

EDUC 706
Youth Literacy, Culture, and Identity

Professor: Elizabeth Birr Moje
Office: 4122 SEB Mailbox: To be determined
Phone: 647.9571 e-mail: moje@umich.edu
Class Hours: Tuesdays, 1-4 PM
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 11 AM-noon or by appointment

Course Description

When I proposed to teach this class as the Literacy Seminar requirement, I was motivated by what I see as a general lack of attention in our society to the social, cultural, political, and educational issues of youth—people of about 10-20 years of age. I wanted to offer a course that focused almost exclusively on youth and young adults. When I chose the three constructs on which we would focus in the course—literacy, culture, and identity—I was motivated to include literacy at least in part because I was offering a *literacy* seminar.

Identity seemed like a useful construct to consider in conjunction with a focus on youth literacy, because all sorts of claims are made about youth in terms of their identity development, construction, and representation. But identity, as a construct, is very difficult to define. We have little clarity in the field of education or in its contributing disciplines as to what identity really is.

Culture, like identity, is often invoked as an explanation for why youth engage with their social and school worlds as they do. Everything from ethnic to youth to popular culture is named as an explanation for youth literacy and identity practices, with little attention to what they different “types” of cultures might mean, especially to youth.

So this is what we’ll be doing in this course: We will examine youth in terms of how they use literacy; how they claim, construct, or challenge identities (and subjectivities); and how they shape and are shaped by the different cultural practices they invent or in which they are positioned. We’ll read theoretical pieces from different disciplines or perspectives, we’ll read empirical studies of youth, and we’ll engage in our own analyses of youth and the different kinds of texts to which they have access in their everyday and school worlds. For more specific details on the nature of these activities, read on!

Course Texts

Alvermann, D. E., Hinchman, K., Moore, D. W., Phelps, S. F., & Waff, D. R. (Eds.). (2006). *Reconceptualizing the literacies in adolescents' lives*. Mahwah, NJ: LEA.
Knobel, M., & Lankshear, C. (2007). *A new literacies sampler*. New York: Peter Lang.

Course Requirements

Reading responses. Each week (until a certain point in the semester) one half of you will produce and post to the CTools site questions for discussion based on the assigned

readings. The other half of the group will write a one-page, single-spaced response to the readings, which can take off from the focus questions listed each week on the syllabus, or can take an entirely different direction, as long as it's related to the texts at hand. For both questions and written responses, you may respond to one reading, to one idea that runs across the readings, or to a series of ideas represented across the readings. The best questions/responses seek integration across the readings, but you can also ask questions or write responses that focus on discrete aspects of individual readings. Whatever focus you choose, you should read all the assigned readings each week and be prepared to discuss them. I will often ask people to lead discussions—without advance planning—based on what they've submitted, so come prepared to talk about the texts. Both questions and responses should be posted by each Monday afternoon at 5:00 PM, to give me time to read them and integrate them into whatever I am planning for each week's seminar. 30%

Analysis Project. You will analyze one of two kinds of data. The first will be an analysis of the popular cultural, media, or information technology texts that youth are likely to access OR that represent youth in some way. The second is an analysis of real youth. Your analysis should reflect *and expand* the theories and empirical analyses that we're reading in class. In particular, you should analyze how these texts or youth experiences are shaped by and reflect the effects of globalisation, information technologies, digital environments, and popular culture. 20%

Culminating project. This project should be something that is relevant to your current work and interests. You might collect some small slice of data in a classroom or school (provided that you already have IRB approval), and use the theories and empirical works we read to analyze that data. If you're just starting your dissertation proposal, you might write a theoretical piece that examines the perspectives on youth, literacy, identity, or culture that we are discussing; craft a literature review that incorporates and goes beyond these readings; or design data collection methods or instruments that reflect both your understandings of YCLI theoretical perspectives and your research aims. Those of you who are involved in dissertation or other research project data collection might use these theories to examine the data you already have, and write a chapter of your dissertation. In every case, *the course concepts and readings we do should be a central part of your work.* However, do not limit yourself to these readings. Part of your task in this culminating project will be to go beyond the course readings, to integrate related works that build on, challenge, or expand what we have read and discussed.

Because this is to be something relevant to your work and interests, I cannot give you specifications for the project's completion, but I will be happy to discuss your ideas and the form of them with you. Please be sure to set a time in advance of the due date to discuss these ideas with me or email me with your ideas so that I can respond to them in a timely fashion. 30%

Presentation. On the final class meeting of the semester we will present our work to each other in formal presentations. The class size is too large to allow for individual presentations, so we will probably present in small groups or perhaps we can come up

with some innovative to handle the numbers and time dilemma. The presentation can take many different forms, so feel free to exercise creative license, but *do* consider this a formal presentation. That is, prepare handouts, visual aids, Power Point presentations, etc. For those of you scheduled to give papers at NCTE, NRC, MLA, CCCC, or other conferences in the near future this could be a great practice session. 10%

Participation. I'll evaluate your participation in regard to your attendance and timely arrival to class, but my main evaluation will be based on whether you come prepared to discuss all the readings. 10%

Tentative Course Schedule

9-2 Exploring the constructs

Read: Ctools: Moje, 2008 (before you come to class!)

9-9 Examining perspectives on literacy, text, and YCLI

Read: CTools: *Reading Next* Report; *Reading at Risk* report; Kress, pp. 1-15; Franzak

Due: Response/Questions

9-16 Re/Constructing Youth/Adolescence

Read: CTools: Lesko, pp. 1-90; Vadeboncoeur; Wyn (in Vadeboncoeur file)

Due: Response/Questions

9-23 Identity: A Thing, a State, a Process, or Practice?

