

EDUC 792C
Understanding Research in Language, Literacy, and Culture

Fall 2003
Wednesday
4:00 – 6:30 p.m.
Furcolo 225

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Office Hours: Wednesday 2-4 and by
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Course Overview and Objectives:

The LLC faculty has created this course to apprentice doctoral students to the literacy practices of reading and writing research at the intersection of the study of Language, Literacy, and Culture. The course is intended to support students' developing research questions and interests across these areas. This course is also designed to encourage doctoral students to begin to locate, review, and organize research literature to align with their scholarly interests. To accomplish this the goals of the course center on students developing the following abilities:

- Making distinctions between a range of approaches to research in the social sciences (e.g. positivist, interpretive, and critical);
- Recognition of how different approaches to research have influenced research policy and practice in the area of access to literacy for all students;
- Learning to read and critique various scholarly genres (e.g. conceptual pieces, empirical research, reviews of the literature);
- Using state-of-the-art library research tools and resources to explore a self-selected topic in the field of Language, Literacy, and Culture (e.g. library databases such as ERIC, Proquest, OVID)
- Developing a system for planning, conducting, organizing, and recording your evolving research interests (e.g. Endnote)
- Synthesizing research in preparation for a literature review

Course Design:

To meet the above goals, this course is divided into four sections. In Part I (weeks 1 – 3) and Part II (weeks 4 – 5) we will begin by reading conceptual pieces that describe the different theoretical approaches to understanding the nature of knowledge or what is referred to as “epistemology.” In Part I we will explore the concept of paradigm shifts within research on education and more specifically in Part II we will read articles that outline the *positivist*, *interpretive*, and *critical* approaches to exploring questions in the field.

In Part III (weeks 6 – 11) we will read articles from relevant handbooks and journals to explore the historical and contemporary landscape of educational research as it

relates to student diversity. In this part of the course we will read both conceptual and empirical research in order to understand how various paradigms (e.g. positivist, interpretive, critical) have shaped the way researchers think and write about the intersection between language, literacy, and culture. The latter part of this review will focus on the issue of *access to literacy* through the reading of literature reviews and empirical studies. Students in the class will revisit particular epistemological themes by collaboratively map the field of research as it relates to the topic of access.

In Part IV (weeks 12 – 14) students will assemble an annotated bibliography of a self-selected research topic and share their understanding of that topic with the class. This presentation will provide other participants with the opportunity to view a “conceptual map” of a selected topic, tips on how to conduct library research, and insights into ways of connecting theoretical and empirical work within their future research.

Prior to beginning the class, I will assemble and share an agenda for each class session. In order to make the best use of time and respect the life schedules of class members, participants are urged to be present and ready to begin class on time. In order to respect individual learning needs, I urge you to consult with me during the first two weeks of class so that we may make appropriate arrangements as to physical or time adjustments to the course tasks.

Prerequisites:

This course is intended for new doctoral students in LLC. The design of the course is based on two fundamental assumptions regarding new students in the program. First, we assume that participants bring with them a wealth of valuable insights into issues regarding language, literacy, and culture derived from life and professional experiences. It is also assumed that participants are prepared to work collaboratively across a variety of differences in a committed manner to unpack accepted beliefs regarding language, literacy, and culture as well as to understand and “push back” on theories we encounter over the semester. It is not assumed, however, that everyone in the class has had the same opportunities to acquire the ability to use language in the ways that educational researchers in the field of LLC do (e.g. read, write, and discuss theoretical and empirical points). Rather, the goal of this course is for students to critically acquire these abilities.

Course schedule (see attached)

Required texts:

- A course packet containing all readings will be available at Campus Design and Copy in the Student Union Building (for information about hours contact: cdcopy@stuaf.umass.edu).

Recommended texts:

(These books provide excellent references for theoretical underpinnings of research in language, literacy, and culture.)

- Pennycook, A. (2001). *Critical applied linguistics*. Mahwah, NJ: LEA.
- Schwandt, T. A. (2001). *Dictionary of qualitative inquiry* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.

Requirements:

Participation (25%): You are expected to attend all class sessions and contribute actively to discussions. This grade will be based on class attendance and the quality of assigned class work. If you must miss a session please contact someone in the seminar who can bring you up to speed.

Reading logs and related assignments (25%): Logs should be completed before class meetings. They should be typed, labeled with the number of the week they are due (Reading Log Week 2), and contain complete APA references. I will collect and respond to these logs weekly.

The purpose of this assignment is to support you in actively engaging with the authors of the readings, in keeping track of the ideas you discover, and prepare you to participate in the class discussion. Log entries should include:

- Your name and the week assigned
- A full APA reference
- Notes regarding the contents of the readings
- Frequently encountered terms
- Interesting/thought provoking/troubling quotations
- Connections to your work
- Critical comments
- Insights into your own reading strategies
- Responses to specific tasks indicated the prior week

Your grade for the requirement will be based on the degree to which you actively engage in a dialogue with the authors and with yourself as a learner.

Journal Review and Presentation (25%): The purpose of this assignment is to help you become familiar with one of the major research journals in the field and to share your insights with other members of the seminar. For this assignment you are required to choose one journal (see list attached) and to review the contents for the past five years. You will not need to read all the articles in the journal to complete this task. Rather, you may skim the text and use the tables of contents to construct a one-to-two page informational handout for our class. This handout should summarize what you found in

your journal in terms of the types of articles, their themes and topics, and the approaches to research they represent.

Each presentation should be no more than 30 minutes long. You may complete this individually or with one or two partners. I will grade these reviews according to the degree to which they reflect analysis and not simply synopsis. (Guidelines and examples will be given in class to make this distinction).

Journals most directly related to language, literacy, & culture

Annual Review of Applied Linguistics

Bilingual Research Journal

Discourse and Society

English Education

Foreign Language Annals

JAC: A Journal of Composition Theory

Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy

Journal of Basic Writing

Journal of Literacy Research (formerly Journal of Reading Behavior)

Journal of Multilingual/Multicultural Development

Language and Society

Language Arts

Linguistics and Education

Race, Ethnicity, and Education

Reading Research Quarterly

Research in the Teaching of English

Second Language Writing

TESOL Quarterly

The Reading Teacher

Written Communication

Additional journals which may include research on language, literacy, and culture

American Educational Research Journal

Anthropology and Education Quarterly

Educational Researcher

Equity and Excellence in Education

Harvard Educational Review

International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education

Journal of Education

Review of Educational Research

Teachers College Record

Annotated bibliography and presentation (25%): The purpose of this assignment is to support you in identifying and conducting library research related to a specific area of interest in the field of language, literacy, and culture. For this assignment you need to:

- Select a topic

- Narrow your topic and provide a one-page interim update on your library research
- Present this area of research to the seminar in an organized, informative manner accompanied by a concise handout
- Provide the other participants with an annotated bibliography with a minimum of 20 references
- Share/demonstrate your process of conducting and organizing your search
- Share/describe how your reading in this area connects with your future research goals

Several class sessions will be dedicated to provide examples of this project.

Grading:

You may select either a Pass/Fail or a letter grade. Please let me know by the second class session which you prefer. I strongly discourage students from taking an incomplete except in cases of dire emergency. It is your responsibility to complete the appropriate paperwork and assigned work as governed by university policy.