

Education 250:  
**Literacies and Education**  
Haverford College  
Fall 2009

**Instructor:** Barbara L. Hall

**Course Meetings:** Wednesdays from 1:30 – 4:00 p.m. in Sharpless 410

**Office:** Founders 28

**Office Hours:** Wednesdays from 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. and by appointment

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All of these e-mail addresses funnel to a single account, so they all work and they all get to me equally quickly.

## **Course Overview:**

This course is an elective offered through the Education Program. It is designed for students who are interested in exploring and analyzing literacies and education in multiple senses of both terms. The course seeks to question and enrich the relationships of literacies to learning contexts, and will also help prepare students to become educators who are able to foster such questioning and enrichment in others' learning. To this end, we will pay particular attention to the meanings of academic literacy, its potential and its limitations. Together we will create a learning community in which, through collaboration, study, and field experiences, participants may more deeply understand the interplay of literacies and literacy education within formal and informal settings and across diverse communities.

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

- Literacy as something people do, rather than something they have;
- Literacy as social and skilled practice, rather than as mechanical skill;
- Literacy as political process;
- Literacy as contextually grounded and meaningful -- acquired and learned through multiple personal, cultural, academic, social, and political contexts.

Literacies in Education is limited to 25 students. Priority goes to students who are completing the options available through the Bryn Mawr-Haverford Education Program (the Teacher Certification Program and the minor in Educational Studies). A required Praxis 1 field placement helps students explore dimensions of literacy education when it is expansively defined.

## Learning Goals for Students:

Within the context of the course as described above, I have the following learning goals for students. Students will:

- Grapple in significant ways with the complexities inherent in greatly expanding the traditional definition of literacy beyond simply “the ability to read and write” to include various literacies/competencies and critical perspectives;
- Enrich their current understandings of the ways in which literacies in particular, and teaching and learning more generally, are always enacted within and affected by meaningful social, cultural, political, linguistic, and personal/individual contexts;
- Interrogate possible relationships between literacies and social justice, and the possibilities that arise from curriculum and pedagogy in enacting those relationships;
- Deepen their abilities to engage with and enhance the experiences of students from a diverse range of backgrounds, including those of variously positioned English Language Learners (ELLs) in the United States
- Explore and enact multiple relationships between educational theory and practice by integrating class readings, discussions, projects, and individual writing with participant observation in their field placement settings.

## Course Policies:

- This course will involve students as critical readers and writers of texts, active participants in class discussions, and participants in field settings and others’ learning. ***Thus, 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 inform me about this well ahead of time. Since this is not the kind of course in which students can just “get the notes” from a classmate and expect to stay current, I also very strongly suggest that you e-mail or meet with me to check in about what you have missed. In addition, I will begin each class each day with announcements; if you arrive late, it is your responsibility to check in with me for a recap.
- Unless you have a serious emergency that you have discussed with me in advance, all cell phones are to be turned off at the beginning of every class. No text messaging or internet use is permitted during class.

- If there is a reason why you cannot complete a paper by the due date, you **MUST** speak to me about an extension **BEFORE** the date that the paper is due. Late papers for which students have not sought an extension before the due date will be marked down by one-third of a point for each day late (i.e., a 3.7 becomes a 3.3).
- Course papers may be revised and re-submitted once for a new grade based on the revision, but students who choose this option **MUST** consult with me first about the revision process. Please also remember the resources of the Writing Centers on each campus. I suggest you use them often!
- In all written assignments, please take care to print out, edit and proofread your work carefully before submitting it so that needless errors do not distract readers from the strength of your thinking. All papers should have titles and should be stapled together before submission. Pages should be numbered. Be sure to cite sources appropriately in APA, MLA or Chicago citation style as well.
- I expect students to communicate appropriately with me throughout the semester regarding your learning, your growth as readers and writers, and other matters if the need arises.
- Students who think they may need accommodations in this course because of the impact of a learning difference or disability 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 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.
- Since this is a Praxis 1 course, you will complete a field placement in an educational setting. My Education Program colleagues and I, as well as the Praxis office will help you with every step of this process, from identifying the classroom, to giving you travel directions, to reimbursing you for train tickets or providing you with mileage reimbursement if you drive, to responding if anything unwelcome should happen. ***Please keep in touch with me if any problems associated with this fieldwork occur.*** We will talk in class about general guidelines for appropriate behavior and participation in your field placement setting. At the end of your placement, we request that each student write a thank you note to the teacher(s) with whom you have been working. All course writings referring to your field placement **must use pseudonyms**.