Read: CTools: McCarthy & Moje; Sen; Sfard & Prusak; Davidson, pp. 1-3 (file 1);

Due: Response/Questions

9-30 Studying Identity: Achieved, Ascribed, Recognized, Performed, or Enactment?

Read: CTools: Davidson, pp. 33-52 (file 2); Patel Stevens (in Vadeboncoeur file, Sep 16); Smith

Reconceptualizing: Neilsen; O'Brien

Due: Response/Questions

10-7 What is the role of culture? What is culture, anyway How is culture related to identities?

Read: CTools: Bhabha excerpt; Rosaldo excerpt

Due: Response/Questions

10-14 Where does popular culture fit?

Read: CTools: Grossberg; Dolby; Willis; C. McCarthy et al.

NL Sampler: Ch. 3, 9

Due: Response/Questions

10-21 Study Break; No class

10-28 What’s the deal with “new” literacies?

Read: Kress, pp. 35-105 (from September 9 file)

NL Sampler: Chs. 1, 5, 10

Due Response/Questions

11-4 More on “new” literacies

Read: NL Sampler: Chs. 4-8

Due: Response/Questions

11-11 Youth literacies, identities, and cultures: Kids and Texts

Read No readings—Use past readings for assignment

Due: Textual/Media/Popular Culture/Youth Analysis Project

11-18 Youth literacies, identities, and cultures: Dis/Connections to schooling

Read NL Sampler: Ch. 2, 7

Reconceptualizing: Wilder & Dressman; Lytle

CTools: Stevens et al.

Due: Response/Questions

11-25 Youth literacies, identities, and cultures: Connections to schooling

Read: CTools: Moje Developing Socially Just Pedagogy; Morrell; Lee

Reconceptualizing: Harper & Bean; Cohen et al.

Due: Response/questions

12-2 Presentations

Due Final projects due

12-9 Presentations

Due Final projects due

CTools Citations

- Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The location of culture*. London: Routledge. (Excerpt pp. 1-18 and 212-256)
- Biancarosa, G., & Snow, C. E. (2004). *Reading next--A vision for action and research in middle and high school literacy: A report to the Carnegie Corporation of New York*. Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education.
- Davidson, A. L. (1996). *Making and molding identity in schools: Student narratives on race, gender, and academic engagement*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press. (Excerpt pp. 1-17 and 33-52)
- Dolby, N. (2003). Popular culture and democratic practice. *Harvard Educational Review*, 73(3), 258-284.
- Franzak, J. (2006). Zoom: A review of the literature on marginalized adolescent readers, literacy theory, and policy implications. In B. M. Gordon & J. E. King (Eds.), *Review of Educational Research* (Vol. 76, pp. 209-248). Washington DC: American Educational Research Association.
- Grossberg, L. (1997). Re-placing popular culture. In S. Redhead (Ed.), *The clubcultures reader: Readings in popular cultural studies* (pp. 199-219). London: Blackwell Publishers.

- Kress, G. (2003). *Literacy in the new media age (literacies)*. New York, NY: Routledge. (Excerpts 1-15 and 35-105)
- Lee, C. D. (2001). Is October Brown Chinese? A cultural modeling activity system for underachieving students. *American Educational Research Journal* 38(1), 97-141.
- Lesko, N. (2001). *Act your age! A cultural construction of adolescence*. New York: Routledge Falmer. (Excerpt , pp. 19-106)
- McCarthy, C., Giardian, M., Harewood, S. J., & Park, J.-K. (2003). Contesting culture: Identity and curriculum dilemmas in the age of globalization, postcolonialism, and multiplicity. *Harvard Educational Review*, 73(3), 449-465.
- McCarthy, S. J., & Moje, E. B. (2002). Identity matters. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 37(2), 228-237.
- Moje, E. B. (2007). Developing socially just subject-matter instruction: A review of the literature on disciplinary literacy. In L. Parker (Ed.), *Review of research in education*, (pp. 1-44). Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association.
- Morrell, E. (2000). *Curriculum and popular culture: Building bridges and making waves*. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Journal.
- Rosaldo, R. (1989). *Culture and truth: The remaking of social analysis*. Boston: Beacon. (Excerpt pp. 196-224)
- Schmidt, M. E., & Vandewater, E. A. (2008). Media and Attention, Cognition, and School Achievement. *The Future of Children*, 18(1), 63-85.
- Sen, A. (2000). Beyond identity. *The New Republic*, 23-30.
- Sfard, A., & Prusak, A. (2005). Telling identities: In search of an analytic tool for investigating learning as a culturally shaped activity. *Educational Researcher*, 34(4), 14-23.
- Stevens, R., Satwitz, T., & McCarthy, L. (2008). In-game, in-room, in-world: Reconnecting video game play to the rest of kids' lives. In K. Salen (Ed.), *The ecology of games: Connecting youth, games, and learning* (pp. 42-66). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Subrahmanyam, K., & Greenfield, P. (2008). Online communication and adolescent relationships. *The Future of Children*, 18(1), 119-146.
- Vadeboncoeur, J., & Stevens, L. P. (Eds.). (2004). *Re/Constructing the adolescent: Sign, symbol, image*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Willis, P. (2003). Foot soldiers of modernity: The dialectics of cultural consumption and the 21st century school. *Harvard Educational Review*, 73(3), 390-415.