

**Literacies and Education**  
**Education 250**  
**Bryn Mawr College and Haverford College**  
**Fall 2007**

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One of the electives offered through the Education Program, this course is designed for students interesting in exploring and analyzing literacies and education in the multiple senses of both terms. The goal of this seminar is to create a community in which, through discussion, reading, writing, and field experiences, participants may explore the theory and practice of literacies and literacy education within formal and informal settings. The course aims to question and enrich rather than to reify and fix the definitions of and relationships between literacies and learning contexts.

More specifically, this course will examine the following conceptions of literacy and their interactions:

literacy as something people do, rather than something that they have;

literacy as social practice, rather than as mechanical skill;

literacy as political process, through its power to construct people as objects as well as subjects;

literacy as contextually grounded and meaningful -- acquired and learned through multiple personal, cultural, academic, social, and political contexts.

The first phase of the course begins where we are with a consideration of academic literacies within the context of “higher” education. The second phase asks, How did we get here?, as it considers identity and literacy, including emergent and school-age children’s literacies in and out of school. We also consider visual literacy as another sign system. Finally, we consider implications of these inquiries for teaching and educational policy. We will attend throughout to the question of how educators can work from an expansive understanding of literacy in a society that tends to privilege a narrower one.

All students will complete a field experience that meets the interrelated purposes of deepening our understandings of literacies and education and addressing the expressed needs of an education-related organization. The Praxis component of the course enables us to gain real life experiences with literacies in a range of contexts that will deepen our understanding of issues and implications in the field. We will learn both from our individual field experiences and from sharing this dimension of the course with colleagues in the class. We will also use our resources to address felt needs of educators in the field.

We are fortunate to be working with the Praxis Office:

Nell Anderson, Praxis Field Placement Coordinator, [nanderso@brynmawr.edu](mailto:nanderso@brynmawr.edu)

Paula Arboleda, [parboleda@brynmawr.edu](mailto:parboleda@brynmawr.edu)

The course is designed to meet criteria for the social justice requirements at both Bryn Mawr and Haverford. As set forth in the Haverford College Course Catalogue, course readings, assignments, and activities directly address "the structures, workings, and consequences of prejudice, inequality, and injustice" in relation to the system of schooling in the U.S. The course supports students in "critically examin(ing) in an ongoing way the hierarchies and relationships of power that shape our lives and how we shape them," as stated in the Bryn Mawr Social Justice Pilot Overview.

This course is limited to 25 students. Priority goes to students who are completing the teacher certification program or the minor in educational studies.

Students who think they may need accommodations in this course because of the impact of a learning difference are encouraged to meet with the course instructor privately early in the semester. Students who attend Bryn Mawr should also contact Stephanie Bell, Coordinator of Access Services, at [sbell@brynmawr.edu](mailto:sbell@brynmawr.edu) or 610-526-7351 in Canwyll House, as soon as possible, to verify their eligibility for reasonable accommodations. Haverford Students should contact Rick Webb, Coordinator, Office of Disabilities Services, at [rwebb@haverford.edu](mailto:rwebb@haverford.edu) or 610-896-1290. Early contact will help to avoid unnecessary inconvenience and delays.

### **Course Policies**

\* This course will involve students as critical readers and writers of texts, active participants in class discussions, and participants in other education-related settings. Your presence and active engagement are essential. Missing several classes or placement visits or conversely preparing and participating in an exemplary way may have an additional impact on your course grade.

\* I expect everyone to attend class consistently and punctually. If the need arises for you to miss a class, be late or leave early, please call or email me ahead of time if possible.

\* If there is a reason why you cannot complete a paper by the due date, speak to me about an extension BEFORE the date that the paper is due.

\* Course papers may be revised and re-submitted for a new grade based on the revision. You are welcome to consult with me on the revision process.

\* In all written assignments, please take care to edit and proofread your work so that needless errors do not distract readers from the strength of your thinking. Pages should be numbered. Be sure to cite sources appropriately.

### **Assigned Texts (available in the Bryn Mawr Bookstore and on reserve at Canaday)**

Dozier, Johnston and Rogers, *Critical Literacy, Critical Teaching: Tools for Preparing Responsive Teachers*

Strickland and Alvermann, *Bridging the Literacy Achievement Gap Grades 4 - 12*

Zamel & Spack, *Negotiating Academic Literacies*

Bulkpack of selected readings (available for purchase in Bettws-Y-Coed)

## **Assignments**

### **IMPORTANT NOTES:**

**\*We will discuss all assignments more specifically in class.**

**\*ALL course writings referring to your field placements must use pseudonyms.**

### **Field Notes**

After each field visit and using pseudonyms, jot down field notes. The content of your notes will differ according to your field sites. Use these guidelines if helpful:

(1) Describe an interaction (teacher-student or student-student) you observed/participated in today. Think about what conditions helped support this interaction. (2) What was a key topic or issue addressed in class today? (3) What was something that students learned from today? (You may choose to focus on one or several students here.) (4) What theory/theories of literacy seemed to be at work? Draw on your field experiences to contribute to class discussions and your evolving understandings of theory-practice relationships. You should incorporate direct quotations, vignettes, and references to your experiences into as many forums as possible.

