

**EDRD 797**  
***Literacy Development in International Contexts:  
A Critical Comparative Analysis***

**Fall 2015**  
**Thompson 1020**  
**Fairfax Campus**  
**4:30 – 7:10**

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course examines current discourses and trends related to literacy in international contexts. Special emphasis is placed on critical comparative analysis of systems, initiatives, and policies impacting literacy development across the globe. Topics to be explored include (a) assumptions such as the relationship between literacy and social, political, and economic development, (b) the impact of the Post 2015 development agenda, (c) the rise of international assessments of reading literacy and their influence on politics and policy, (d) current trends, innovations, and priorities in literacy projects and curriculum for low and middle income economies, and (e) the roles and perspectives of major donors and international organizations such as the OECD, USAID, UNESCO, and the World Bank. Students will have the opportunity to learn about current debates, analyze the impact of current initiatives, and understand emerging trends in the design, delivery, and financing of literacy in developed, developing, and low economy countries.

**NATURE OF COURSE DELIVERY**

This course will be taught from an inquiry-oriented perspective. Lecture, class discussion, and group work will be employed to understand and critique literacy theory, research, policy, and practice within international contexts. Students will also have the opportunity to share findings of research into international literacy development in countries and companies based on their own questions and interests and given their work to this point in the doctoral program.

## STUDENT OUTCOMES

Each student will:

- A. Write a critical comparative analysis paper on literacy policy, practice, and development in at least two national contexts and present the findings to the class. Specific topics will be negotiated individually with the professor
- B. Conduct an investigation of a local international development company with a focus on literacy and present the findings to the class
- C. Read and analyze research studies, reports, reviews, and commentaries on international literacy related topics
- D. Lead class discussion over a course reading

## REQUIRED TEXTS

The syllabus lists required readings, which may be accessed through GMU electronic databases or from the Internet.

Recommended text:

American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION

### I. Critical Comparative Analysis Paper

**Points**  
**50**

Students will examine literacy policy and development in one low economy country using data and insights drawn from the practices and situation in one high economy country to uncover critical issues around politics, power, and economics. Research articles, country reports, and policy documents will be used in the analysis and recommendations in the form of an agenda for maximizing impacts on literacy funding and development will be offered. Students will make a formal presentation to the class of their findings.

### II. International Development Company Investigation

**25**

Students will research a local company involved in international development and shed light on the literacy perspectives that guide the practices employed by the company. The investigation will include examination of the company's major funders and other significant influences on the company's approach to literacy development, as well as key personnel responsible for directing literacy development activities. Students will make a formal presentation to the class of their findings.

**III. Discussion Leadership** **15**

Each student will be responsible for interpreting and engaging her/his peers in discussion around an article, report, or policy document from one of the required course readings.

**IV. Class Participation** **10**

Students are expected to participate actively in each class by preparing for each class. Preparation entails completing all required readings and response heuristic (See below for details.).

For each course reading, students will respond to the following prompts and Will be required to bring their responses to class in order to participate actively in discussion.

- **Author’s Most Significant Points**  
What are the author’s points you found to be most significant?
- **Questions and Criticisms**  
What doubts, challenges, and lingering questions do you have as a result of reading the text?
- **Text-to-Self Connections**  
How does the reading contribute to knowledge building for your own professionalism?

**TOTAL      100**

**100 – 90 = A; 89 – 80 = B; 79 – 70 = C**

\*All written assignments will be submitted electronically

## 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.

## 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/the-mason-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/>).

## PROFESSIONAL DISPOSITIONS

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

## 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/>.

For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, Graduate School of Education, please visit our website <http://gse.gmu.edu/>.

## TENTATIVE AGENDA

<u>Session/Date</u>	<u>Topic/Assignments</u>
Session 1, August 31	<b>Course Introduction &amp; Requirements</b> <b>Literacy in International Contexts: An Overview</b> UNESCO <i>Education for all: Literacy for life</i> (Chp 6)
Session 2, September 7	<b>No Class – Labor Day Holiday</b>
Session 3, September 14	<b>International Literacy Assessments</b> Fleischman, Hopstock, Pelczar & Shelley (2010) Carnoy & Rothstein (2013) Baird, et al (2011) Discussion Leadership demonstration
Session 4, September 21	<b>International Literacy Assessments</b> <i>The Guardian</i> (2014, May 6) Goldstein (2004) Feniger & Lefstein (2014) Brozo et al (2014) <i>DL</i>

**Session 5, September 28**

**Literacy and Social, Political & Economic  
Development: Exploring and Problematizing  
the Connections**

Hanushek & Woessmann (2010)

