

PERSPECTIVES ON ADULT LITERACY

EADU 8040

Spring 2009

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Meetings	Dates: Jan. 10, Jan. 24, Feb. 21, Mar. 21, and Apr. 25 Time: 8:30am-1:00pm Room: 135 River's Crossing

Description and Rationale

The course will take the form of an advanced seminar that is held partially face-to-face and partially online. This seminar will explore the critical and theoretical underpinnings of adult literacy, and the purpose of the seminar is to foster clear thinking about adult literacy, adult illiteracy, and adult literacy education through broad reading, free-wheeling discussion, and focused writing. Discussions will center on selected readings, both classical and modern, and inquiry projects will offer students the opportunity to pursue personal interests.

Literacy scholarship is quite complex; it derives from many disciplines and embodies a variety of different--even warring--perspectives. The readings in this course are quite diverse, and since the intellectual structure of the course is shaped by the readings, past students have reported feeling overwhelmed, not so much by the number of pages, but by the number of competing ideas. In my own mind, I tame this chaos by realizing that most of the readings provide answers to the following six "focus" questions:

1. What is literacy?
2. What are the origins of literacy and illiteracy?

3. What is the status of illiteracy (and under-education) in the United States?
4. Who are the low-literate and undereducated adults?
5. How do people become and remain low literate in a highly literate, developed society?
6. What can adult literacy programs reasonably accomplish for individuals and for society as a whole?

If you keep those questions uppermost in your mind--and if you can provide reasonable, if incomplete, answers to them by the end of this course, you will have accomplished a good deal.

Learning Formats

Face-to-Face Sessions. There will be a total of five face-to-face class sessions during which we will function as a seminar group, discussing important readings and key concepts related to adult literacy. These sessions will be led by Tom.

Online Learning Modules. The course will include seven Web-based learning modules designed to address important adult literacy topics. Each module consists of two distinct phases. In phase one, students will work independently to complete assigned readings and submit a short paper, usually a reaction to a particular chapter or article. In phase two, students will read one another's papers (which will be posted on the website) and engage in an online discussion. These sessions will be facilitated by Jamie. Tom will respond to the group's papers and discussions at the beginning of the subsequent face-to-face session (see Appendix A for a complete description of modules).

Individual Inquiry Projects. Students will engage in one or more independently-selected (but instructor-approved) inquiry projects. Each project will be selected by the student from a list provided in this syllabus (see Appendix B) or designed by the student. Early in the course, each student is required (a) to submit an "Independent Inquiry Plan" to the Tom specifying the projects to be undertaken and (b) to notify Tom if those plans change as the semester progresses. Personal assistance in planning and completing inquiry projects is available by appointment.

Course Requirements

- 1) Each student is required to attend all five face-to-face sessions and participate actively in class discussions.
- 2) Each student is required to complete the **seven** Web-based learning modules by (a) submitting a paper for each module and (b) participating in an online discussion.

3) Each student will complete one or more independently-selected, instructor approved inquiry projects

Grading

Points are earned through specific course activities as follows:

Activity/Product	Points
Attendance and Participation in Face-to-Face Sessions (5 sessions @ 4 points per session)	20 points
Online Learning Modules (7 papers @ 4 points per paper) (7 discussions @ 2 points per discussion)	42 points
Inquiry Projects (variable number of projects per student, depending on the time and work involved)	40 points.
<i>Total Points</i>	102 points

Letter grades will be assigned for the course based on the points earned, as follows:

- A = 90 points or more
- B+ = 85 through 89 points
- B = 80 through 84 points
- C+ = 75 through 79
- C = 70 through 74
- D = 60 through 69
- F = less than 60 points

During the semester, students will accumulate a portfolio of critical writing tasks. Grades will be posted on WebCT so that students can monitor their progress. Rather than be returned with grades and brief comments, all papers will be discussed with Tom during private “portfolio review” meetings at the end of the semester.

A note on absenteeism: Because there are only five class meetings, attendance at all sessions is critical. Please make every effort to be on time for class. If you miss a class session, you will automatically lose 4 points on your course grade. You can recover these 4 points by (a) obtaining tapes or notes from another student covering the content of the session and (b) submitting a five-page reflective memo in which the absent student addresses the ideas covered during the session.

