George Mason University  
Advanced Studies In Teaching and Learning  
College of Education and Human Development  
Special Topics in Literacy:  
Integrating Children’s Literature into Early Childhood Classrooms  
3 Credits

Instructor:  
Gail V. Ritchie, MEd., NBCT  

Phone:  
Office – 703.208.7753 (Leis Instructional Center)  
Home – 703.866.2281  

FAX:  
703.698.7997  

E-Mail:  
gail.ritchie@fcps.edu  
OR  
gritchie@gmu.edu

Prerequisite:  
Admission to the Early Childhood specialization or permission of the program coordinator

Course Description:  
This course provides a research-based foundation for integrating children’s literature into the early childhood curriculum.

Course Outcomes:  
Students will:  
1. Review the history of children’s literature.  
2. Appreciate and utilize both the aesthetic and efferent aspects of literature.  
3. Apply their understanding of the developmental stages of children’s growth and note how appropriate book selection/experiences relate to that growth.  
4. Develop criteria for selecting bias-free, diversity-respectful books for presentation to young children.  
5. Gain a more precise understanding of themselves as readers as they read and respond to genres of children’s literature most appropriate for children in the early childhood years.  
6. Demonstrate familiarity with selected and noteworthy authors/illustrators of children’s books.  
7. Suggest learning activities and strategies that encourage children’s responses to literature.  
8. Become familiar with internet resources devoted to children’s literature and related topics.  
9. Investigate the uses of technology to enhance assignments and course work.  
10. Model reading and writing enthusiastically as valued life-long activities.

Readings:
**Required Text:**


**Recommended Text:**


**Required Articles:**


**Optional, Related Reading:**


*Booklinks: Connecting books, libraries, and classrooms.* [Monthly publication by American Library Association based on topics and themes].


**Electronic Requirements:**

Students must have access to email and the internet, either at home, work or GMU campus. GMU provides students with free email accounts which must be accessed for information sent from the university or the Graduate School of Education. Go to [http://mason.gmu.edu/](http://mason.gmu.edu/) for information on accessing email.

After introductory training (during class meeting 2 or 3), students will also be expected to access Blackboard prior to every class session to download agendas and other pertinent course documents. Blackboard can be accessed by going to [http://blackboard.gmu.edu](http://blackboard.gmu.edu).

**George Mason University Honor Code:**

To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of George Mason University and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the members of George Mason University, have set forth the following code of honor. Any individual who is caught in the act of cheating, attempting to cheat, plagiarizing, or stealing will be brought forth before a council of their peers. In the event that the individual is found guilty, he or she will be punished accordingly. For further information, please refer to the University Catalog or Website at [www.gmu.edu](http://www.gmu.edu). Code in the University catalog can be found online at [http://www.gmu.edu/facstaff/handbook/aD.html](http://www.gmu.edu/facstaff/handbook/aD.html).

**George Mason University Policy on Disabilities:**

This syllabus is subject to change based on the needs of the class. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in the series, programs, or activities of all State and local Governments. Under ADA a disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity such as: learning, working, walking, speaking, hearing, breathing, and/or
taking care of oneself. If a student has a disability and needs course adaptations or accommodations because of that disability, it must be established with the faculty, in writing, at the beginning of the semester so arrangements can be made. Please call the Disability Resource Center for required documentation (703-993-2474). The Disability Resource Center website is at http://www.gmu.edu/student/drc/

Nature of Course Delivery

The class will be structured around discussion and small group activities; it is critical for you to keep up with the readings and to participate in class. Instructor and student generated questions related to course readings and assignments/projects will often be the focus of group discussions. Be prepared to discuss the content of the text and its relation to your teaching experiences, course assignments, and projects and to ask questions for clarification, exploration, or to promote discussion. The instructor will use a lecture methodology periodically for brief periods of time. Students will also be engaged in activities designed to encourage application of materials from the readings and discussions to the early childhood classroom. An electronic discussion that students participate in outside of class is an additional course delivery mechanism.

General Requirements

1. Class attendance is both important and required. If, due to an emergency, you will not be in class, you must contact the instructor via phone or email. Students with more than two absences may drop a letter grade or lose course credit.
2. It is expected that assignments will be turned in on time (the beginning of the class in which they are due). However, it is recognized that students occasionally have serious problems that prevent work completion. If such a dilemma arises, please speak to the instructor in a timely fashion.
3. The completion of all readings assigned for the course is assumed. Because the class will be structured around discussion and small group activities, it is critical for you to keep up with the readings and to participate in class.
4. According to university policy, all beepers and cell phones should be turned off before class begins.

