

PROPOSED Course Syllabus for:
EDCI 617 (EDUC 597)
Using Digital and Popular-Culture Media
with Grades 4-12

Instructor:
Office:
E-Mail:
Phone:

Catalog Description and Prerequisites

Exposes students to recent knowledge on how middle and high school teachers can use digital media and popular culture texts to engage students in subject area learning or literacy development. The focus is on grades 4-12.

Prerequisites: Admission to a GSE licensure, Master's, or doctoral program and at least one year of PK-12 teaching experience, completion of EDCI 569, EDCI 567, EDCI 572, EDCI 573, or EDCI 544, or permission of instructor.

Nature of Course Delivery

Lecture, class discussion, cooperative-learning groups.

Course Rationale

A growing contingency of researchers in the education field have declared that cognition now increasingly depends upon a digital epistemology – that is, people use, share, and create knowledge on much different terms than before Web 2.0 and other digital platforms existed (Alvermann, 2002)¹. Indeed, middle and high school teachers and their adolescent (or pre-adolescent) students are immersed daily in multimedia digital technology practices that shape the way they think, write, and read. Many of these practices are related to popular culture (e.g., Facebook, text messaging, downloading music, etc.).

Many opportunities exist for teachers to incorporate the pop culture media that adolescents and tweens (children between the ages of 9 and 13) use on a daily basis into curricular and extra-curricular instructional planning. As a result, there are a growing number of books and journal articles dedicated to how teachers can use pop culture media (e.g., videos, social networking, music) to engage students in content area subjects and after-school clubs. Some of these books and articles also discuss how middle and high school teachers can use what researchers in the education field now know about the connections among reading, writing, and pop culture-use to enhance learning across school curricula.

¹ [Adolescents and Literacies in a Digital World \(New Literacies and Digital Epistemologies, Vol. 7\)](#) edited by Donna E. Alvermann (Paperback - Jul 2002)

Learner Outcomes

The purpose of this course will be to expose educators – or those interested in the field of education, more generally -- to the growing body of books and practitioner articles on the role of popular digital media texts in school curricula. The course will take a cultural studies stance on media, meaning that the readings and assignments will focus on people as creative consumers and producers of popular media texts. As such, the students in the class will not only create content-specific curricula (language arts, science, social studies, etc) that incorporate popular media texts and digital media literacy activities, they will also examine their own popular media practices by producing related media texts (such as magazine mock ups, television commercials, on-line news reports, and manga samples), all with the help of Web 2.0 platforms. They will then go through *critical framing*, wherein they will analyze their own productions from a critical theory standpoint in order to help them understand how students in grades 4-12 can engage in media practices in academic settings. The focus will be on *critical media literacy*, so that the members of the class can learn ways to help middle and high school students critique ideas created and represented through digital multimedia.

By the end of the course, students will be able to

- Design instruction meant to enhance students' content-area knowledge through the use of popular digital media texts and other forms of pop culture.
- Participate in critical framing.
- Discuss relevant theory and research regarding the use of pop culture and popular digital media in school curriculum, grades 4-12.

The key questions that will guide the course are as follows:

- What is the definition of *media literacy*?
- What are *digital multimedia*?
- What are some ways to define *popular culture*?
- What is meant by a *literacy practice*? (Note that the term *literacy*, for the purposes of this course, will be broadly defined as *set of language practices that mediate learning in a variety of settings and subject areas*. Literacy, then, will not be limited to a study of reading and writing in the English Language Arts, but will instead be portrayed as a tool for learning and critical thinking across the curriculum).
- How have secondary teachers successfully used digital multimedia (popular culture) to engage students in school curricula and to build students' conceptual knowledge?
- What do teachers' own uses of multimedia and popular media texts mean for incorporating such texts into school curricula?

Professional Standards

This course focuses on the following INTASC Standards:

Standard 2 (Student Learning)
 Standard 3 (Diverse Learners)
 Standard 4 (Instruction)
 Standard 6 (Communication)

The following is a sample of Professional Organization standards that the course addresses:

NCTE (National Council of Teachers of English) Standard 7: Candidates will help students compose and respond to film, video, graphic, photographic, audio, and multimedia texts and use current technology to enhance their own learning and reflection on their learning.

NSTA (National Science Teachers Association) Standard 2 (in part): [Students of science education] should be required to analyze, discuss and debate topics and reports in the media related to the nature of science and scientific knowledge in courses and seminars throughout the program, not just in an educational context.

NCTM (National Council of Teachers of Math) Standard 4: Knowledge of Mathematical Connections

Candidates recognize, use, and make connections between and among mathematical ideas and in contexts outside mathematics to build mathematical understanding.

Relevant Indicators in bold:

4.1 Recognize and use connections among mathematical ideas.

4.2 Recognize and apply mathematics in contexts outside of mathematics.

4.3 Demonstrate how mathematical ideas interconnect and build on one another to produce a coherent whole.

Course Readings

Common Textbooks:

Street, B.V. (Ed.). (2005). *Literacies across educational contexts*. Philadelphia, PA: Calson Publishing.

