

George Mason University
College of Education and Human Development
Literacy Program

EDRD 619.DL2 – Literacy in the Content Areas
3 Credits, Fall 2022
Asynchronous, Online

Faculty

Name: Tom Opfer, Ph.D.
Office Hours: By Appointment
Office Location: Program Office Thompson Hall 1500, Fairfax Campus
Office Phone: Program Office 703-993-7611
Email Address: topfer2@gmu.edu

Prerequisites: For candidates in the Secondary Education program, SEED 566, SEED 567, SEED 569, SEED 572, or SEED 573 is a required prerequisite.

Corequisites: For candidates in the Secondary Education program, SEED 667, SEED 669, SEED 672, SEED 673, or SEED 676 should be taken concurrently.

University Catalog Course Description

Examines language and literacy processes of adolescent learners. Builds understanding of reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, and visually representing in content areas. Evaluates disciplinary instructional strategies to support students' development of academic language and comprehension, including adaptations for diverse learners' needs. Fosters an awareness of the role of multiple texts and independent reading in adolescent learners' literacy practices.

Course Overview

Not Applicable

Course Delivery Method

This course will be delivered online (76% or more) using an asynchronous format via Blackboard Learning Management system (LMS) housed in the MyMason portal. You will log in to the Blackboard (Bb) course site using your Mason email name (everything before @gmu.edu) and email password. The course site will be available on Monday, August 22.

Under no circumstances, may candidates/students participate in online class sessions (either by phone or Internet) while operating motor vehicles. Further, as expected in a face-to-face class meeting, such online participation requires undivided attention to course content and communication.

Technical Requirements

To participate in this course, students will need to satisfy the following technical requirements:

- High-speed Internet access with standard up-to-date browsers. To get a list of Blackboard's supported browsers see:
https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student/Getting_Started/Browser_Support#supported-browsers

To get a list of supported operation systems on different devices see:

https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student/Getting_Started/Browser_Support#tested-devices-and-operating-systems

- Students must maintain consistent and reliable access to their GMU email and Blackboard, as these are the official methods of communication for this course.
- Students may be asked to create logins and passwords on supplemental websites and/or to download trial software to their computer or tablet as part of course requirements.
- The following software plug-ins for PCs and Macs, respectively, are available for free download:
 - Adobe Acrobat Reader: <https://get.adobe.com/reader/>
 - Windows Media Player:
<https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/help/14209/get-windows-media-player>
 - Apple Quick Time Player: www.apple.com/quicktime/download/

Expectations

- Course Week:
Because asynchronous courses do not have a “fixed” meeting day, our week **will start on Monday and finish on Sunday at 11:59 p.m.**
- Log-in Frequency:
Students must actively check the course Blackboard site and their GMU email for communications from the instructor, class discussions, and/or access to course materials at least **4 times per week.**
- Participation:
Students are expected to actively engage in all course activities throughout the semester, which includes viewing all course materials, completing course activities and assignments, and participating in course discussions and group interactions.
- Technical Competence:
Students are expected to demonstrate competence in the use of all course technology. Students who are struggling with technical components of the course are expected to seek assistance from the instructor and/or College or University technical services.
- Technical Issues:
Students should anticipate some technical difficulties during the semester and should, therefore, budget their time accordingly. **Late work will not be accepted based on individual technical issues.**
- Workload:
Please be aware that this course is **not** self-paced. Students are expected to meet *specific deadlines* and *due dates* listed in the **Class Schedule** section of this syllabus. It is the student’s responsibility to keep track of the weekly course schedule of topics, readings, activities and assignments due.
- Instructor Support:
Students may schedule a one-on-one meeting to discuss course requirements, content or other course-related issues. Those unable to come to a Mason campus can meet with the instructor via telephone or web conference. Students should email the instructor to schedule a one-on-one session, including their preferred meeting method and suggested dates/times.
- Netiquette:
The course environment is a collaborative space. Experience shows that even an innocent remark typed in the online environment can be misconstrued. Students must always re-read their responses carefully before posting them, so as others do not consider them as personal offenses. *Be positive in your approach with others and diplomatic in selecting your words.*

Remember that you are not competing with classmates, but sharing information and learning from others. All faculty are similarly expected to be respectful in all communications.