Hanushek & Woessmann (2008)

Tramonte & Willms (2010)

*DL*

**Session 6, October 5**

**Literacy and Social, Political & Economic  
Development: Exploring and Problematizing  
the Connections**

Heckman & Kautz (2012)

Norton (2005)

Bloem (2013)

*DL*

**Session 7, October 12**

**No Class--Columbus Day Holiday—Class shifts to  
Tuesday, October 13**

***International Development Company Investigation  
Presentations***

**Session 8, October 13**

**Literacy and Social, Political & Economic  
Development: Exploring and Problematizing  
the Connections**

Heckman, Stixrud, & Urzua (2006)

Bertschy, Cattaneo, & Wolter, (2009)

Lewis (2014)

*DL*

**Session 9, October 19**

**International Literacy Donors & Developers**

Wickens & Sandlin (2007)

Smith (2005)

Learning Metrics Task Force (2013)

*DL*

**Session 10, October 26**

**International Literacy Donors & Developers**

Wagner (2011)

Robinson (2005)

Steiner-Khamsi (2012)

*Individual Conferences*

**Session 11, November 2**

**International Literacy Projects & Priorities**

Wagner & Castillo (2014)

Rose (2005)

*Individual Conferences*

**Session 12, November 9**

**International Literacy Projects & Priorities**

World Bank (2011)

Wagner (2003)

Winthrop (2010)

*DL*

**Session 13, November 16**

**Learning from International Perspectives**

Van de Werfhorst & Mijs (2010)

Sum, Kirsch, & Taggart (2002)

EU High Level Group of Experts on Literacy (2012)

EURYDICE (2011)

*DL*

**Session 14, November 23**

**Paper Presentations**

**Session 15, November 30**

**TBA**

**Session 16, December 7**

**TBA**

## DISCUSSION LEADERSHIP

### Assignment

The purpose of this assignment is to provide you the opportunity to read, analyze, and interpret the required readings for your peers.

### Completion Procedures

1. Identify one reading over which to lead discussion. The reading should be taken from those required in the course. There will be no overlap.
2. Read, analyze, and format its presentation around the following aspects of the reading:
  - 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, and handouts (if relevant) should accompany the article presentations and discussions.
6. Article discussion leaders should plan 30 minutes for their article discussions.

### Evaluation

Article discussant will be given a grade based on (a) the level of planning and coordination evident in 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.



## COURSE READINGS

- Baird, J.A., Issacs, T., Johnson, S., Stobart, G., Yu, G., Sprague, T., & Daugherty, R. (2011). *Policy effects of PISA*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Centre for Educational Assessment. Retrieved from [www.researchgate.net](http://www.researchgate.net)
- Bertschy, K., Cattaneo, M.A., & Wolter, S.C. (2009). PISA and the transition into the labour market. *Labour*, 23(1), 111-137.
- Bloem, S. (2013). *PISA in low and middle income countries*. OECD Education Working Papers, No. 93, OECD Publishing. Retrieved from, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5k41tm2gx2vd-en>
- Bloom, D., Canning, D. and Chan, K. (2006). *Higher education and economic development in Africa*. Washington, DC: Human Development Sector, Africa Region, World Bank.
- Borghans, L., & Schils, T. (2012). *The leaning tower of PISA: Decomposing achievement test scores into cognitive and noncognitive components*. Retrieved from <http://sole-jole.org/13260.pdf>
- Brozo, W.G., Sulkunen, S., Shiel, G., Garbe, C., Pandian, A., & Valtin, R. (2014). Reading, gender, and engagement: Lessons from five PISA countries. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 57(7), 584-593.
- Carnoy, M., & Rothstein, R. (2013). *What do international tests really show about U.S. student performance?* Washington, DC: Economics Policy Institute.
- EU High Level Group of Experts on Literacy. (2012). *Final report*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Retrieved from [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/school/doc/literacy-report\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/school/doc/literacy-report_en.pdf)

