Foundations of Literacy, Fall 2011  
ED 500, Sec. 001, 2334, SEB

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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. Examination of selected issues related to literacy instruction.
4. Sensitivity to evolving functions and impacts of literacy and the policy implications of these trends.
5. Appreciation of challenges to literacy development faced by selected special populations, and of strategies for meeting those challenges.
6. Development of a conceptually sound and empirically grounded view of literacy, its acquisition, and its role in personal fulfillment.

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.

Readings
Readings for the course are provided in dated folders under Resources on the CTools site for ED 500 11. The folders are dated for the class session in which the readings will be discussed.

Course Requirements
1. **Class participation (30%).** Active class participation is a core component of the course. Participation includes the following:
   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. For each assigned reading, students will write 2-4 “take away” ideas (using references to the text) and bring them to class. **During class discussion of the readings, students may make notes on their “take away” ideas before handing them in at the end of class.** I will quickly review how students are processing the readings and discussions; however, they will not be graded. **Failure to submit “take away” assignment will adversely affect the participation grade.**
To facilitate the goal of learning to write literature reviews, students’ will do a brief analysis of one literature review in each set of readings where an article has an asterisk for a total of 6 analyses. Guidelines for analyzing literature reviews will be discussed in class. Again, these will not be graded but will contribute to the overall participation grade.

2. **Reflective essay (10%)**. Select an issue raised in the assigned readings, and write a 2-3 page essay. The purpose of the essay is to stimulate your thinking about a particular topic as you read, and your personal reflections, based on past experiences or your readings, about the topic. We will share our reflections in a group discussion. No late essays will be accepted.

3. **Position Statement on Literacy (20%) DUE Wednesday, October 26th.** An essay (approx. 5-7 pages) presenting your personal philosophy of literacy instruction. What do you see as the most productive approach to fostering literacy in school settings? What theoretical framework informs your perspective? What empirical research provides validation for your views?

4. **Review Paper (40%)**. Each student should consult with me to identify a particular topic of current interest in the field literacy research that will become the focus of a critical review paper. You will identify all the relevant work on the topic and write an analytic review of what is and isn’t known about the topic. The paper should be about 10-15 pages and will include proposals for where inquiry on this topic should go next and for how we should go about accomplishing the goals identified. Each student will be asked to present a general overview of their findings at an appropriate point in the semester.

**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.

**Grading**
Each student will receive a letter grade for class participation and each of the three papers. Each student’s course grade will be determined by the average of these four grades (using UM’s nine-point grading scale).

**SCHEDULE FOR TOPICS AND REQUIRED READINGS**

**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 (9/7): Preliminary Issues: Course Overview; Introductions**
In this first class meeting, we will learn about each others’ backgrounds, explore participants’ goals for the course, discuss the course structure and requirements, and “sign up” for discussion leader responsibilities for the rest of the course. In addition, we will examine participants’ a priori conceptions of literacy and familiarity with course topics. Discussion questions for week 2 will be provided as well.

**Week 2 (9/14): Conceptions of Literacy and Its Role for Society & the Individual**

The readings for this week raise important questions regarding conceptions of literacy and its impact on society and the individual. We will also explore broad trends in scholarly approaches to the study of literacy and its past and future role in society.


**Week 3 (9/21) Independent Activity: Reflective Essay**


This week, we begin a three-week ‘tour’ of the three major theoretical perspectives within which scholars conceptualize literacy processes and practices: the so-called cognitive, sociocultural, and critical perspectives. The focus this week is on the cognitive perspective.


**Week 5 (10/5): Frameworks, Part 2: The Sociocultural Tradition**

We continue our ‘tour’ of the three major perspectives for conceptualizing literacy processes and practices. Use the assigned readings to glean key implicit and explicit assumptions made by representatives of the sociocultural perspective.


**Week 6 (10/12): Independent Activity. Individual project outline**

**Week 7 (10/19) Frameworks, Part 3: The Critical Tradition**


Philips, S. Participant structures and communicative competence: Warm Springs children in community and classroom.

**Week 8 (10/26): Frameworks, Part 4: Reconciling Perspectives?**

This week, we will grapple directly with the question of if and how the cognitive, sociocultural and critical traditions can be reconciled. We will explore arguments against reconciliation and one prominent proposal for a fruitful reconciliation.


LITERACY PHILOSOPHY DUE

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 9 (11/02): Emerging Language/Literacy Connections

In this first week of our tour of literacy development, we will focus on the preschool years, with an emphasis on the interplay between oral language and early written language, and on the family and community activities that foster emerging literacy. Think about aspects of oral language and communicational activities that lay a groundwork for emerging literacy.


Week 10 (11/09): Mastering the conventions of literacy: Literacy Development in the Early Elementary Years
In this week’s readings and discussion, we will focus on the early elementary years, with an emphasis on how children “crack the code” in their reading and writing. Think about what “the code” is, in its various manifestations. What types of skills or practices make cracking the code possible? To what extent does it make sense to view this process as “stage-like”?


**WEEK 12 (11/16): Mastering the skills associated with literacy**


**Week 13 (11/21): NO CLASS—THANKSGIVING/Developmental Paper Due**

**WEEK 14 (11/30): Reading/writing and content knowledge: Literacy Development in the Late-Elementary/Middle and High School Years**

We continue our ‘tour’ of major trends in literacy acquisition, this time focused on the late elementary/middle and high school years. The readings emphasize children’s growing awareness of, and production of, text structure, approaches to fostering comprehension and use of what one reads, and the ways in which adolescents “greet” literacy from their own life experiences and expectations.


**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 15 (12/7): Literacy Policy and Instructional Reform in the United States**

In this week, we will broaden our lens to focus on current efforts to affect U.S. policy regarding literacy instruction. The readings for this week address the question of the interface between literacy research and policy. Here, we will see the broad implications of the clash of perspectives on the nature of literacy and literacy instruction that we explored in Unit I.


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<th>Date/Topic</th>
<th>Reading to be completed prior to class</th>
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<td>9/7—Course Overview, Introductions</td>
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<td>9/14—</td>
<td>Alexander &amp; Fox; Allington &amp; McGill/Franzen; Flood &amp; Lapp; Scribner &amp; Cole</td>
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<td>PLD Ch. 5 (pp. 41-62); Anderson; Rumelhart; McCutchen</td>
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<td>PLD Chs. 6-8 (pp. 63-158); Stone</td>
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<td>Juel &amp; Minden-Cupp; Ehri &amp; McCormick; Hiebert &amp; Martin; Perez</td>
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<td>Jetton &amp; Alexander; Langer; Alvermann; Moje et al.</td>
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