- Accommodations:

Online learners who require effective accommodations to ensure accessibility must be registered with George Mason University Disability Services.

Learner Outcomes or Objectives

This course is designed to enable students to do the following:

1. Explain theories of adolescent literacy and the role of literacy in learning across disciplines.
2. Identify evidence-based strategies that adolescent learners can use to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate disciplinary-specific texts.
3. Design learning strategies and plans in specific content areas to scaffold adolescent learners' literacy development, including their word analysis, vocabulary, comprehension and writing skills.
4. Explain the specific challenges adolescent learners with varying levels of literacy and linguistic proficiency face in each discipline.

Professional Standards

Not Applicable

Required Texts

Fisher, D., & Frey, N. (2020). *Improving adolescent literacy: Content area strategies at work*. Pearson Education, Inc.

Course Performance Evaluation

Candidates are expected to submit all assignments on time in the manner outlined by the instructor (e.g., Blackboard, VIA, hard copy).

- **Assignments and/or Examinations**

Assignment Overview

Assignment	Total Value	Due Date
Course Learning Modules	50%	Sunday evenings
Disciplinary Literacy Inquiry Project	20%	November 13
Disciplinary Literacy Lesson Plan	15%	December 4
Field Experience Critical Reflection	15%	December 9

A. Course Learning Modules (50%): Each week, candidates are expected to complete a series of lessons and activities to show evidence of understanding course objectives. Assignments and point values are detailed in each module. Candidates can expect modules to take 6-9 hours per week including time to read and view content.

Candidates' work should reflect learning from readings, videos, and any other online content posted within the **Course Learning Modules**. Thorough preparation and reflection is expected.

Participatory activities will vary including, but not limited to engaging in online discussions, sharing and providing feedback on peers' work, reflecting through journals and blogs, and/or creating multi-media responses and projects. A variety of online tools and platforms will be used to facilitate activities.

Rubrics provided on Blackboard.

It is essential that candidates complete **all lessons and activities** in the Course Learning Modules in order to be prepared for the final projects.

Late work not accepted without prior approval.

B. Clinical Experience Critical Reflection (15%): Candidates will observe and/or participate in teaching a lesson(s) in a middle-school or high school classroom. The candidate will look for and take notes on connections between course concepts and practices in the secondary setting. The candidate will then compose a 3-5-page critical reflection paper, drawing connections between course concepts and participation in clinical experiences.

Rubric and assignment details provided on Blackboard.

For SEED candidates: Complete the assignment reflecting on your classroom observations through your Methods 2 course.

For Provisional Teachers: Complete the assignment reflecting on your own classroom.

C. Disciplinary Lesson Plan (15%): Candidates will design, justify, and reflect on a detailed, standards-aligned lesson plan with specific content learning and literacy/language development goals. Candidates will draw on learning from the course to work across several modules to build and share the lesson plan.

Candidates will complete the following:

1. Lesson design: Candidates will design a lesson plan that engages students in reading a content area text. The lesson may focus on adolescent learners in middle level (grades 6-8) or secondary (grades 9- 12). A lesson template will be provided or candidates may use a lesson plan template from their current teaching context, ensuring that all elements from the lesson template are addressed. A folder in Blackboard will be provided with lesson planning materials.
2. Lesson rationale: Candidates will submit a 1-2 page written or 3–5-minute audio-recorded lesson rationale reflecting on and explaining the lesson design. Candidates will (1) explain why/how the content and language/literacy learning goals support one another in a rigorous (grade-level appropriate) lesson that is anchored in VA SOLS, (2) explain choices/thinking around lesson content, learning activities, and scaffolds/supports, and (3) explain the way that embedded formative assessment(s) will support adolescent learners **and** the candidate in assessing learners' progress toward the content and language goals.

