work.
<b>Week 3</b> Responses to Other	30	10—The learner responds with at least 3-4 sentences to each of 3 other learners' comments.

Learners' Comments from Week Three Discussion		<p>10—These responses are well-thought-out, and complex in terms of their thought process.</p> <p>10—These responses are properly formatted, with correct grammar and spelling, and is clearly at the graduate level in terms of quality of work.</p>
<b>Week 4</b> Week Four Discussion	20	<p>10 – The discussion question is answered completely, with all elements discussed.</p> <p>5 – The response to the discussion question reflects critical thinking and a deep grasp of the reading material.</p> <p>5 – The response to the question is properly formatted, with correct grammar and spelling, and is clearly at the graduate level in terms of quality of work.</p>
<b>Week 4</b> Responses to Other Learners' Comments from Week Four Discussion	30	<p>10—The learner responds with at least 3-4 sentences to each of 3 other learners' comments.</p> <p>10—These responses are well-thought-out, and complex in terms of their thought process.</p> <p>10—These responses are properly formatted, with correct grammar and spelling, and is clearly at the graduate level in terms of quality of work.</p>
<b>Week 4</b> Final Project	70	<p>Create an anti-bullying plan that takes into account alternative aggressions. In the context of your classroom or school, write a 3-page plan delineating how to combat the unique ways in which girls use aggression against one another. This paper should be double-spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font, and at least 3 pages in length. It may be structured in a way that makes the most sense to your school and situation. It may include bullet points but should be a paper rather than an outline or list.</p> <p>20 – The paper is professionally prepared, with appropriate grammar and correct spelling and punctuation, as is expected in a graduate-level course.</p> <p>20 - It covers appropriate forms of alternative aggression and encompasses the majority of issues that are explored in the book.</p> <p>20 – It offers real solutions that are able to be implemented in a school setting.</p> <p>10 – The paper is a minimum of three pages in length, with 12 point Times New Roman font and double-spacing.</p>