EDRD 831  Foundations of Literacy: Adolescence through Adulthood  
Section 001  
Fall 2013  
Tuesdays, 4:30 – 7:10  
University Hall 1203

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Foundations of Literacy: Adolescence through Adulthood (3:3:0) Prerequisites: EDUC 800 and EDRS 810. Explores theory, research, and practice related to adolescent and adult literacy. Topics include influences on adolescents' and adults' literacy practice and development, current and historical understanding of literacy, connections between literacy and learning in the content areas, and needs of diverse learners. Students review common core research literature and topics of individual interest.

NATURE OF COURSE DELIVERY

This course will be taught from an inquiry-oriented perspective. Lecture, class discussion, and role plays will be employed to understand and critique adolescent/adult literacy theory, research, policy, and practice. Students will also have the opportunity to develop and explore their own questions about adolescent and/or adult literacy that are meaningful to them, given their work to this point in the doctoral program.

STUDENT OUTCOMES

Each individual will conduct a project based on course options and her/his own interests and learning needs. The choice for individual projects should be based on what has already been accomplished in previous graduate coursework as well as goals that have been set in the doctoral portfolio. The specific nature of each project will be determined through consultation with the professor.
REQUIRED TEXTS

A list of readings is included in this syllabus and these may be accessed through GMU electronic databases.


COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION

I. Article Discussion Leadership
Each student will be responsible for interpreting and engaging her/his peers in discussion around one of the required articles. (See assignment details in syllabus)

II. Paper/Project
Each student will choose one paper/project from a set of required options focusing on some aspect of adolescent literacy (See format and expectations in this syllabus). Each option will be explained in class and each student will be given individual support in the development of the paper/project. All students will present a brief oral summary of what they learned and accomplished through the paper/project during the final class sessions.

III. Class Participation
Students are expected to attend all classes and participate actively. If an absence is necessary, please discuss it with the professor.

* All assignments will be graded on a Pass or In Progress basis. A Pass grade converts to an “A”. An In Progress grade means the student’s work has not yet achieved a Pass grade and s/he will be expected to continue improving the assignment until a Pass grade is achieved. If necessary, the student will be offered the option of taking an Incomplete for the course in order to finish work at a Pass level.

*All assignments will be submitted electronically. Redrafted assignments must include tracked changes.
## TENTATIVE AGENDA

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<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assignments Due</th>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>8/27</td>
<td>Course Introduction &amp; Requirements</td>
<td>Bring copy of syllabus to class</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>9/3</td>
<td>The Landscape of Adolescent Literacy History of Content Area Reading</td>
<td>IRA (2012)</td>
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<td>Moore, Readence, &amp; Rickelman, 1983</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>9/10</td>
<td>The Landscape of Adolescent Literacy</td>
<td>Faggella-Luby, Ware, &amp; Capozzoli, (2009)</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>9/24</td>
<td>Adolescent Identities</td>
<td>Finders (1998-99); McCarthey &amp; Moje (2002); Tatum (2008)</td>
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<td>10/1</td>
<td>Consultations on Term Project</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>10/8</td>
<td>Critical Literacy &amp; Youth Culture</td>
<td>Dimitriadis, G. (2001); Morrell, E. (2002; 2005; 2009); Hagood (2002); McDonald (2009)</td>
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<td>COLUMBUS DAY HOLIDAY - NO CLASS</td>
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13. 11/19 | Struggling & Diverse Adolescent Readers | ADL

14. 11/26 | Presentation of Term Projects | Term Projects due

15. 12/3 | Presentation of Term Projects | Term Projects due

16. 12/10 | TBA

GENERAL INFORMATION

Email Access

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

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

1. GMU Policies and Resources for students
   a. Students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code [See http://oai.gmu.edu/honor-code/].
   b. Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing [See http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing/ ]
   c. Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their George Mason University email account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. All communication from the university, college, school, and program will be sent to students solely through their Mason email account.
   d. The George Mason University Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)
staff consists of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social
workers, and counselors who offer a wide range of services (e.g.,
individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs) to
enhance students' personal experience and academic performance [See
http://caps.gmu.edu/].

e. Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be
registered with the George Mason University Office of Disability Services
(ODS) and inform their instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the
semester [See http://ods.gmu.edu/].

f. Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting
devices shall be turned off during class unless otherwise authorized by the
instructor.

g. The George Mason University Writing Center staff provides a variety of
resources and services (e.g., tutoring, workshops, writing guides,
handbooks) intended to support students as they work to construct and
share knowledge through writing [See http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/].