COURSE SCHEDULE		
Date	Online Activities	Class Meetings and Independent Inquiry Projects
1/10 Class		Course Planning Lecture and Discussion: "What is Literacy?"
1/11-1/24	Module #1: Defining Literacy	
1/24 Class		Review of Online Work Lecture and Discussion
1/25-2/7	Module #2: Who Are the Low-Literates?	
2/8-2/21	Module #3: Living With Low Literacy	
2/21 Class		Review of Online Work Lecture and Discussion
2/22-3/7	Module #4: Social Contexts of Literacy	
3/8-3/21	Module #5: Understanding Family Literacy	
3/21 Class		Review of Online Work Lecture and Discussion: "Family Literacy"
3/22-4/6	Module #6: Critical Pedagogy for Literacy	
4/7-4/18	Module #7: Women and Literacy	
4/23		Last day for submitting all course work, including individual inquiry reports
4/25		Review of Online Work Final Portfolio Review (individual meetings with Tom; completion of evaluation form)

Special Notes

Accommodations. Anyone requiring special accommodations for a disability should alert me as soon as possible. I will be happy to make necessary and reasonable accommodations.

Syllabus Subject to Change. The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary. It is your responsibility to be aware of changes that may be made.

UGA's Academic Honesty Policy. All academic work must meet the standards contained in "A Culture of Honesty." Students are responsible for informing themselves about those standards before performing any academic work. The link to more detailed information about academic honesty can be found at: <http://www.uga.edu/ovpi/honesty/acadhon.htm>.

Appendix A

Online Learning Modules

Much of the learning in the course occurs in seven online learning modules. Each module involves three major activities:

- Independent reading,
- Critical writing, and
- Online discussion.

Module #1: Defining Literacy (January 11 through January 21)

Readings. Read both of these articles carefully by January 17.

1. Levine, K. (1982). Functional illiteracy: Fond illusions and false economies. *Harvard Educational Review*, 52(3), 246-266.
2. Scribner, S. (1984), Literacy in Three Metaphors, *Journal of Education*, 93, 6-21.

Reaction Paper (must be emailed to the instructor by 6am on Sunday January 18!!!). Submit a one-or two-page reaction paper that takes one of the following forms:

1. A paper on one of the articles in which you use the following outline: (a) a brief (one or two paragraph) summary of the piece, (b) a critique of the piece, (answering the question, "How well did the author do what s/he set out to do), and (c) an evaluation of the piece's significance for adult literacy practice.
2. A paper in which you pick an important, thought-provoking, or troubling issue in one or both articles and discuss it critically.
3. A critical paper of your own design.

In writing the paper, you may feel free to write in the first-person (I, my, etc.) as long as that does not interfere with the rigor of your argument.

In order to receive full credit for your work, the paper must be emailed to the instructor (within WebCT) by the appointed time.

Discussion. Two substantive postings must be made ON TWO DIFFERENT DAYS in the appropriate forum during the period January 18 and January 21.

Module #2: Who Are the Low-Literates? (January 25 through February 7)

This module is different from the others in two important respects:

- First, it will require you to do independent internet research before writing and
- Because of that, we are adjusting the time frame a bit to allow you to do so; both the due date for submission of your reaction papers and the subsequent discussion will be delayed two days.

Rationale. Both the measurement of adult literacy—and the definitions on which that measurement is based—is constantly evolving and often contested. As a literacy scholar, you need to be able to locate literacy statistics and interpret them.

Read, Research, and Write (paper must be submitted by 6am on Tuesday, February 3!!!)

1. Begin by reading the posted chapter:

Hunter, C. & Harman, D. (1979). *Adult Illiteracy in the United States: A Report to the Ford Foundation*, Chapter 2 (Who are the adult illiterates?) McGraw-Hill, New York: NY.

This chapter is excellent, and many of the ideas are valuable. However, the data are hopelessly out of date (though certain trends persist).

2. Now do some internet research to locate more up-to-date data. Promising websites include the U.S. Census for school completion figures, National Center for Educational Statistics for performance measures, or UNESCO for international comparisons.

3. Choose one study or report and prepare a two- to three-page reaction paper in which you do the following:

- present and critique the definition of literacy on which the study is based,
- describe and evaluate the adequacy of the data (e.g., literacy measure, methodology, sample, etc.) in the study, and
- assess to what extent and in what ways the report supports or refutes the conclusions reached by Hunter and Harman in their chapter.

Discussion. Two substantive postings must be made ON TWO DIFFERENT DAYS in the appropriate forum during the period February 4 and February 7.

Module #3: Living with Low Literacy (February 8 through February 18)

Readings. Read both of these articles carefully by February 14.

