EDRD 619  LITERACY IN THE CONTENT AREAS

George Mason University, Graduate School of Education
Secondary Teacher Education Program
Spring 2004, Sections 001 and 002 (3 credits)

INSTRUCTORS
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Office Hours  Before & after class, and by appointment

Class Meetings
Tuesdays, 4:30 - 7:10 pm  Robinson Secondary School, FCPS
5035 Sideburn Road  Fairfax, VA
#A226 & A227

Course Website  http://blackboard.gmu.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course is designed to assist students in understanding the language and literacy process as it applies to teaching in the middle and high schools. Particular attention is paid to reading and writing in the content areas and instructional strategies to support students’ literacy development. The course will focus on ways in which reading, writing, speaking, and listening are developed and used within the learning of discipline-specific curriculum including adaptations for culturally diverse and exceptional learners. The course develops connections between knowledge of the literacy process, using language to support learning, and effective instruction incorporating reading and writing.

The course is structured around readings, reflections on those readings, class projects, discussions, activities, and participation in a series of model lessons designed to reflect strategies for the integration of literacy development and practice with the teaching/learning process. Using this collection of activities, the course seeks to build clear bridges between students’ literacy development, theoretical / research perspectives, and classroom practice.

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. Code in the University catalog can be found online at http://www.gmu.edu/facstaff/handbook/aD.html.
Required Texts


Texts for specific subject area disciplines:

**Mathematics**

**All other areas**

Additional assigned readings and handouts will be distributed in class, found on electronic reserve, or online at specific websites.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

The following objectives have been established for the course:

1. Students will explore and explain the role of literacy in learning the content areas.
2. Students will be introduced to and use strategies that middle/high school students can apply to successfully comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate content-related texts.
3. Students will design reading and writing instruction that supports students' literacy development in middle and high school classrooms.
4. Students will create instructional goals and activities appropriate for students' active learning through interaction with print, media, and computer texts.
5. Students will develop content area curriculum that integrates reading, writing, speaking, and listening using multiple media forms throughout students' learning experiences.
6. Students will adapt instruction to accommodate secondary students' varying degrees of literacy and linguistic proficiency.
7. Students will assess print and non-print media and adapt it for effective instruction for a diverse student population.
8. Students will integrate appropriate texts for instruction into the curriculum of their respective content areas, e.g., adolescent literature, trade books, and Internet resources.

**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/](http://www.gmu.edu/student/drc/).
COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

Attendance and In-Class Responses to Reading Assignments

Attendance is critical; class time will provide opportunities for (1) demonstration of effective, research-based literacy strategies, (2) participation in hands-on activities, (3) discussions and analyses of research and theory on literacy, and (4) reflection on readings, class activities and assignments. Students are expected to be consistently well-prepared to participate actively in class. **Weekly.**

Classroom-Based Assignments

Each student enrolled in EDRD 619 is required to complete a minimum of 15 hours of classroom work in an accredited middle/high school. During EDRD 619, this work generally occurs in the classroom where students are placed for their student teaching or internship, or the classroom of a teacher with a provisional license. The specific classroom-based assignments focus on various aspects of literacy. Class participants will

- create and administer an inventory to examine the literacy interests and behaviors of adolescents
- describe the range of literacies in the content area by observing and focusing closely on the work of 3 representative students
- incorporate and analyze literacy strategies used by effective teachers
- demonstrate at least one literacy strategy
- analyze a textbook excerpt or text sample using a readability formula
- read and review a contemporary young adult novel

Information about each of these assignments will be provided in class. Individual, word-processed, classroom-based assignments should be completed by the **dates specified on the class schedule.**

Content-Specific Lesson with Literacy Connections

Each student is required to develop a content-area lesson that clearly and cohesively incorporates literacy strategies, activities, texts, supplemental texts, and/or other literacy resources. The complete lesson will include a combination of reading techniques and strategies, a rationale that reflects an understanding of effective literacy-based instruction for adolescents, and a reflection based on teaching the lesson to at least two different classes and to the 3 representative students. The development of the lesson will be an ongoing focus of this course. The lesson is **due March 30.**

Position Statement on Content-Specific Literacy

The purpose of the position statement assignment is to synthesize theory, research, and best practice from course readings, activities, and assignments into a coherent statement of philosophy and action on adolescent literacy in your content area. The position statement may be done in several different formats, but in general, all formats should include a well-organized presentation of key points, support from theory and research, and specific recommendations for the integration of literacy strategies in the content area. Further guidelines will be provided during the course. The final position statement is **due May 11.**

Literacy Strategy Notebook

The Literacy Strategy Notebook is an organized resource notebook of practical ideas, effective literacy-based strategies, and lists of resources to aid planning of instruction. The intent is to create a basic collection of potentially useful strategies, activities, and resources that are literacy-based and content-related in a format that could be expanded during future teaching semesters. Suggested categories for sections and tabs: before-, during-, and after- strategies; vocabulary; prior / background knowledge; read-alouds; book lists; graphic organizers; previews or warm-ups; and information organizers. Further guidelines will be provided during the course. The Literacy Strategy Notebook is **due April 27.**
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignments</th>
<th>Due Dates</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-Class Responses to Reading Assignments</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom-Based Assignments</td>
<td></td>
<td>120</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interest Inventory - 20 pts</td>
<td>February 17</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Focus: 3 Representative Students - 30 pts</td>
<td>March 2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Literacy Strategy Demonstration - 25 pts</td>
<td>TBA</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Text Excerpt – Readability - 20 pts</td>
<td>February 3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Young Adult Novel - 25 pts</td>
<td>April 20</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Content-Specific Lesson with Literacy Connections</td>
<td>March 30</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position Statement on Content-Specific Literacy</td>
<td>May 11</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy Guidebook</td>
<td>April 27</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Points</strong></td>
<td><strong>300</strong></td>
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It is recommended that you retain copies of all course products to document your progress through the Secondary Education Program. Selected products from this course (content-specific lesson with literacy connection, position statement on content-specific literacy, and selected classroom-based assignments) should be included in your exit portfolio for the M.Ed. program and can also become part of your professional portfolio used for job placement.