2. Professional Dispositions  Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and
dispositions at all times.

3. Core Values Commitment  The College of Education & Human Development is
committed to collaboration, ethical leadership, innovation, research-based
practice, and social justice. Students are expected to adhere to these principles.
http://cehd.gmu.edu/values/

4. For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development,
Graduate School of Education, please visit our website [See  http://gse.gmu.edu/]
COURSE READINGS

Reports & Papers


need to go.

http://www.ldonline.org/article/Adolescent_Literacy%3A_Where_We_Are_-_Where_We_Need_to_Go


**Journal Articles**


McDonald, T., & Thornley, C. (2009). Critical literacy for academic success in


Morrell, E. (2010). Critical literacy, educational investment, and the blueprint for educational reform: An analysis of the reauthorization of the Elementary and
Secondary Education Act. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 54(2) 146-149.


Shanahan, T., & Shanahan, C. (2008). Teaching disciplinary literacy to adolescents:


**Recommended Books & Chapters**


Brozo, W.G. (2010). *To be a boy, to be a reader: Engaging teen and preteen boys in active literacy* (2nd ed.). Newark, DE: IRA.


GUIDELINES FOR COURSE READINGS

Be prepared for class discussion with each course reading by being able to:

1. Articulate the point of the article; what motivated the author to write the piece; why was the research conducted?

2. Describe the main points the author makes in the article

3. Describe the basic steps of the research process employed by the author

4. Raise questions, doubts, and challenges based on the article

5. Articulate how the knowledge gained from the article contributes to your own scholarship and professionalism
ARTICLE DISCUSSION LEADERSHIP

Assignment

The purpose of this assignment is to provide you the opportunity to read, analyze, and interpret the research articles from the course readings for your peers. You will work with a colleague from class on this assignment.

Completion Procedures

1. Identify one article over which to lead discussion. The article should be taken from the course readings and must not be one already assigned. There will be no overlap.

2. Read, analyze, and format its presentation around the following aspects of the article:
   - purpose
   - main points
   - type of research and methodology, if relevant
   - conclusions
   - implications for research and practice
   - personal responses and reactions

3. Discussants should also devise ways of engaging the class in critical conversation and reflection on the article. Demonstrations, simulations, role-plays, and debates are recommended.

4. PowerPoint slides, overheads, and/or handouts should accompany the article presentations and discussions.

6. Article discussion leaders should plan 30 minutes for their article discussions.

Evaluation

Article discussants will be evaluated based on (a) how well they planned and coordinated the presentation and discussion of the article; (b) how succinctly and understandably key information from the article was presented; and (c) the extent to which the discussants used engaging techniques for bringing all students into critical conversation about the article.
Research Project/Paper

The purpose of this assignment is to provide you the opportunity to conduct a scholarly exploration of an area of interest in adolescent literacy. A report will be written as a result of your exploration.

1. Identify an issue/aspect of adolescent literacy to research

This should be something that concerns/interests you at the present time. It may be related to something that has evolved out of your teaching experience, or it may be something that has piqued your interest from the course readings.

2. Seek Knowledge

There are many sources for acquiring information about your research concern. First and foremost, review the related literature. Consult journals, books, yearbooks, etc.

3. Plan and Implement Research

Based on your research concern, plan specific steps to carry out with groups or individuals. To refine your plan, it’s helpful to pose questions that the research might answer or form hypotheses to be confirmed or disconfirmed.

Your research might involve trying out strategies, administering criterion tasks, meeting with students, teachers, administrators for interviews, gathering verbal reports, administering interest and attitude scales, and/or observing students within genuine learning contexts.

4. Reflect on Research Results

In this phase you should gather all the data related to your research concern and make interpretations relative to your research questions/hypotheses. All interpretations and assertions should be supportable by the data.

Another important aspect of the reflection phase of research is to consider the implications of the findings. Focus your attention on how the research has contributed to you as a researcher, how the results might contribute to our knowledge in the field, and direction future research might take by you and/or others.

The research report should be written according to the following sections:

- Research Question and Rationale
- Review of Literature
- Research Design
• Findings
• Discussion and Implications

The paper should be at least 15 to 20 double-spaced pages in length excluding references. You are also required to give a short presentation of your work to the class.
Research Proposal Paper

The purpose of this assignment is to provide you the opportunity to propose a research study of an area of interest in adolescent literacy.

