PURPOSE: The purpose of this course is to gain understanding of the factors that affect children’s acquisition of reading and the interrelations among these factors. Course activities include reading and discussing current research on learning to read from both a cognitive/linguistic perspective and a socio-cultural perspective. Topics include (but are not limited to): (a) phonology and other aspects of language as factors that influence learning to read, (b) the nature of different orthographies and the challenges they pose for young readers, (c) decoding strategies and automaticity of word recognition, (c) developmental changes in the relation of language and decoding to reading comprehension, (d) metacognition and motivation, (e) social, cultural and biological factors that affect acquisition of reading skill, (f) influence of instruction on the prevalence and severity of reading difficulties, (g) the definition and identification of reading disabilities. We will address a wide variety of questions focused on acquisition of reading from different perspectives and research methodologies. Students will carry out a literature review of one aspect of acquisition of literacy.

COURSE OBJECTIVES: On completing this course, the student should:
1. Understand the cognitive and linguistic processes of reading;
2. Understand developmental processes by which children acquire reading proficiency;
3. Understand the causes and correlates of reading disabilities (e.g., brain basis, social and cultural factors);
4. Understand social, cultural, and biological factors that affect the acquisition of reading capabilities;
5. Have knowledge of research on effective practices in reading instruction for students who are struggling readers;
6. Understand current policies and issues concerning the identification of children with reading or learning disabilities.


A set of readings is available at Excel (S. University Ave).
COURSE REQUIREMENTS: Along with attending class, each student must
1. Write a critique of readings for four topics covered in different class meetings.
2. Complete a literature review paper and give a presentation to the class
summarizing your research on the topic. The literature review will be completed in three
phases (see instructions at the end of the course outline.)

EVALUATION:
Each student’s grade will be a weighted average of the article critiques (averaged
together, 40%) and the literature review (60%).

COURSE OUTLINE:

January 10: An overview of the process of learning to read

Questions:
1. What are the central cognitive and linguistic processes of reading?
2. What is the nature of skilled reading?
3. What cultural or contextual factors affect reading?
4. Is reading different for different written language systems?

Readings:
whole system works together. Beginning to read: Thinking and learning about print.
Cambridge: MIT Press.
of the theory. The psychology of reading and language comprehension. Boston: Allyn
and Bacon.

NOTE: January 17, No class-- Martin Luther King Day
TENTATIVELY WE WILL MEET ON TUESDAY, JAN. 18 FROM 1-4 PM. FOR
SIMPLICITY OF SCHEDULINGM THIS MEETING WILL BE IN MY OFFICE,
3210C.

January 24: The role of phonology in learning to read

Questions:
1. What is the nature of phonological processing in reading?
2. To what extent are phonological deficits the core problem of reading
disabilities?
3. How is the development of phonological processing related to other aspects of
language learning and knowledge applicable to learning to read?

Readings:


**January 31: Beyond phonology: A more complete picture of factors critical for success in learning to read**

Questions:
1. What is the role of orthography and orthographic knowledge in reading?
2. How is lexical access and naming speed related to reading?
3. Do problems with memory contribute to difficulties learning to read?

Readings:
1. McBride-Chang, Chapter 4 The role of morphologic al awareness in learning to read and Chapter 5 Visual and orthographic skills in reading and writing.


**February 7: Developmental changes in reading and reading disability**

Questions:
1. How do the basic word-reading skills interact with language comprehension and text characteristics?
2. Do the nature and importance of word reading and comprehension capabilities change as reading skill develops?
3. What factors are thought to characterize severe reading disabilities (dyslexia)? Does reading performance differ for students with “pure” reading disabilities and students with both reading and language-learning disabilities?
Readings:
4. McBride-Chang, Chapter 8 Dyslexia

February 14: Reading and writing literature reviews on reading acquisition

Questions:
1. Why are literature reviews important for scholarship and research?
2. What are the characteristics of a valuable (effective?) literature review?
3. How does one go about producing a literature review?
4. What can we learn from examination of literature reviews in the area of reading?

Readings:

Assignment—Phase 1 of your literature review. Bring to class a paragraph explaining the topic of your literature review, including the list of terms you used to search for articles on your topic. Be ready to discuss your preliminary search of relevant databases and your plans for preparing and writing your literature review.

February 21: Skilled reading hinges on the development of automaticity and fluency; Spelling and writing are critical to the development of literacy

Questions:
1. What is meant by “automaticity” of word reading? Why is automaticity so critical for the development of reading skill?
2. How is “fluency” of text reading different from automaticity of word reading? What are the characteristics of fluent reading?
3. Does learning to spell help children understand the way that their language is represented in writing?
4. What are the similarities and differences in reading and writing processes? Do children with reading difficulties also have spelling or writing difficulties?
5. To what extent are writing skills comparable to comprehension in reading?

Readings:


**February 28:** NO CLASS, SPRING BREAK

**March 7: Factors affecting the development of reading comprehension**

Questions:
1. What processes and sources of knowledge pertain to reading comprehension specifically (as opposed to word reading)?
2. Building on our earlier readings, reflect on the existence of “specific” problems with reading comprehension. How common are these? What might cause these?
3. Do researchers tend to agree on the sources of comprehension problems?

Readings:


March 14: The relation of motivation and metacognition to reading achievement

Questions:
1. What are the metacognitive processes that play a role in reading?
2. How are metacognition and motivation related?
3. Is motivation related in a causal manner to reading difficulties and disabilities?
4. What factors affect children’s motivation to learn to read and interest in reading?

Readings:

Assignment: Be ready to hand in phase 2 of your literature review (see explanation of this phase at the end of the course outline). Be ready to discuss your progress with the class.

