

Education 274: Perspectives on Learning, Teaching, and Using Literacy

Spring 2007

Time: Fri. 5-8; Sat. 10-3

SJSU, Sweeney Hall: Rm. 335

e-mail: Nicholas_meier@csumb.edu

Instructor: Nicholas Meier

Office: CSUMB, Bldg 3, Rm 159

Phone: 831-582-3536 (o)/8312-688-2708(h)

Office hours: By appointment and after class

Course Description: This course provides you with a venue from which to examine and consider theoretical perspectives, educational issues and scholarship related to the use and development of literacy among diverse populations, particularly those who have not fared well in U.S. schools. In drawing on a collaborative and inquiry-based pedagogy for this course, I will be asking class members to share and discuss professional and personal experiences with language and literacy. We will begin the quarter by examining our own literacy histories as well as trends in literacy education. We will then explore different conceptual understandings about literacy that have framed research, policy, and pedagogy, paying particular attention to sociocultural perspectives and research focused on the use and development of literacy among learners from a variety of ethnic, racial, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Drawing largely on a sociocultural framework, we will also explore trends in literacy pedagogy. In addition, we will share our own experiences with and observations of literacy learning in different educational settings.. The final weeks of the course will focus on relating our study of literacy to trends and policy debates about the learning and teaching of literacy in U.S. schools and classrooms. In so doing, we will explore approaches to the professional and political development of teachers, focusing on how they are negotiating and making sense of the political milieu in which they live and work.

Overarching goals for the course include the following:

- To access and examine our own foundational understandings and values about learning, teaching, literacy, language and diversity.
- To better understand and evaluate conceptual understandings about language and literacy that have framed research, policy, and pedagogy.
- To collaborate with colleagues as we develop and share new understandings.
- To share, inquire about, reflect on, and reconsider our personal experiences and processes with literacy and as educators.
- To consider how to better understand and support teachers and prospective teachers in their work as literacy educators.

Required Texts:

Rose, M. (1989). *Lives on the boundary: A moving account of the struggles and achievements of America's educationally underprepared* New York: Penguin Books.

A Selection of Readings (I will provide these readings on the first day of class)

Our own texts.

Requirements

1. Attend class and keep up with required reading.

Your attendance in class is *essential*. Because much of class time will be devoted to discussions of course readings you will find it very difficult to participate in class if you haven't done the reading.

2. Participation in class discussion and jigsaws.

Class will be conducted in a seminar style, meaning that discussion will play an important role in our work together. During each class session, some readings will be “jigsawed” so that small groups of students will take primary responsibility for formulating and sharing their perspectives on a given reading with others. On other occasions the entire class may participate in a discussion of all or some of the assigned readings. When sharing or “jigsawing” readings, you will need to develop some way of using text to represent a reading. Such texts may take the form of a handout, poster, dramatic rendition, or pictorial representation.

The questions listed below plus any other additional questions raised in class or that I provide may help guide small and large group discussion.

- What does knowing or using language and literacy mean for the author?
- What is the author's perspective on learning language and literacy?
- How do points or claims made in the reading relate or compare to those brought up in other readings for this course?
- What did you find in the reading that helped you better understand a past experience or important phenomena or event(s)?
- What aspect of the reading did you find problematic?
- What questions did the reading raise for you?
- How does the reading relate to your research experiences or plans?
- How does the reading relate to your experiences as an educator?

3. Your Literacy Autobiography.

In preparation for our first class, I have asked you to read (or reread) *Lives on the boundary: A moving account of the struggles and achievements of America's educationally underprepared* by Mike Rose. The book, which was originally published in 1989, is an autobiography in which Rose connects his own experiences with literacy to those of his students. You can get the book at your local library, bookstore, or through Amazon.

In addition, I would like you to write an outline of your own literacy autobiography, which you will share in class and submit to me and your colleagues via email. For this outline, I would like you to do the following:

1. Draft a table of contents, constructing titles for each chapter.
2. Annotate each chapter title with a paragraph length description of what might be included in the chapter.
3. Choose one chapter and write a brief (no more than 2 page) narrative, vignette, or critical incident that would be highlighted in that chapter.