Rubric provided on Blackboard

D. Disciplinary Literacy Inquiry Project (20%). This is a partner project. Candidates will work with a peer to complete an inquiry on methods of supporting students' comprehension in a particular content area. Candidates will read six (6) articles related to teaching in a particular discipline, create a critical annotated bibliography, and develop an 8-10-minute multimedia presentation to share their learning.

Assignment details and rubric provided on Blackboard.

- **Grading**
 - A = 95%-100%
 - A- = 90%-94%
 - B+ = 87%-89%
 - B = 83%-86%
 - B- = 80%-82%
 - C = 70 %-79%
 - F = below 70%

Professional Dispositions

See <https://cehd.gmu.edu/students/polices-procedures/>

Class Schedule

Note: Faculty reserves the right to alter the schedule as necessary, with notification to students.

Date	Topic	Readings	Due dates
Module 1. August 22-28	What is important about literacy? Who is responsible for literacy instruction for adolescents?	Read the syllabus. Ch. 1, <i>Improving Adolescent Literacy</i> International Reading Association. (2015). <i>Collaborating for success: The vital role of content teachers in developing disciplinary literacy with students in grades 6-12</i> [Position statement].	Complete all activities in module.
Module 2. Aug. 29 – Sept. 4	What is the role of identity in literacy and learning?	Buehl, D. (2017). Mentoring students in disciplinary literacy. In Doug Buehl, <i>Developing readers in the academic disciplines</i> (pp. 1-22). Stenhouse. (located on e-reserves) International Literacy Association. (2019). <i>Engagement and adolescent literacy</i> [Position statement and research brief].	Complete all activities in module.
Module 3. Sept. 5-11	What is comprehension? How do we analyze texts to use in our lessons?	Buehl, D. (2017). Teaching comprehension of complex disciplinary texts. In Doug Buehl, <i>Developing readers in the academic disciplines</i> (pp. 29-73). Stenhouse (located on e-reserves). Fang, Z. (2008). Going beyond the Fab Five: Helping students cope with the unique linguistic challenges of expository reading in intermediate grades. <i>Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy</i> , v51 n6 476-487. https://doi.org/10.1598/JAAL.51.6.4	Complete all activities in module.
Module 4. Sept. 12-18	How do we prepare students to read?	Ch. 2, <i>Improving Adolescent Literacy</i> Rance-Roney, J. (2010). Jump-starting language and schema for English-language learners: Teacher-composed digital jumpstarts for academic reading. <i>Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy</i> , 3(5), 386–395 https://doi.org/10.1598/JAAL.53.5.4	Complete all activities in module.
Module 5. Sept. 19-25	How do we create robust vocabulary learning?	Ch. 3, <i>Improving Adolescent Literacy</i> Flanigan, K., & Greenwood, S. (2007). Effective Content Vocabulary Instruction in the Middle: Matching Students, Purposes, Words, and Strategies. <i>Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy</i> , 51(3), 226–238. https://doi.org/10.1598/JAAL.51.3.3	Complete all activities in module.