March 21: The context of learning to read: Social and cultural factors

Questions:
1. To what extent do “home” factors contribute to children’s reading acquisition?
2. Considering book reading as one source of differences in “home” literacy experiences, what particular practices seem to distinguish children’s learning of language and literacy?
3. Does bilingualism, in general, affect students literacy acquisition?
4. What factors affect learning to read in a second language? What places ELL students at risk for reading disabilities? Are these risk factors different for students learning to read in their first or their second language?
5. Why might children who speak African American English be at risk for reading difficulties?

Readings (for discussion on March 21 AND March 28):
1. McBride-Chang, Ch. 9 Bilingualism and literacy

**March 28: Neurological and genetic studies of reading disabilities (and continuation of discussion of readings from March 21)**

Questions:
1. To what extent are reading difficulties found to be associated with neurobiological differences?
2. How has functional magnetic imaging helped us learn about differences in the neurological functioning of students with and without reading disabilities?
3. What have researchers learned to date about the genetic basis for reading and writing abilities and disabilities?

Readings:

**April 4: Defining and identifying children at risk for reading disabilities**

Questions:
1. How are “learning disabilities” conceptualized, from different research perspectives? What are the implications for the individual, the school community, and society?
2. Consider principles used to identify students with learning disabilities. How does intelligence figure into this process? To what extent do the identification guidelines
reflect what we know about reading disabilities from other studies (e.g., Snowling, Catts)?

3. What is the purpose of early identification? How accurate can we be in identifying kindergarten students who will later have reading problems? Consider here the developmental changes in profiles of reading disabilities presented in other papers we have read and discussed.

Readings:

April 11: The impact of current research findings on federal policies and instructional practices

Questions:
1. What is the National Association of Education Progress? How is reading achievement assessed by this organization? Why are the results so influential? Has reading achievement changed over the past ten years?
2. How has the report of the National Reading Panel become so influential? What does this report tell us about the “scientifically-based” reading instruction?
3. What is the research agenda of the Rand study group? How does this relate to the NRP results?

Readings:
3. NAEP Reading Report Card; overview of Reading First legislation (to be handed out in class)

April 18: On the frontlines: Effective instruction as prevention for reading difficulties

Questions:
1. How likely is it that severe reading problems are the result of poor instruction?
2. Are there individual differences in the nature of instruction that is effective? Do boys learn differently from girls? Are there cultural and social factors in response to instruction?

3. Do researchers know the elements of effective instruction? What is meant by “scientifically-based reading research”?

Readings:

April 25: Class presentations and papers (Literature Review, Phase 3)
ASSIGNMENTS

(1) Article Critiques:

You are to write a critique of the readings for FOUR topics covered in different class meetings. Pick one or two of the questions and at least two of the readings; you are encouraged to include other papers you might have read in discussing the issues. Discuss ideas of interest raised by the readings. Also include a critique of the two (or more) articles. Your critique of each article might include the following:

a) the purpose or rationale of the paper or study(ies)
b) the research perspective and design of the study(ies),
c) the method of the study(ies)
d) describe and evaluate the findings and the author(s) interpretation of the findings.

Please include a summary in which you integrate analyses and comments about the two papers, as they relate to the topic of the class meeting. Your article critiques should be about 5 pages, double-spaced.

(2) Literature review:

At the beginning of the course, each student will be asked to identify a topic or question concerning developmental variation in learning to read. Your major assignment for the term is to prepare a literature review on this topic or question. The assignment will be completed in three phases.

Phase 1: Identify the topic about developmental variation in reading you would like to learn more about. Do a literature search. Identify at least a dozen research reports or book chapters on theory or empirical findings that have been published in the last 10 years. Read these papers, keeping notes on research questions, research design, method of study, results and significant findings. In addition, I recommend you develop a method for grouping studies by topic; this will help you organize your literature review. Be prepared to turn in a paragraph about your topic and what you think (at the outset) will be the subtopics or questions you will be discussing in the review. Include a list of at least 12 references to articles and book chapters that are relevant for your review. This is to be handed in at the third class meeting (Jan 27th). (Note: I encourage you to read several published literature reviews so that you can understand the nature of this genre of academic writing.)

Phase 2: Complete more extensive reading of papers on your topic and analysis of the studies that are most salient. In particular, consider issues of methodology in the studies you have read: a) what research perspective and methods are most commonly used to study questions related to your topic? b) How are participants selected? What data are collected—what kinds of tasks, tests and procedures are used? Pick two representative studies and prepare a short presentation for the class that focus on methods of study.
Consider the strengths and weaknesses of the studies as they contribute to your understanding of research on the topic. Make a table that shows the author and date, central features of the study, and findings that are relevant to your topic. Prepare a written draft of the method of your literature review and a general overview of the findings so far. Be prepared to discuss your work with the class.

Phase 3: Your final literature review is due on April 25. It should be no more than 25 pages in length. The paper should include an updated table of the studies that you reviewed in the paper, building on the draft table you prepared for Phase 2. Your discussion section should go beyond summarizing the findings of the studies. It is important that you evaluate or reflect on the findings. In addition, you might indicate strengths and weaknesses of the current literature on the topic; areas in which further research is needed. References in the text should include authors’ last name and date of publication; in the reference list, all citations should be complete. The paper should be double-spaced and follow APA guidelines. At this class meeting, you will also be asked to give a short presentation to the class (no more than 15 minutes). In your presentation, plan to cover major issues, your interpretation of the state of our knowledge about your topic, and your thoughts about the most important issues or questions that still need to be addressed.