Your table of contents should capture dominant themes and patterns in your own evolution with literacy. You need not portray your experiences chronologically or account for all of your life experiences connected to literacy. Instead identify themes, patterns or critical events in your literacy narrative that you think have informed you as a learner and educator.

During our first class session we will share and draw on these drafts as a way to reflect on and inquire into the frameworks we bring to our study of literacy.

4. Literacy Snapshot.

For this assignment, I would like you to spend some time in a formal or informal setting where children, youth, and/or adults are learning/using literacy. You may choose to observe a class, an after-school program, parent workshop, or any other learning/teaching setting where participants are engaged with text as readers, writers, and/or thinkers. Although it may be particularly fruitful for you to choose a setting that you think is one where participants are engaged in innovative learning/teaching, you may decide on a setting that intrigues you (or even worries you). The overarching goal is to develop your account of literacy learning venues that can serve as texts for all of us to consider in our discussions with one another. In addition to taking detailed notes of what transpired during your observations, please interview one or two individuals participating in the event. Ideally those individuals should include a teacher (or person you perceive to be in a support role – i.e., caretaker, tutor) and a learner.

The following questions should guide your inquiry:

- What transpired during the event(s) you observed? (Aim for a thick description)
- How do you think participants conceive of language and literacy? (relate to perspectives mentioned in class or in course readings)
- How would you describe the nature of the learning that went on in the event(s) you observed?
- What were participants' views of the event?
- What did you think of the event(s)?
- What questions, issues, concerns does your observation raise for you in your role as educator/leader?

Approximate length of paper: 8 to 10 pages

Due Date: Observation/data collection by **April 20**; Write up by **May 4th**.

6. Socio Political Landscape Assignment.

For this assignment, I would like you to share your perspectives on the current policy context for learning and teaching language and literacy to future teachers. One of my concerns is

developing venues for teacher education students in which they gain insights into the current policy context that surrounds the learning and teaching of language and literacy in schools.

In preparation for our discussion, I will ask you to address the following questions:

What are the current policies or practices for teaching reading/writing in your school or work place?

Are federal, state or district policies impacting the way you teach reading/writing? (or the way reading/writing is being taught in your school or work setting) If so, how?
What are your views regarding these policies?

Do you have any suggestions regarding how new teachers should respond to or cope with these policies?

7. Final Paper

The goal of this assignment is to further your understanding of research and theory in the area of literacy learning/teaching in ways that will be useful to you as a scholar/educational leader. While I want you to have choice in deciding on the type of paper that you will write for this assignment, I know that it can help to suggest some options, including the following:

- Expand on your literacy autobiography. This would entail adding three more two-page vignettes and a concluding chapter in which you use your experience (and that of your family member, students, and/or colleagues) as a frame to exemplify or interrogate theoretical perspectives on learning and teaching that are addressed in this course.
- Expand on the sociopolitical landscape assignment to develop your take on a policy initiative or state mandate that has influenced literacy teaching and learning. In addition to studying the policy context in which it emerged, discuss how the initiative relates to various theoretical perspectives on learning and teaching language and literacy and on the academic achievement of students of color and English language learners.
- Conduct a critical review of literature in a particular area. This review could focus on a topic that you plan to pursue for your dissertation. In conducting this review, you must engage in a comprehensive analysis of research literature in a particular area that focuses on methodological concerns as well as theoretical ones.
- Develop a position paper that describes your pedagogical vision regarding the learning/teaching of language and literacy in your school community.

Approximate length: 2000–2500 words.

Due date: [May 19th](#)

You will need to decide on the general topic of your final project by [April 21st](#).

Topics and Readings

Session 1 (April 5 & 6):

- **Course Introduction**
- **Our Literacy Autobiographies**
- **Class Discussion of Mike Rose's *Lives on the Boundary***

- **What Frames our Perspectives for Examining Practice?: Examining Teachers' Literacy Learning/Teaching Websites**
- **Historical/Ideological Overview of Perspectives on Literacy that is Reflected in the Way Reading and Writing have been Taught in U.S. Public Schools**

Assignment

Share your draft of your literacy autobiography with the class

Submit your draft of your literacy autobiography to Cindy and post on class website (Cindy will provide details).