1. Formulate a research question that is simply stated and clear. This question should be related to adolescent literacy and that concerns or interests you at the present time. Be sure to discuss why an answer to your particular research question is worth seeking; in other words, what would it mean in terms of the advancement of our knowledge of literacy and literacy practices.

2. Review the literature likely to address this question. The information gleaned from your sources should support the need for further research on the question, whether in the form of replication/refinement of previous studies or new directions of inquiry based on previous work.

3. Formulate your research design by including the following information:

- description of subject(s)
- description of all materials and how they would be utilized
- description of any instruments you would use, such as checklists, surveys, naturalistic assessments, written protocols, etc. and how they would be used
- thorough discussion of the procedures you would use to collect data and what would be required of your subject(s)
- how you would evaluate and interpret data

Be sure to thoroughly describe exactly what the subject(s) would do over the course of the study. For instance, if you design a quasi-experiment you will need to specify how the activities of the “treatment/intervention” group differ from the “control” group. Be very clear here.

4. Discuss the implications of your potential findings. Speculate on what it would mean if your data pointed in one direction versus another. Focus your discussion on implications relative to the advancement of knowledge about literacy and literacy practices.

5. Include a complete list of references in correct APA format.

6. Append all appropriate materials.

The research proposal should be written according to the following sections:

- **Research Question and Rationale**
- **Review of Literature**
- **Research Design**
- **Potential Implications**
The paper should be at least 15 to 20 double-spaced pages in length excluding references and appendices. You are also required to give a short presentation of your work to the class.
Problematizing Practice Paper

The purpose of this assignment is to provide you the opportunity to problematize conventional thinking about instructional practices in adolescent literacy practices. What are the so-called “givens” in adolescent literacy? What strategies and practices have become instructional folkways. Even where evidence might exist for certain practices, can they still be challenged with counter-evidence and scholarly opinion? These are the central questions guiding the production of this paper.

1. Identify such a strategy or practice widely advocated in adolescent literacy. Do not be afraid to take on the “experts.”
2. Describe it and provide its justification from research and/or scholarly opinion.
3. Explore and describe challenges to the strategy or practice from alternative evidence using research and scholarly opinion.
4. Conclude by deciding based on contravening evidence whether the strategy or practice should be modified or capitulated.

The paper should be at least 15 to 20 double-spaced pages in length excluding references. You are also required to give a short presentation of your work to the class.
Adolescent Literacy Policy Paper

The purpose of this assignment is to provide you the opportunity to advocate a set of policies related to an issue in adolescent literacy based on evidence. What areas of adolescent literacy are receiving too little attention or being neglected by policy makers? This is the central question to guide the production of this paper.

1. Identify an issue in adolescent literacy. This is an objective description of a problem or concern.

2. Offer a perspective on the issue. A perspective requires taking a position on the problem or concern (e.g., advocacy for literacy supports for adolescent males or for immigrant youth)

3. Provide research support and scholarly opinion in evidence to support the perspective.

4. Lay out a set of policy recommendations tied to the evidence that could be followed by relevant players in the field (e.g., local, state, national politicians; local, state, national education officers)

The paper should be at least 15 to 20 double-spaced pages in length excluding references. You are also required to give a short presentation of your work to the class.
Critique of Theory Paper

In Gary Thomas’s 1997 article in the *Harvard Educational Review* he makes a provocative argument against the use of theory in educational inquiry. This perspective seems nearly heretical to most education scholars as well as doctoral students of education. And yet, each theory must be given a full and continuous critique to ensure its viability. Karl Marx is purported to have said, "Practice without theory is blind, theory without practice is sterile.” But how do we know if a theory is “sterile”? That is the central question to guide the production of this paper.

1. Identify a popular theory framing adolescent literacy scholarship today.

2. Describe the theory and the perspective of its advocates.

3. Review the theory through a practical lens and critique its value. Are practices of adolescent literacy directly relatable to the theory? To what extent has the theory been “field tested” in the real world? How has it fared? In spite of the reputation and conviction of the owner(s) of a theory, do not be afraid to take on the “experts”.

4. Propose a research agenda that could (further) test the viability of the theory as a guide to practice. Also, think about how the theory might be modified to create a closer match to practice and, consequently, be more influential.

The paper should be at least 15 to 20 double-spaced pages in length excluding references. You are also required to give a short presentation of your work to the class.