1. Fingeret, A. (1989). Social network: A new perspective on independence and illiterate adults. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 3(3), 133-145.
2. Purcell-Gates, V. (2001). A world without print. In E. Cushman, E. Kintgen, & B. Kroll (Eds.), *Literacy: A critical sourcebook* (pp. 402-417), Bedford and St. Martin's: Boston: MA.

Reaction Paper (must be emailed to the instructor by 6am on Sunday February 15!!!). Submit a one-or two-page reaction paper that takes one of the following forms:

1. A paper on one of the articles in which you use the following outline: (a) a brief (one or two paragraph) summary of the piece, (b) a critique of the piece, (answering the question, "How well did the author do what s/he set out to do), and (c) an evaluation of the piece's significance for adult literacy practice.
2. A paper in which you pick an important, thought-provoking, or troubling issue in one or both articles and discuss it critically.
3. A critical paper of your own design.

In writing the paper, you may feel free to write in the first-person (I, my, etc.) as long as that does not interfere with the rigor of your argument.

In order to receive full credit for your work, the paper must be emailed to the instructor (within WebCT) by the appointed time.

Discussion. Two substantive postings must be made **ON TWO DIFFERENT DAYS** during the period Sunday, February 15, and Wednesday, February 18.

Module #4: Social Contexts of Literacy (February 22 through March 4)

Readings. Read both of these articles carefully by February 28.

1. Gee, J. (1989). Literacy, discourse, and linguistics: Introduction and What is literacy? *Journal of Education*, 171(1). 5-25.
2. Delpit, L. (1995). *Other people's children: Cultural conflict in the classroom.* (pp. 153-166). The New Press, New York.

Reaction Paper (must be emailed to the instructor by 6am on Sunday March 1!!!). Submit a one-or two-page reaction paper that takes one of the following forms:

1. A paper on one of the articles in which you use the following outline: (a) a brief (one or two paragraph) summary of the piece, (b) a critique of the piece, (answering the question, "How well did the author do what s/he set out to do), and (c) an evaluation of the piece's significance for adult literacy practice.
2. A paper in which you pick an important, thought-provoking, or troubling issue in one or both articles and discuss it critically.
3. A critical paper of your own design.

In writing the paper, you may feel free to write in the first-person (I, my, etc.) as long as that does not interfere with the rigor of your argument.

In order to receive full credit for your work, the paper must be emailed to the instructor (within WebCT) by the appointed time.

Discussion. Two substantive postings must be made **ON TWO DIFFERENT DAYS** during the period Sunday, March 1, and Wednesday, March 4.

Module #5: Understanding Family Literacy (March 8 through March 18)
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Readings. Read both of these articles carefully by March 14.

1. Auerbach, E. (1989). Toward a social-contextual approach to family literacy. *Harvard Educational Review*, 59(2), 165-181.
2. Auerbach, E. (1995). Deconstructing the discourse of strengths in family literacy. *Journal of Reading Behavior*, 27(4), 643-661.

Reaction Paper (must be emailed to the instructor by 6am on Sunday March 15!!!). Submit a one-or two-page reaction paper that takes one of the following forms:

1. A paper on one of the articles in which you use the following outline: (a) a brief (one or two paragraph) summary of the piece, (b) a critique of the piece, (answering the question, "How well did the author do what s/he set out to do), and (c) an evaluation of the piece's significance for adult literacy practice.

2. A paper in which you pick an important, thought-provoking, or troubling issue in one or both articles and discuss it critically.
3. A critical paper of your own design.

In writing the paper, you may feel free to write in the first-person (I, my, etc.) as long as that does not interfere with the rigor of your argument.

In order to receive full credit for your work, the paper must be emailed to the instructor (within WebCT) by the appointed time.

Discussion. Two substantive postings must be made **ON TWO DIFFERENT DAYS** during the period Sunday, March 15, and Wednesday, March 18.

Module #6: Critical Pedagogy for Literacy (March 22 through April 1)

Readings. Read both of these articles carefully by March 28.

1. Freire, P. (1970). The adult literacy process as cultural action for freedom and education and conscience, *Harvard Educational Review*, 40, 205-212.
2. Degener, S.(2001). Making sense of critical pedagogy in adult literacy education, In J. Comings, B. Garner, and C. Smith (Eds.), *Annual Review of Adult Learning and Literacy, Volume 2* (pp.26-62), Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.

Reaction Paper (must be emailed to the instructor by 6am on Sunday March 29!!!). Submit a one-or two-page reaction paper that takes one of the following forms:

1. A paper on one of the articles in which you use the following outline: (a) a brief (one or two paragraph) summary of the piece, (b) a critique of the piece, (answering the question, "How well did the author do what s/he set out to do), and (c) an evaluation of the piece's significance for adult literacy practice.
2. A paper in which you pick an important, thought-provoking, or troubling issue in one or both articles and discuss it critically.
3. A critical paper of your own design.