Readings:

Rose, M. (1989). *Lives on the boundary: A moving account of the struggles and achievements of America's educationally underprepared*. New York: Penguin Books.

Willis, A. I. (1997). Focus on research: Historical considerations. *Language Arts*, (74)5, pp. 387-397.

Cadiero-Kaplan, K. (2002). Literacy Ideologies: Critically engaging the language arts curriculum. *Language Arts*, (79)5, pp. 372-381.

Remember to post your reflection on an AERA session by April 17th

Session 2 (April 12/13)

- **Perspectives on Literacy, Theory, Research and Practice**
- **Closer examination of Sociocultural Perspectives on Literacy, Theory, Research, and Practice: Connecting the Formal to the Informal**
- **Examining Teachers websites**
- **The Teaching of Reading (innovations and comments) if time permits**

Assignments

- **Do required readings, including reading teachers' websites (i.e., DVDs and CDs, handed out in previous class)**
- **Each student will be responsible for carefully reading and sharing an article/chapter for jigsaw presentations.**

Readings:

Framing Article

Stone, C. A. (2004). Contemporary approaches to the study of language and literacy development: A call for the integration of perspectives. In Stone, Sillman, Ehren & Apel (Eds.), *Handbook of Language and Literacy*. **(Meier will present but please scan)**

Everyone reads:

Macedo, D. (2003). Literacy matters. *Language Arts*, 81(1), pp. 12 –13.

Luke, A. (2003) Literacy education for a new ethics of global community, pp. 20-22.

Kist, W. (2000). Beginning to create the new literacy classroom: What does the new literacy look like? *Journal of adolescent and adult literacy*, 43(8), pp. 710-718.

Gee, J. (1993). "What is literacy?" In L. M. Cleary & M. D. Linn, *Linguistics for teachers*. New York. McGraw Hill, pp. 257-265.

Luke, A & Freebody, P. (1997). Shaping the social practices of reading. In constructing critical literacies. In S. Muspratt, A. Luke, & P. Freebody, *Constructing critical literacies: Teaching and learning textual practice*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, Inc., pp. 185-225.

CDs and DVDs of teachers' web sites (Yvonne Hutchins, Gillian Maimon, Elena Aguilar, Jennifer Myers)

Jigsaw: Exploring Learning and Teaching from Sociocultural and Critical Perspectives

Session 3: (April 19/20)

- **"Innovations" in Learning to Read and Write**
- **Bilingual Learners and Literacy in School Settings**
 - **What does "the research" have to say?**
 - **What do you have to say?**
- **Teachers' Perspectives on the Institutional and Policy Environment**

Assignments:

- **Do required readings.**
- **Share (orally) your literacy snapshot**
- **Each student will be responsible for carefully reading one article/chapter for jigsaw presentations**

Readings:

Framing articles (everyone reads)

Garcia, G. E. (2000). Bilingual children's reading. In (Eds.), M. L. Kamil, P. B. Mosenthal, P. D. Pearson, & R. Barr, *Handbook of reading research: Volume III*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, pp. 813-834.

Bunch, G. C., Abram, P. L., Lotan, R. A., & Valdes, G. (2001). Beyond sheltered instruction: Rethinking conditions for academic language development. *TESOL Journal*. (Autumn), pp. 28-33.

Alim, H. S. (2005). Critical language awareness in the United States: Revising issues and revising pedagogies in a reseggregated society. *Educational Researcher*, 34(7), pp. 24-29.

MacGillivray, L. Ardell, A. L., Saucedo, C., & Palma, J. (2004). Colonized teachers: Examining the implementation of a scripted reading program. *Teaching Education*, 15(2), pp. 132-144.