## Course Materials:

Please bring each day's readings to class with you so that you can use them in our discussions. It may be useful to bring the previous week's readings to class as well to facilitate additional connections across the materials. The following books are available in the Haverford Bookstore, and on reserve at Magill library. Our other readings are available on our Blackboard site under Course Documents.

Delpit, L.D. (2006) *Other People's Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom*. Revised Edition. New York: New Press.

North, C.E. (2009) *Teaching for Social Justice?: Voices from the Front Lines*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.

Santa Ana, O. (2004) *Tongue-Tied: The Lives of Multilingual Children in Public Education*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

## Course Assignments

We will discuss all assignments more specifically in class. All are subject to modification based on student interest and course evolution.

### 1. Fieldnotes (10% of course grade)

After each field visit and using pseudonyms, jot down field notes. You can do this either by hand in a notebook or as a Word Document on a computer, but in either case you should do it as soon as possible after the visit. You should keep your fieldnotes together and organized in some manner.

The content of your notes will differ according to your field sites and that day's experienced. Please use the following format as a structure for each visit's entry:

1. **What** – a 1-2 paragraph description of critical events, activities, observations
2. **So What?** – a 1-2 paragraph analysis of the meaning and implications of your observations/experiences.
3. **Now What?** -- a 1-2 paragraph exploration of ideas, questions, and action steps flowing from the above.

After you have completed half of your allotted visits, and then again at the end of the semester, please hand your compiled field notes in to me for comments. Please attach a 1-2 page memo detailing the following:

1. A list of the dates/hours/activities of participation at your field site
2. Key events/observations that stand out as important to you

3. A brief description of the themes that emerge across the notes
4. Questions emerging from these notes that you will carry forward into additional visits to the setting, or future study, work, activism, etc.

## 2. Literacy/ies Reflection

(15 % of course grade)

For this paper, you will reflect on a paper, lab report, or other written piece you have created for another course. Please turn in the paper you have selected to analyze, and attach to it a 4-6 page ***description and analysis*** of the process of creating it as well as the implications and questions that follow for your studies of literacies and education. Use the readings, perspectives, experiences and ideas you have learned in this class in your analysis, and additional materials if/as needed.

## 3. Expanded Definition /Literacy Autobiography

(20% of course grade)

This 8-10 paper has four components that you will interweave to create the whole:

- First, articulate and clarify a definition of literacy or literacies. While that definition will probably change as we move through the course, you should use whatever clear and grounded definition of literacy you have at the time of writing. ***Making reference to your life experience, our readings, your placements, and other class work***, construct your definition in such a way that it can serve as an analytic tool for the autobiographical literacy episodes that follow (see below).
- Second, 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. Tell the episodes fully, providing details and specific descriptions. In addition to words, you may want to consider using photographs, drawings or paintings, charts, diagrams, etc., as well. Select and construct these episodes in dynamic relation to the definition you offer in this paper of literacy/literacies – i.e., you should use these episodes to instantiate, interrogate and perhaps revise your definition.
- Third, consider how your definition of literacy or literacies illuminates your “literacy autobiography” and/or how the literacy episodes you describe illustrate/challenge/complicate your 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 or synergies (or both!) have taken place among the personal, cultural, and academic sources of your literacy/ies?
- Last, explore the implications of your definition, your “literacy autobiography”, and the analyses you develop in this paper for practicing educators. What should educators learn from what you have said here?