		Schneider, E. & Ming, K. (2019). Masters of Morphology: Explicit Multisensory Structured Metacognitive Language Strategies to Foster Adolescent Learners' Content Vocabulary. <i>The Clearing House</i> , 92(3), 101–111. https://doi.org/10.1080/00098655.2019.1608144	
Module 6. Sept. 26 – Oct. 2	How do we support students' comprehension?	Chapter 4, <i>Improving Adolescent Literacy</i> Rainey, E.C., Maher, B. L., Coupland, D. Franchi, R., & Moji, E.B. (2018). But what does it look like? Illustrations of disciplinary literacy teaching in two content areas. <i>Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy</i> , 61(4), 371-379.	Complete all activities in module.
Module 7. Oct. 3-9	How do we create interactive and guided learning experiences?	Ch. 7, <i>Improving Adolescent Literacy</i> Ch. 8, <i>Improving Adolescent Literacy</i>	Complete all activities in module.
Module 8. Oct. 10-16	How do we use questioning strategies?	Ch. 5, <i>Improving Adolescent Literacy</i> Brown, S. A., & Pyle, N. (2021). Self-Questioning Strategy Routine to Enhance Reading Comprehension Among Secondary Students. <i>Teaching Exceptional Children</i> , 53(6), 441–449. https://doi-org.mutex.gmu.edu/10.1177/0040059920976677	Complete all activities in module.
Module 9. Oct. 17-23	How do we use writing to learn?	Ch. 9, <i>Improving Adolescent Literacy</i> Fang, Z., & Park, J. (2020). Adolescents' use of academic language in informational writing. <i>Reading & Writing</i> , 33(1), 97–119. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11145-019-09937-8	Complete all activities in module.
Module 10. Oct. 24-30	How do we develop academic discourse?	Ch. 6, <i>Improving Adolescent Literacy</i> Chiaravalloti, L. (2010). “Wouldn’t She Notice He Had Mud on His Shirt?”: Scaffolding Meaningful Discussions. <i>Voices from the Middle</i> , 18(2), 16–25.	

		Rawding, M.R., & Wills, T. (2012). Discourse: Simple Moves That Work. <i>Mathematics Teaching in the Middle School</i> , 18(1), 46–51. https://doi.org/10.5951/mathteachmidscho.18.1.0046	
NOTE: 2 -week cycle.			
Module 11. Oct. 31- Nov. 13	Complete DLIP	Self-selected articles.	Lesson Plan workshop: Wednesday Nov. 9, 4:30-6:00 PM online Complete all activities in module. DLIP due Nov. 13.
NOTE: 2 -week cycle.			
Module 12. Nov. 14 – Dec. 4	How do we design instruction?	Jung, L. A. (2021). Lesson Planning with UNIVERSAL DESIGN for Learning: Intentionally using UDL principles upfront means making fewer adaptations later-- and reaching more students. <i>Educational Leadership</i> , 78(9), 38–43. Prather, C. (2021). The Code for Student Engagement: What Malcolm X, The Wire, and my students’ lives taught me about creating lessons that matter. <i>Educational Leadership</i> , 79(4), 52–57. Wiggins, G., & Wilbur, D. (2015). How to Make Your Questions ESSENTIAL? <i>Educational Leadership</i> , 73(1), 10–15.	Final Disciplinary Literacy lesson plan due Dec. 4
Exam Week:		Complete course evaluations.	Field experience critical reflection due no later than Dec. 9

Core Values Commitment

The College of Education and 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/>.

GMU Policies and Resources for Students

Policies

- Students must adhere to the guidelines of the Mason Honor Code (see <https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/honor-code-system/>).
- Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing (see <https://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing/>).
- Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their Mason 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.
- Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with George Mason University Disability Services. Approved accommodations will begin at the time the written letter from Disability Services is received by the instructor (see <https://ds.gmu.edu/>).
- Students must silence all sound emitting devices during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.

Campus Resources

- Support for submission of assignments to VIA should be directed to VIAhelp@gmu.edu or <https://cehd.gmu.edu/aero/assessments>. Questions or concerns regarding use of Blackboard should be directed to <https://its.gmu.edu/knowledge-base/blackboard-instructional-technology-support-for-students/>.
- For information on student support resources on campus, see <https://ctfe.gmu.edu/teaching/student-support-resources-on-campus>

Notice of mandatory reporting of sexual assault, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, and stalking: As a faculty member, I am designated as a “Non-Confidential Employee,” and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason’s Title IX Coordinator per [University Policy 1202](#). If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason’s confidential resources, such as [Student Support and Advocacy Center](#) (SSAC) at 703-380-1434 or [Counseling and Psychological Services](#) (CAPS) at 703-993-2380. You may also seek assistance or support measures from Mason’s Title IX Coordinator by calling 703-993-8730, or emailing titleix@gmu.edu.

For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, please visit our website <https://cehd.gmu.edu/students/>.