- EURYDICE. (2011). *Teaching reading in Europe: Contexts, policies and practices*. Brussels: Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency. Retrieved from <http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice>
- Goldstein, H. (2004). International comparisons of student attainment: Some issues arising from the PISA study. *Assessment in Education, 11*(3), 319-330.
- Feniger, Y., & Lefstein, A. (2014). How not to reason with PISA data: An ironic investigation, *Journal of Education Policy, 29*(6), 845-855.
- Fleischman, H.L., Hopstock, P.J., Pelczar, M.P., & Shelley, B.E. (2010). *Highlights from PISA 2009: Performance of U.S. 15-year-old students in reading, mathematics, and science literacy in an international context* (NCES 2011-004). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Gove, A., & Cvelich, P. (2010). *Early reading: Igniting Education for All: A report by the early grade learning community of practice*. Research Triangle Park, NC: Research Triangle Institute.
- Gove, A., & and Anna Wetterberg, A. (Eds.). (2011). *The Early Grade Reading Assessment: Applications and interventions to improve basic literacy*. Research Triangle Park, NC: RTI. Retrieved from <http://www.rti.org/pubs/bk-0007-1109-wetterberg.pdf>
- Hanushek, E., & Kimko, D. (2000). Schooling, labor-force quality, and the growth of nations. *American Economic Review, 90*(5), 1184–1208.
- Hanushek, E.A., & Woessmann, L. (2010). *The high cost of low educational performance: The long-run economic impact of improving PISA outcomes*. Paris: OECD. Retrieved from, [www.sourceoecd.org/education/9789264077485](http://www.sourceoecd.org/education/9789264077485)

- Hanushek, E. and L. Woessmann (2008). The role of cognitive skills in economic development. *Journal of Economic Literature*, 46(3), 607–68.
- Heckman, J. J., & Kautz, T. (2012). *Hard evidence on soft skills*. Bonn, Germany: Institute for the Study of Labor.
- Heckman, J. J., Stixrud, J., & Urzua, S. (2006). The effects of cognitive and noncognitive abilities on labor market outcomes and social behavior. *Journal of Labor Economics*, 24(3), 411-482.
- Learning Metrics Task Force. (2013). *Toward universal learning: What every child should learn*. Montreal/Washington, DC: UNESCO Institute for Statistics/Brookings. Retrieved from <http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/reports/2013/09/learning%20metrics%20task%20force%20universal%20learning/ltnmf%20recommendationsreportfinalweb.pdf>
- Lewis, S. (2014). The OECD, PISA and educational governance: A call to critical engagement. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 35(2), 317–327.
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- Nugent, G., Malik, S., & Hollingsworth, S. (2012). *Using action research to improve literacy instruction in classrooms around the world*. Washington, DC: Global Operations Unit, International Reading Association. Retrieved from <http://www.scribd.com/doc/238090831/A-Practical-Guide-to-Action-Research-for-Literacy-Educators#scribd>

OECD and Pisa tests are damaging education worldwide. (2014, May 6). *The Guardian*.

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<http://www.theguardian.com/education/2014/may/06/oecd-pisa-tests-damaging-education-academics>

OECD. (2013c). *PISA 2012 results: Excellence through equity: Giving every student the chance to succeed (Volume II)*. Paris: Author.

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Robinson, C. (2005). Promoting literacy: What is the record of Education for All? *International Journal of Educational Development*, 25(4), 436-444.

Rose, P. (2005). Is there a 'fast-track' to achieving Education for All? *International Journal of Educational Development*, 25(4), 381-394.

Smith, H. (2005). Ownership and capacity: Do current donor approaches help or hinder the achievement of international and national targets for education? *International Journal of Educational Development*, 25(4), 445-455.

Steiner-Khamsi, G. (2012). For all by all? The World Bank's global framework for education. In S.J. Klees et al. (Eds.), *The World Bank and Education*, (pp.3-20). Sense Publishers.

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[http://www.tc.columbia.edu/faculty/steiner-khamsi/\\_publications/Gitas%20Professional%20Files/WorldBankPublication.pdf](http://www.tc.columbia.edu/faculty/steiner-khamsi/_publications/Gitas%20Professional%20Files/WorldBankPublication.pdf)

Strickland, B. (2014). *Trends in global development: Survey of trends in private sector partnerships for international development and modalities for engagement*. Washington, DC: Creative. Retrieved from

[http://www.creativeassociatesinternational.com/wpcontent/uploads/2014/08/Survey\\_Of\\_Trends.pdf](http://www.creativeassociatesinternational.com/wpcontent/uploads/2014/08/Survey_Of_Trends.pdf)

- Sum, A., Kirsch, I., & Taggart, R. (2002). *The twin challenges of mediocrity and inequality: Literacy in the U.S. from an international perspective*. Educational Testing Service, Washington, DC. Retrieved from, <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED472136.pdf>
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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/221351213600>
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## **RECOMMENDED READINGS**

- Egelund, N. (2012). *Northern lights on PISA 2009 – focus on reading*. Copenhagen: Nordic Council of Ministers. Retrieved from
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