ED500
Foundations of Literacy
Prof. Addison Stone
Fall 2004 - Thursdays 4-7 Room 2232

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Course Objectives

1. Analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of alternative theoretical frameworks for conceptualizing literacy and literacy acquisition.
2. Familiarity with major milestones and processes in literacy development.
3. Evaluation of selected principles for literacy instruction.
4. Appreciation of challenges to literacy development faced by selected special populations, and of strategies for meeting those challenges.

Course Format

The course will be a combination of mini-lectures and discussion. Lectures will highlight issues cutting across the readings and/or introducing issues/research findings that supplement the readings. Discussions will focus on analysis of selected readings from theoretical, methodological, and/or practical viewpoints. Emphasis will be placed on the development of a critical appraisal of current assumptions and knowledge regarding literacy acquisition and their implications for instructional approaches.

Course Requirements

1. **Class participation (25%).** Active class participation is a core component of the course. I am expecting three broad types of participation:
   a. On-going critical analysis of assigned readings prior to associated course meeting and active participation in class discussions. Policy regarding missed classes: Attendance and active participation in class discussions is assumed and is a significant portion of the course grade. However, students do occasionally have legitimate reasons for missing a class. Whenever possible, students should inform me in advance of any anticipated absence. In order to assure that students have read and reflected on the readings for a missed class, I require that you submit to me via email no later than 3 days following a missed class a set of brief informal reflections on the required readings.
   b. Responsibility for leading the group discussion regarding one assigned reading once during the term.
   c. Each student will participate as a team member in an informal mini-debate regarding a controversial issue in literacy policy or instruction during Weeks 9 & 10.

2. **Reflective essays (30%).** Five short essays (each 2-3 pages) focused on issues raised in the assigned readings. One or two possible topics based on specific required readings will be distributed in each of weeks 2-8; students must select 5 weeks out of the 7 in which to submit essays. The possible essay topics for each week will be distributed one week in advance of the class for which the target readings are assigned. Each essay will be due on the day for which the target reading is assigned. No late essays will be accepted.
3. **Term-long project (45%)**. This project will take one of two forms. Form A, for M.A. students, involves participation in a team effort to inform the class about a current topic in literacy assessment or instruction that is not covered in the syllabus. Form B, for Ph.D. students, involves the production of a critical review of the research on a given topic.

   A. **Team project (MA students).** Two-three person teams will research and present an overview and critique of a current topic in literacy not covered thoroughly in the course. Possible topics might include: literacy and bilingualism, literacy disabilities, workplace literacy, or a specific approach to literacy assessment or instruction. Topics must be approved in advance. In addition to the team presentation, each team member will turn in an individually written discussion (approx. 7-10 pages) linking the focus of your team project to theory and research covered in class. Half of your grade for the overall project will be based on the quality of the team presentation and your contribution to the presentation, and half will be based on your reflection paper. The paper is due on Monday, Dec. 20 at noon.

   B. **Review paper (Ph.D. students).** Each student will consult with Addison to identify a topic of current interest in the field of literacy research that will become the focus of a critical review paper. Students will identify all relevant work on the topic and write an analytic review of what is and isn't known about the topic. The paper (approximately 15 pages) will include proposals for where inquiry on this topic should go next and for how we should go about accomplishing the goals identified. Students will present a general overview of their findings in the form of a mini-lecture on the topic at an appropriate point during the semester. The paper is due on Monday, Dec. 20 at noon.

**Course Accommodations**

The University of Michigan abides by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which mandates reasonable accommodations to qualified students with disabilities. If you have a disability and may require some type of accommodation for instructional delivery or course requirements, please contact me early in the semester so that I can provide or facilitate in providing accommodations you may need. If you have not already done so, you will need to register with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (G-664 Haven Hall 505 South State Street. 763-3000). I look forward to talking with you soon to learn how I may be helpful in enhancing your academic success in this course.
UNIT I: FOUNDATIONAL ISSUES IN CONCEPTUALIZING LITERACY

In this unit, we will explore definitions of literacy and major paradigms that have been used in conceptualizing and studying literacy development, with an emphasis on metaphors used in talking about literacy, key mechanisms used to explain literacy functions, and major milestones in literacy acquisition.

Week 1 (9/9): Preliminary Issues
Overview of the course & participant responsibilities

Week 2 (9/16): Mapping the territory: What is literacy, and How does it serve us?

Week 3 (9/23): Frameworks for the Study of Literacy Acquisition, Part I: The Cognitive Tradition

Week 4 (9/30): Frameworks, Part 2: The Sociocultural Tradition
UNIT II: THE DEVELOPMENT OF LITERACY SKILLS

In this unit, we will review selected research regarding the major milestones of literacy acquisition and the processes by which such milestones are attained. Included will be issues related to the nature of literacy in and out of school, the role of individual versus social dynamics in literacy learning, and the factors underlying individual differences in the rate and level of literacy growth.

Week 5 (10/7): Early Language/Literacy Connections

Class visitor: David Shilt (discussion of emergent writing)


Week 6 (10/14): Mastering the conventions of literacy: Literacy Development in the Early Elementary Years


Week 7 (10/21): Reading/writing and content knowledge: Literacy Development in the Late-Elementary/Middle-School Years

Class visitor: (discussion of writing instruction)


**Week 8 (10/28): Critical and Practical Engagement: Literacy at the Adolescent/Adult Level**

**Class visitor: Ritu Radhakrishnan (discussion of nontraditional literacy practices)**


**UNIT III: CURRENT ISSUES IN LITERACY PRACTICE AND POLICY**

In this unit, we compare selected approaches to literacy instruction, including major principles regarding instructional activities flowing from alternative theoretical frameworks, and comprehensive literacy programs. We also consider questions of policy related to instructional reform and challenges to literacy acquisition posed by selected child populations.

**Week 9 (11/4): The Content and Structure of Effective Literacy Instruction**


Week 10 (11/11): Literacy Policy and Instructional Reform in the United States

Class visitor: Ruth Athan (discussion of Reading First)

Week 11 (11/18): Societal Change and Implications for Literacy Priorities: Cultural/Linguistic and Ability Diversity


Week 12 (12/2): Societal Change and Implications for Literacy Priorities: Technology and Preparation for the Workplace

Class visitor: Phil Piety (discussion of hypertext literacy)

Week 13 (12/9): Project presentations
No assigned readings

Week 14 (12/16) (exam week): Project presentations
No assigned readings