## 4. Literature Project

(20% of course grade: 10% for group paper and 10% for individual paper)

Working with a small group, you will be responsible for creating, presenting, and leading for our class an activity from a curriculum unit (3-4 weeks of instructional planning) focused on a work of children's or young adult literature. You will have 30 minutes of classtime in which to present your curriculum, lead your activity, and answer questions from the group about it. In addition, two papers are at the heart of this project: a group-written rationale for the way you have mapped out your instructional unit and an individual reflection on your learning from the project. We will make groups, determine books, and schedule presentations/activity sessions in class.

### Steps in completing the project:

1. Collaborate with your group members in choosing a book and then in deciding what age group/grade and classroom for which you will plan your curriculum.
2. Work together to write a clear plan for the unit that will focus on this book for your chosen age group/grade and classroom. A unit usually involves about 3-4 weeks of instructional focus (classtime, activities, etc.) Use the framework of "Before reading, During reading, and After reading" to structure the unit. You do not need to plan the details of each class to be held during this unit, but you should find a way to describe how you will structure the teaching and learning across the unit. ***Be sure to plan the instruction in relationship with the key points about and perspectives on literacies you have selected as your focus; you will (see below) attach a rationale for these choices to your written curriculum.***
3. Write a rationale for the way you planned your unit, focusing ***very clearly and specifically*** on explaining the ways in which your instructional approach utilizes/interrogates/deepens the points or perspectives on literacies you have selected from our class readings and discussions. Your references to our readings and discussions should be explicit and direct. What choices did you make here regarding this instructional approach and why? How do you see this approach coming to life in the unit you have planned? The written plan for your unit and the group-written rationale are due in class on the day you present.
4. You will then have 30 minutes of classtime in which to present your curriculum, lead a brief activity from it, and take questions from the group about your instructional focus and planned curriculum.
5. One week after you present, turn in a 3-5 page reflection on what you learned from this project about literacies, including and most specifically what you learned from planning and presenting a unit of instruction utilizing ideas about what literacies are, can, and should (in your opinion) be.

## 5. Final Project

(25% of course grade)

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

1. Write a field-based research paper (8-10 pages) in which you identify, describe in as much detail as you can, and then carefully analyze a key literacies-related issue at your site (using the readings, perspectives, experiences and ideas you have learned in this class and additional research materials as needed).
2. Create a curriculum unit (a teaching plan for a 4 - 5 week study of something) that is applicable to your field placement site and is thoughtfully informed by your knowledge of literacies theory and practices from this class. Attach a 6-8 page paper in which you clearly explain BOTH how this curriculum is applicable to your site AND how this curriculum reflects your knowledge of literacies theory and practices. Use the readings, perspectives, experiences and ideas you have learned in this class and additional research materials if/as needed.
3. Write a 8-10 page proposal for a program of some kind that would address issues in evidence at your field site, again drawing on your knowledge of literacies. Clearly explain BOTH how this program addresses issues in evidence at your site AND how this curriculum reflects your knowledge of literacies theory and practices. Use the readings, perspectives, experiences and ideas you have learned in this class and additional research materials if/as needed.

### Grading Summary:

Fieldnotes	10%
Literacy/ies Reflection	15%
Literacy/ies Autobiography	20%
Literature Project	20% (10% group paper; 10% individual paper)
Final Project	25%
Attendance and Participation	10%
Total:	100%

**Course Schedule:** All assignments are due on the day they are listed. This schedule should be considered tentative; given a variety of factors, including student interest, we may make changes as we go along. At the end of each class, I will make announcements pertaining to preparation (including readings, questions/ideas to consider, etc.) for the following week's seminar.