GRADING SCALE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>98 - 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94 - 97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90 - 93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87 - 89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83 - 86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80 - 82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70 - 79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>below 70%</td>
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Grades of A+, A, and A- in this course are earned by students who do exemplary, distinguished work.

The “A” student participates actively and thoughtfully in class discussions and activities; completes all course readings and assignments in a timely and professional way; shows coherence and thoroughness in lesson planning; writes well-organized responses and strategy descriptions; consistently demonstrates the ability to make connections between theory and practice; and meets the general requirements and guidelines of the course, as listed below.
GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

1. 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 literacy in middle and high school classrooms, it is important that you keep up with the readings and participate in class activities.

2. Class attendance is key. If, due to an emergency, you will not be in class, please contact your instructor and leave a message.

3. 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 graduate students may occasionally have serious circumstances arise that prevent the completion of work by the assigned due date. If such a dilemma arises, please speak to the instructor in advance.

4. The university requires that all pagers and cell phones be turned off before class begins.

ELECTRONIC REQUIREMENTS

Email: 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.

Blackboard: Students will also be expected to access Blackboard for pertinent course documents. Blackboard can be accessed by going to [http://blackboard.gmu.edu](http://blackboard.gmu.edu).

Electronic Reserves: To access Electronic Reserves, find e-reserves at this website: [http://oscr.gmu.edu](http://oscr.gmu.edu)

Click on "Search Electronic Reserves." In "Select a Course," look in the drop down menu and select EDRD 619. In "Select an Instructor," find Margaret Breen or Alicia Hill. Enter the password that will be shared during one of the class sessions. Click the Submit button. Read the instructions at the top, then scroll down until you find the article you want. Click on the icon to download the article. Once it is downloaded, you can print your own copy.

GUIDELINES FOR WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

All written assignments prepared outside of class will be evaluated for content and presentation as graduate-level writing. The American Psychological Association (APA) style will be followed for all written work. All written work unless otherwise noted must be completed on a word processor and should be proofread carefully. (Use spell check!) If you are not confident of your own ability to catch errors, have another person proofread your work. When in doubt, check the APA manual. Portions of the APA manual appear at the Style Manuals link on the GMU library web guide at [http://library.gmu.edu/resources/edu/](http://library.gmu.edu/resources/edu/).

Expectations

- Present ideas in a clear, concise, and organized manner. (Avoid wordiness and redundancy.)
- Develop points coherently, definitively, and thoroughly.
- Refer to appropriate authorities, studies, and examples to document where appropriate. (Avoid meaningless generalizations, unwarranted assumptions, and unsupported opinions.)
- Use correct capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and grammar.

The University Writing Center (Robinson A114) 703-993-1200 is a free writing resource open to everyone involved in the George Mason community, including graduate students. The Writing Center offers individual, group, and online tutoring sessions in a comfortable, supportive atmosphere. GMU students may register for the On-Line Writing Lab (OWL), the distance arm of the Writing Center that allows students to submit papers electronically. Access to a writing tutor, plus assistance with writing, editing, and composition are available at [http://writingcenter.gmu.edu](http://writingcenter.gmu.edu).
## Class Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Readings (TBA) and/Assignments Due</th>
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| Jan. 20  | Introduction to course
Review of syllabus
Introduction of literacy concepts – middle and high school classrooms |                                                                       |
| Jan. 27  | Understanding adolescent literacy in middle and high schools – foundation, expectations and challenges
Readability: assessing text difficulty | • Ryder & Graves, Chapter 1                                           |
| Feb. 3   | Understanding reading processes and adolescent learners
Making the match: students with text, Cloze | • Ryder & Graves, pp.346-357
• Fry Readability w/results and reflection |
| Feb. 10  | Designing effective instruction: Prereading | • Ryder & Graves, Chapter 4
• Reading Interest Inventory – bring draft |
| Feb. 17  | Designing effective instruction: Vocabulary | • Ryder & Graves, Chapter 3
• Bring Buehl book
• Reading Interest Inventory w/results and reflection |
| Feb. 24  | Designing effective instruction – focus on comprehension strategies | • Strategy Share - Group #1 |
| March 2  | Designing effective instruction – focus on discussion strategies, guest speaker | • Strategy Share – Group #2
• Three Typical Students |
| March 9  | **GMU spring break - No class meeting** |                                                                       |
| March 16 | Teaching for Understanding: Scaffolding Instruction | • Ryder and Graves, Chapter 7
• Strategy Share – Group #3 |
| March 23 | Focusing on Vocabulary | • Strategy Share – Group #4 |
| March 30 | Focusing on Vocabulary | • Content Specific Lesson (bring ideas for Literacy Position Paper) |
| April 6  | No class meeting |                                                                       |
| April 13 | Writing to Learn | • Due - Young Adult Book Review |
| April 20 | No class meeting |                                                                       |
| April 27 | Literature circles: fiction and nonfiction | • Literacy Strategy Notebook |
| May 4    | **Reading Day – No class meeting** |                                                                       |
| May 11   | Final class meeting. | • Literacy Position Statement w/self-addressed, stamped envelope |