### **Literacy Workbook**

This is a collection of pieces each accompanied by a 3-5 page analysis in which you discuss, making use of course readings and activities, what you learned about literacies from the process of completing the assignment. Over the course of the semester you will add to the workbook according to your interests and life. The contents will include the following pieces, each with an accompanying reflection:

- A passage from one of our readings and your response
- Evoke a landscape, using media of your choice; in your analysis, consider your location in this communicative field as a context for your creative process

*One* of the following:

- \* A paper, lab report, or other written piece you have created for another course with an analysis of the process of creating it
- \* Field notes from three field visits (written as soon after the visit as possible) and analysis

### **Expanded Definition /Literacy Autobiography (8-10 pages)**

This paper has three components that you will interweave to create the whole:

(1) Clarify and articulate a definition of literacy or literacies. Your definition will probably change as we move through the course, but drawing on course readings and discussions as well as your own experiences, frame your autobiographical episodes (below) with whatever clear and grounded definition of literacy you have at the time of writing. Here's one approach: Read several dictionary definitions of the word, placing one or more of these at the top of a page. Then consider what's valuable in these definitions and what kinds of expansion are needed. With reference to experience, reading, and class work, construct this expanded, revised definition so that it will serve as an analytic tool for your autobiographical literacy episodes.

(2) Select two ‘literacy episodes’ that you see as particularly significant in your own literacy autobiography. One of these should be an in-school episode, the other an out-of-school episode. Select and construct these in dynamic relation to your expanded definition of literacy/literacies; that is, you should be able to use these episodes to instantiate, interrogate and perhaps revise your definition. Tell the episodes fully, providing details and specific descriptions.

(3) Consider how your expanded definition illuminates your slices of literacy autobiography and/or how your literacy episodes illustrate/challenge/complicate your expanded definition. For example, in uncovering and telling your stories, how are the in and out of school episodes related? Do these episodes suggest a coherent analytic framework, or do they illuminate through contradiction? What struggles have taken place among the personal, cultural, and academic sources of your literacies?

Use whatever medium/media you deem appropriate. In addition to words, you may want to consider using photographs, drawings or paintings, charts, diagrams, hypertext, etc., as well.

### **Final Project**

Using your field experiences as a guide, select one of the following options:

- 1) write a field-based research paper in which you analyze a key literacies-related issue at your site;
- 2) create a curriculum unit (a teaching plan for a 4 - 5 week study of something) applicable to your site and informed by your knowledge of literacies theory and practices;
- 3) Write a proposal for a program that would address issues in evidence at your field site, again drawing on your knowledge of literacies.

### **Class Meetings and Assignments (subject to revision)**

#### **I. ACADEMIC LITERACIES: DEFINITIONS AND DILEMMAS**

##### **Week One: Sept. 4, Sept. 6**

Tuesday:

Course Overview/Introduction

Thursday:

Reading due:

Freire, “The Importance of the Act of Reading”

Rose, *Lives on the Boundary*, chap. 1

##### **Week Two: Sept. 11, Sept. 13**

Tuesday:

Reading due:

Gee and Delpit, *Negotiating Academic Literacies*

Thursday:

Reading due:

Lu and Cliff, *Negotiating Academic Literacies*

**Week Three: Sept. 18, Sept. 20**

Tuesday:

Reading due:

Pratt, *Negotiating Academic Literacies*

Thursday:

Writing due:

Literacy Workbook: A passage from one of our readings and your response

Praxis Orientation

**Week Four: Sept. 25, Sept. 27**

Tuesday:

Reading due:

Shen and Spack in *Negotiating Academic Literacies*

Thursday:

Reading due:

Widdowson and Zamel in *Negotiating Academic Literacies*

**II. LITERACIES AND IDENTITIES: GROWING UP IN AND OUT OF SCHOOL**

**Week Five: Oct. 2, Oct. 4**

Tuesday:

Reading due:

Schultz & Hull and Heath (Bulkpack)

Thursday:

Reading due:

Martens and Compton-Lily (BP)

**Week Six: Oct. 9, Oct. 11**

Tuesday:

Reading due:

Honig and Schoenbach et. al (BP)

Thursday:

Reading due:

Levine and Nielsen (BP)

Writing due:

Literacy Workbook: Landscape evocation and process paper

**Fall Break: Oct. 16 & 18. Enjoy**

**Week Seven: Oct. 23, Oct. 25**

Tuesday:

Reading due:

*Critical Literacy, Critical Teaching*, Part I chaps. 2 & 3 and Part II, chaps. ??

Thursday:

Reading due:

*Critical Literacy, Critical Teaching*, Part II, chaps. ??

**Week Eight: Oct. 30, Nov. 1**

Tuesday:

Reading due:

Strickland & Alvermann and Jimenez, *Bridging the Literacy Achievement Gap*

Thursday:

Reading due:

Hicks and Wigfield, *Bridging the Literacy Achievement Gap*  
Gee (BP)

**Week Nine: Nov. 6, Nov. 8**

Tuesday:

Reading due:

Lee, *Bridging the Literacy Achievement Gap*  
Fecho and Kohl (BP)

Thursday:

Writing due:

Expanded definition/literacy autobiography

### **III. IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE**

**Week Ten: Nov. 13, Nov. 15**

Tuesday:

Reading due:

Christensen, selections (BP)

Thursday:

Reading due:

*Bridging the Literacy Achievement Gap*, selections from Part II

**Week Eleven: Nov. 20**

Tuesday:

Reading due:

Adolescent literature (text TBA)

Thursday:

Reading due:

Adolescent literature (text TBA)

**Nov. 22: Thanksgiving!**

**Week Twelve: Nov. 27, Nov. 29**

Tuesday:

Reading due:

Adolescent literature (text TBA)

Thursday:

Reading due:

*Bridging the Literacy Achievement Gap*, selections from Part II

**Week Thirteen: Dec. 4, Dec. 6**

Tuesday:

Praxis panel on field/research learnings

Thursday:

Praxis panel on field/research learnings

Writing due:

Literacy Workbook: Piece from another course plus analytic paper OR field notes from three visits plus analytic paper

**Week Fourteen: Dec. 11, Dec. 13**

Tuesday:

Praxis panel on field/research learnings

Thursday:

Praxis panel on field/research learnings

FINAL PROJECT DUE AT END OF EXAM PERIOD.