## Part 1:

### Week 1 (9/2): Orienting to the course and to the class community

Distribute syllabus, explain requirements, begin getting to know one another, start defining the subject of our collective academic inquiry for the semester

### Week 2 (9/9): What is Literacy?/What are Literacies?

Reading due:

1. Allington, R.L. (2006). "Reading Lessons and Federal Policy Making: An Overview and Introduction to the Special Issue". *The Elementary School Journal*, Volume 107, No. 1.
2. Bohannon, L. (1966). "Shakespeare in the Bush". *Natural History*, August-September.
3. Freire, P. (1983). "The Importance of the Act of Reading". *Journal of Education*, Vol. 165, No. 1, Pp. 5-11.
4. Gee, J.P. (1987). "What is Literacy?"
5. Hull, G. and K. Schultz. (2001). "Literacy and Learning Outside of School: A Review of Theory and Research." *Review of Educational Research*. Winter 2001, Vol. 71, No. 4, pp. 575-611.

### Week 3 (9/16): Ways of learning how to read and write

Reading due:

1. Heath, S.B. (1982). "What No Bedtime Story Means". *Language in Society*. Vol. 11, No. 2. April.
2. Pruisner, P. (2009). "Moving Beyond No Child Left Behind with the Merged Model for Reading Instruction". *TechTrends* Vol. 53, No. 2. March/April.
3. Rich, M. "A New Assignment: Pick Books You Like". *The New York Times*. August 30, 2009.
4. Schoenbach, R., C. Greenleaf, C. Cziko, and L. Hurwitz. (1999). "Acquiring Cognitive Tools for Reading". In *Reading for Understanding: A Guide to Improving Reading in Middle and High School Classrooms*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
5. Valdes, G. "English con Salsa" in Tongue-Tied.
6. Ward, W. (2003). "Learning to Read and Write in the Waldorf Schools". William Ward and SteinerBooks.

**Week 4 (9/23): Functional Literacy (1)**

Reading due:

1. North, Introduction and Part 1
2. Delpit, Pages xxii – 69

**Week 5 (9/30): Functional Literacy (2)**

Reading due:

1. Santa Ana, Introduction and Parts 1 and 2.
2. Delpit, Pages 152-166.
3. Levine, M. (2002). Ways with Words: Our Language System. In A Mind at a Time. New York: Simon & Schuster.

**Week 6 (10/7): Critical Literacy**

Reading due:

1. Fecho, B. “Crossing Boundaries of Race in a Critical Literacy Classroom”.
2. North, Part 2.
3. Santa Ana, Part 6.

**Literacy/ies Reflection due Friday 10/9 at noon outside Founders 28**

**No class on 10/14: Fall Break**

**Week 7 (10/21):**

**Focus on Languages, Literacies, and English Language Learners (ELLs) in Schools in the US**

Reading due:

1. Santa Ana, Parts 3 and 5
2. Bilingual Education

**Week 8 (10/28):**

**Focus on Lessons from Home and Abroad: Literacies in Other Cultures and Communities**

Reading due:

3. Delpit, Part 2.
4. Literacy in Japan
5. International comparison tests
6. Santa Ana, Part 4

**Literacy/ies Autobiography Paper is due on Friday, 10/30 at noon outside Founders 28**

**Week 9 (11/4): Other Literacies?: Lenses for Thinking about Relational, Democratic, Technological, and Visual Literacies**

Introduce Literature Project in class

Reading due:

1. Gee, “Semiotic Demands: Is Playing Video Games a “Waste of Time”?”
2. North, parts 3 and 4.

**Week 10 (11/11):**

Reading due: TBA

**Week 11 (11/18):**

Reading due: TBA

**Week 12 (11/25): Literature Projects**

Reading due:

Written descriptions of your instructional units and group-written rationales are due in class

**Week 13 (12/2): Praxis Panels**

Reading due:

TBA

**Week 14 (12/9): What We Have Learned and How**

Reading due:

1. Delpit, Pages 167-183.
2. North, Part 5