In writing the paper, you may feel free to write in the first-person (I, my, etc.) as long as that does not interfere with the rigor of your argument.

In order to receive full credit for your work, the paper must be emailed to the instructor (within WebCT) by the appointed time.

Discussion. Two substantive postings must be made **ON TWO DIFFERENT DAYS** during the period Sunday, March 29, and Wednesday, April 1. A separate forum will be created for each module.

Module #7: Women and Literacy (April 5 through April 15)

Readings. Read both of these articles carefully by April 11.

1. Ramdas, L. (1989). Women and literacy: A quest for justice. *Prospects*, 19(4), 519-530.
2. .Stromquist, N. (1990). Women and illiteracy: The interplay of gender subordination and poverty. *Comparative Education Review*, 34(1), 95-111.

Reaction Paper (must be emailed to the instructor by 6am on Sunday April 12!!!). Submit a one-or two-page reaction paper that takes one of the following forms:

1. A paper on one of the articles in which you use the following outline: (a) a brief (one or two paragraph) summary of the piece, (b) a critique of the piece, (answering the question, "How well did the author do what s/he set out to do), and (c) an evaluation of the piece's significance for adult literacy practice.
2. A paper in which you pick an important, thought-provoking, or troubling issue in one or both articles and discuss it critically.
3. A critical paper of your own design.

In writing the paper, you may feel free to write in the first-person (I, my, etc.) as long as that does not interfere with the rigor of your argument.

In order to receive full credit for your work, the paper must be emailed to the instructor (within WebCT) by the appointed time.

Discussion. Two substantive postings must be made **ON TWO DIFFERENT DAYS** during the period Sunday, April 12, and Wednesday, April 15.

Appendix B

Possible Individual Inquiry Projects (a total of 40 points required)

Project	Points
Write a 5-8 page review of a book or substantial government report related to adult literacy or ESL. Focus on the implicit or explicit definitions of literacy used by each author(s), the implicit or explicit beliefs held by each author(s) about the importance of literacy, and the practical import of each work for those engaged in literacy education.	15
Write a 4-6 page paper on adult literacy and causation. Nowhere is correlation more consistently confused with causation than in discussions of adult illiteracy and its correlates. Yet, any time we find that A is statistically correlated with B, at least four possibilities exist: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A causes B • B causes A • A and B are jointly caused by some unspecified C • None of the above; the correlation is spurious (perhaps due to measurement techniques used in determining adult literacy). Now look at the following "A-and-B pairs" of correlates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low literacy; B. Minority Group Membership • Low literacy; B. Crime • Low literacy; B. Poverty For each pair: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specify and logically defend one causal relationship for each of the three pairs (after carefully considering the other three explanations of correlation), and After defending the causal relationship, specify exactly what role adult literacy education might play in improving our society.	10
Write a 4-6 page paper addressing the question "Is literacy right or an obligation of a citizen in a democratic society?" Present a separate, cogent argument for each side of this debate. In a final section, tell me what you really think.	10
Visit an adult literacy, GED, or ESL program and write a report about it. The report should be two or three double-spaced pages in length and should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A description of the program you visited and what you did on your visit, • An assessment of the program in light of things we have read about and discussed in class, and • Your recommendations for how that program could be improved. 	15

<p>Write a 5-8 page paper exploring one of these themes (or other topics of interest):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is adult literacy and ESL education funded and administered • English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) programs and issues • Adult literacy and literacy education in one or more countries • Workplace literacy • Correctional education • Community-based literacy • Health literacy • The role of technology in adult literacy education 	15
<p>Interview an adult literacy or ESL teacher and write a report about it. The memo should be two or three double-spaced pages in length. Questions you might want to ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please describe your work and how you approach it. • How did you come to be a literacy/ESL educator? • What is this best thing about this job? • What is the worst thing about this job? 	15
<p>Write a two or three page review of adult literacy instructional materials or an adult literacy test.</p>	10
<p>Investigate the GED Testing program and write a two or three page report about it. What's on the tests? How widely used are these tests? How legitimate are they as an equivalent to High School graduation? What impact does it have on instruction?</p>	10
<p>Analyze the status of adult literacy in a country or state of your choosing (4-6 pages)</p>	10
<p>Service Learning Option: Become a literacy or ESL volunteer. Describe your training and instructional experiences in a reflective journal</p>	30