Hagood, M.C., Alvermann, D.E., & Heron-Hruby, A. (In press). *Bring it to class: Unpacking popular culture in literacy learning*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Jenkins, H. (2009). *Confronting the challenges of participatory culture: Media education for the 21st century*. Boston, MA: MIT Press.

Additional Readings will be assigned from *The Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* and other practitioner journals related to the various content or specialist areas represented by the students in the class (educational technology, educational leadership, science, math, etc.)

Course Assignments

1. Reading Response Activities: students will post their weekly reactions to their readings to the class Blog. These reactions may be multimedia or multigenre.
2. Critical Framing: Students will complete two critical framing projects. The first one will be completed individually. The second one will be completed in small groups. In both cases, the students will produce a pop culture multimedia text and then critique that text. The critical framing projects will be assessed using a rubric (see Appendix A).
3. Performance Based Assessment: Micro Unit Plan: Students will put together an abridged unit plan that uses media literacy and popular multimedia practices to engage students in some aspect of secondary (grades 4-12) curricula. **Doctoral students** enrolled in the course will have the option of conducting a research project in lieu of the Unit Plan. The Unit Plan will be scored using the Secondary Education Unit Plan INTASC rubric and *SPA-specific standards that are related to media literacy (see **Professional Standards** section, this syllabus, for examples of SPA standards).

*SPA stands for Specialized Professional Association

Possible Schedule of Assignments and Activities (Summer Session C)

Week #1	Read opening chapters in required texts; discuss definitions of literacy and popular culture (both in and out of school settings). Complete Critical Framing Project #1
Week #2	Finish reading Street book; discuss models of literacy across content-areas and education settings as related to digital media literacy. Begin Critical Framing Project #2
Week #3	Finish Jenkins book; continue working on Critical Framing Project #2. Read 2 articles from practitioner journals that are related to using popular digital media in your content area or area of expertise (doctoral students have the option of reading research articles).
Week #4	Begin Work on Unit Plans; Finish

	reading Hagood, Alvermann, and Heron-Hruby text; present Critical Framing Projects.
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Course Requirements

- **Attendance and Participation:** Attendance is critical to how this class will work. You will spend a great deal of time working on group activities to generate ideas for lesson and unit plan design and to share points you find interesting and useful from the course readings. If you must miss a class, please contact me ahead of time through e-mail and also contact a classmate to discuss missed activities and assignments. If you miss more than two classes, you will not be eligible for higher than a C in the course.
- **Punctuality and Conduct:** You are also expected to be in class on time and to conduct yourself in a way that is respectful to your classmates and to the professor. Please familiarize yourself with the George Mason University Honor Code at honorcode.gmu.edu Furthermore, Abstain from cell phones during class and limit your laptop use for lecture notes.

GRADING SCALE

A+	97-100	B+	87-89	D	60-69
A	93-96	B	80-86	F	below 60
A-	90-92	C	70-79		

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT STATEMENT OF EXPECTATIONS:

All students must abide by the following:

Students are expected to exhibit professional behavior and dispositions. See <http://gse.gmu.edu/facultystaffres/profdisp.htm> for a listing of these dispositions.

Students must follow the guidelines of the University Honor Code. See <http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies/#Anchor12> for the full honor code.

Students must agree to abide by the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing. See

<http://www.gmu.edu/facstaff/policy/newpolicy/1301gen.html>.

Click on responsible Use of Computing Policy at the bottom of the screen.

Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the GMU Office of Disability Services (ODS) and inform the instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester. See

<http://www2.gmu.edu/dpt/unilife/ods/> or call 703-993-2474 to access the ODS.

Appendix A Rubric for Critical Framing Project

Teachers and other educators who use popular media in the classroom need to do so dynamically, meaning that they must be open to making mistakes, to taking creative chances, and to attending to their audience's desires for entertainment and relevant information. As such, you will be evaluated by your peers, as well as me (the course instructor), so that you can get the most authentic response to your presentation as possible. Your grade will be an average of all the responses (which will stem from the rubric below).

Standard	Score of 0	Score of 1	Score of 2	Score of 3
Project is presented using digital multimedia	Standard not addressed	Media is poorly executed/sloppy	Media is well-executed.	Media is beautifully executed. It is obvious that the student can use a variety of media to communicate ideas.
Project is fully developed.	Standard not addressed	Project does not have a clear audience; the concept is not discernable or is not well-developed.	Project has a clear audience and a concept that leads the audience from a starting point to a culminating idea or conclusion.	The concept is complex and rich; the audience can draw several perspectives from the presentation.
Student	Standard not	The critical	The student	The student

presents critical frame for project	addressed	frame is present but is incomplete.	can articulate the concept and the intended audience and can hold a comprehensive discussion about the how and why of the project.	can hold a comprehensive discussion of the “how and why” of the presentation; during the discussion, the student makes accurate and conversation-inducing references to the course readings.