Specific Course Requirements:

1. Participation in class discussions and activities. The completion of all readings assigned for the course is assumed. Because the class will be structured around discussion and small group activities pertaining to incorporating children’s literature into early childhood classrooms, it is imperative that you keep up with the readings and participate in class. Class participation is worth 10% of the final grade.

2. Providing examples of children’s literature. Each week, students will be expected to bring examples of children’s literature that relate to the topic(s) of discussion. Students will share their selections in small and large group discussions. Students will
take turns (via a sign-up) compiling bibliographic information for the books shared each week. **Children’s literature examples is worth 10% of the final grade.**

3. **Response Journal/Log.** Students are expected to maintain a journal/log, in which you are to respond to selected course readings (your choice). This includes both the required text and article readings AND various genres of children’s literature. Please begin each entry by recording the *complete bibliographic information* for the book, chapter, or article at the top of the page.

In the case of *literary works*, your response may include comments about the work’s characters, plot, illustrations, style, theme(s), perspective on life and living, the memories and feelings the work evokes, etc. In responding to the books, keep in mind that I am interested in *your* response. What was it about the work that led you to react the way you did? Once you have *personally* responded to the literature, please spend some time trying to anticipate or predict the responses of children and/or discussing ways the book can be used to teach a particular subject or content area.

In responding to the *chapters and articles*, please record your reactions to a few of the ideas you find interesting and/or provocative. You may wish to discuss how the ideas in the chapters/articles correspond or conflict with previous reading, with your experiences with children, or in the classroom, etc. Simply record the idea and then detail your reaction to it. Responses to chapters and articles may also include questions that the chapters/articles raise for you.

You will be expected to bring your response journal to each class session and share passages of your choice during small and large group discussions. **Weekly entries in the Response Journal/Log are worth 10% of the final grade.**

3. Students will participate in electronic discussions related to class topics through the use of GSE’s conferencing system, Blackboard. **Participation in the Blackboard electronic discussions is worth 10% of the final grade.**

4. **Exploring Multiple Literacies.** Students will develop a WebQuest or an “Author Website Scavenger Hunt” for an author of their choice. Examples will be provided in class. **The Multiple Literacies Project is worth 10% of the final grade.**

5. **Group Project.** Students will sign up to work in groups of 3. Each group will choose a noteworthy author/illustrator and develop curricular ties for his/her body of work. Specific criteria for this project will be co-constructed by the instructor and course participants based on student populations (ages, grades, required curriculum) with whom the course participants currently work. **The Group Project is worth 20% of the final grade.**

6. **Integrated Project.** Each student will work individually to create and present an integrated author study/conceptual unit of study. Students will choose a noteworthy
author/illustrator and design a social studies or science unit of study that incorporates works by that author that will help students acquire the curricular concepts in a meaningful, relevant way. The Integrated Project is worth 30% of the final grade.

Evaluation:

Class Participation Assessment 10%

Class participation will be evaluated using the following rating scale:
A (9-10) Excellent – Regularly asks questions or makes observations that indicate reflection and analysis appropriate to the topic. Participates actively in small group activities. Shares reflections on readings and class discussions.
B (7-8) Competent—Occasionally asks questions or makes observations that indicate reflection and analysis appropriate to the topic. Participates in small group activities. Shares some reflections on readings and class discussions.
C (5-6) Minimal – Rarely asks questions or makes comments that indicate familiarity with the topic. Does not participate in small groups. Does not share reflections on readings and class discussions.
Due: Weekly

Children’s Literature Examples 10%

Children’s literature examples will be evaluated using the following rating scale:
A (9-10) Excellent—Regularly provides examples of children’s literature related to class topics. Participates actively in group discussions of children’s literature.
B (7-8) Competent—Occasionally provides examples of children’s literature. Participates in group discussions of children’s literature.
C (5-6) Minimal—Rarely provides examples of children’s literature. Rarely participates in group discussions of children’s literature.
Due: Weekly

Response Journal/Log 10%

Criteria for the Response Journal/Log will include: 1) whether or not students made relevant entries in their log (prior to class meeting); and 2) the depth and quality of their reflections related to assigned readings, personal experiences, and class discussions.
Due: Weekly

Blackboard Discussion 10%

Criteria for the Blackboard electronic discussion will include: 1) whether or not students post their message in a timely manner (before the next class meeting); and 2) the connection of the posted messages to class discussions, personal experiences and
assigned readings. It is expected that students will post at least one response for each Blackboard discussion strand.

**Due: Approximately every other week**

**Multiple Literacies**

Criteria for the Multiple Literacies project will include: 1) whether or not the WebQuest or Scavenger Hunt integrates a noted author/genre with curricular content; and 2) whether or not the WebQuest or Scavenger Hunt can be easily negotiated.

**Due: 13th Session**

**Group Project**

Along with 3 of your classmates, you will study an author, author/illustrator, or author team of your choice within the field of children’s literature. Using all resources available, including the web, published interviews, etc., you are to research the chosen author(s), collect and display his/her books, and highlight curricular ties for these books. Classroom presentation should include biographical information (about the author(s)), bibliographic information (about the books), learning strategies and activities derived from the books, attractive and meaningful display of books/related objects, and a handout outlining curricular ties. This will be a static display; you will not be required to give an oral presentation of this project.

**Due: 9th Session**

**Integrated Project**

Using all resources available, including the web, published interviews, etc. you are to research an author (or author team) of your choice and design an integrated author study/conceptual unit of study for either a science or social studies topic. You will provide a written synopsis of your integrated unit to the course instructor (length will vary), which includes specific responses to literature and learning experiences in which the students will engage. In addition, you will have 10 minutes to present your work to the class using a presentation mode of your choice (powerpoint, overheads, drama, graphic organizer, etc.). Your presentation should highlight the literature and curricular connections so that your classmates and instructor see the “big picture,” the cohesive whole, of the author study/conceptual unit. [This project builds on the knowledge gained from participation in the group project].

**Due: 15th Session**

**Grading Scale:**

A+ = 98-100; A = 94-97; A- = 90-93; B+ = 85-89; B = 80-84; C = 70-79
F = Did not meet course requirements
# TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

***Note:** Specific topics for Sessions 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14 will be co-constructed by the instructor and course participants based on student populations (ages, grades, required curriculum) with whom the course participants currently work. Assigned readings for those sessions will be adjusted, as needed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date/Session</th>
<th>Class Topic</th>
<th>Assignments For Class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1/26/06      | Getting to know each other  
• Introduction and overview of the course  
• Overview of Early Childhood (PreK-2) classrooms and Children’s Literature  
*Quality EC Classrooms  
*Historical Overview of children’s lit  
*Aesthetic and efferent aspects of children’s literature  
Bring an artifact that represents you  
Read G&C, Ch. 1, 11, 12  
K, K, & C, Ch. 1, 2 |
| 2/2/06       | Independent work  
*Reflections—Themes/units of study in your classroom for sessions 7-12  
Read Anderson chapter  
G&C, Ch. 13, 14  
K, K, & C, Ch. 4 |
| 2/9/06       | Schema Theory  
*Connections to Self  
*Connections to Students  
Motivating Students to Read  
Read Isenberg & Quisenberry article |
| **Optional** | Homecoming Reception:  
Featured Speaker: Philip Done  
4:30, Dewberry Hall (Johnson Center)  
Read Stone article  
Isenberg & Quisenberry article |
| 2/16/06      | The purpose and value of Play  
*Role of play in EC Classrooms  
*Literature-play connections  
*Play as a schema builder and schema Activator  
Read K, K, & C, Ch. 3, 10-14  
Camp, Yopp & Yopp articles |
| 2/23/06      | Teaching Reading with Children’s Literature  
*Comprehension Strategies  
*Guided Reading/Shared Reading  
Connecting Children’s Literature to Curricular Content  
Read K, K, & C, Ch. 3, 10-14  
Camp, Yopp & Yopp articles |
<p>|              | 1st Quarter of School: Potential Themes and |
|              | Read |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Related Literature</th>
<th>3/2/06 3/9/06</th>
<th>Related Literature</th>
<th>TBD, based on themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8*</td>
<td>GMU Spring Break: Independent Work on Group Projects</td>
<td>3/16/06</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Sharing Group Projects</td>
<td>3/23/06</td>
<td>2nd Quarter of School: Potential Themes and Related Literature</td>
<td>Read TBD, based on themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mid-term Course Evaluations</td>
<td>Review All chapters read thus far</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10&amp;11</td>
<td>3rd Quarter of School: Potential Themes and Related Literature</td>
<td>3/30/06 4/6/06</td>
<td>Read TBD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12*</td>
<td>FCPS Spring Break: Independent Work on Multiple Literacies project</td>
<td>4/13/06</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>4th Quarter of School: Potential Themes and Related Literature</td>
<td>4/20/06</td>
<td>Read TBD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Additional Themes related to Curricular Requirements</td>
<td>4/27/06</td>
<td>Due (at Session 13) Multiple Literacies project</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Sharing of Individual Projects</td>
<td>5/4/06</td>
<td></td>
<td>No new readings assigned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Course Evaluations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>