Jig saw Readings:

Session 4: (May 4 & 5)

- **Teacher Education and Learning/Teaching Literacy**
- **The NRP Report**
- **Policy Perspectives and Learning/Teaching Literacy**

Assignments:

- **Do required readings.**
- **Each student will be responsible for carefully reading one article/chapter for jigsaw presentations**
- **Socio Political Landscape Discussion**

Readings

Jigsaw Readings:

Everybody reads the following articles and chapters:

Readings pertaining to the NRP

Overview of the Report of the National Reading Panel.

Garan, E. M. (2001). What does the report of the National Reading Panel really tell us about teaching phonics? *Language Arts*, 79(1), pp. 61-69.

Shanahan, T. (2001). Response to Elaine Garan. *Language Arts*, 79(1), pp. 71.

Garan, E. (2001). Response to Timothy Shanahan. *Language Arts*, 79(1), p. 71.

Allington, R. L. (2005). Ideology is still trumping evidence. *Phi Delta Kappan*, (February), pp. 452-468.

Yatvin, J., Weaver & Garan, E. (2003). Reading first: Cautions and recommendations. *Language Arts*, 31(1), pp. 28-33.

Readings pertaining to policy (and in some cases teachers)

Browse the U.S. Department of Education's "No Child Left Behind" Website:

<http://www.ed.gov/nclb.landing.jhtml?src=fb>

Abedi, J. & Dietel, R. (2004). Challenges in the No Child Left Behind Act for English-Language Learners. *Phi Delta Kapan*, June, pp. 782-785.

- Wright, W. (2005). Evolution of federal policy and implications of No Child Left Behind for language minority students. Education Policy Studies Laboratory, Language Policy Research Unit, College of Education, Arizona State University. Available on-line at http://www.asu.edu/educ/eps/EPRU/epru_2005_Research_Writing.htm
- Gutierrez, K. D., Asato, J., Pacheco, M., Moll, L. C. , Olson, K. Horng, E L. , Ruiz, R., Garcia, E., and McCarty, T. L. (2002). "Sounding American" The consequences of new reforms on English language learners. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 37(3), pp. 328-343.
- Pearson, P.D. (2003). The role of professional knowledge in reading reform. *Language arts*, 81(1), pp. 14-15.
- Moll, L. C.. & Arnot-Hoffer, E. A. (2005). Sociocultural competence in teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, (56)3, pp. 242-247.
- Moustafa, M. & Land, R. E. (2002). The reading achievement of economically-disadvantaged children in urban schools using Open Court vs. comparably disadvantaged children in urban schools using non-scripted reading programs. Manuscript from Margaret Moustafa's website.

Final Assignment:
Due 5/19/06

Grading Policy:

Assignments and participation are weighted as follows:

Participation	20%
Literacy Autobiography	15%
Literacy Snapshot	20%
Socio Political Landscape Assignment	15%
Final Assignment	30%

Criteria for written work:

The grading system for this course is based on the expectation that with evaluation criteria given for each assignment, explicit instructor feedback, and opportunities for revision, every student will receive a passing grade for each assignment. In the case of written work, there are a few things that I would like you to consider. Please make sure that you substantiate your claims with different sources of evidence in your writing, including evidence from course readings, your experiences, and class assignments. In addition, when arguing a point or position please consider alternative perspectives. Also, I am partial to succinct writing. (But I personally struggle to make every word that I write "count.") Final drafts should be typed, using APA format for citations. I will suggest different ways to organize the write-ups of your assignments as the quarter progresses.

Criteria for class participation:

I do not base my assessment of your class participation on the quantity of your verbal contributions. I'm interested in the nature of your participation. I appreciate respectful disputes as well as efforts to include colleagues in discussion. Playing devil's advocate (in a respectful way) and raising questions about some one's view point can be helpful for all of our learning. Sometimes it is even more helpful to listen as colleagues grapple with a view or explanation.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities or other special needs are encouraged to speak with me as soon as possible regarding needed modification to the course structure. In addition, please contact the UCSC Disabilities Resources Center at 831-459-2089 for general assistance.

Online Resources:

<http://www.ciera.org>

<http://www.cal.org/crede/>

http://www.indiana.edu/~eric_rec/

<http://www.famlit.org>

<http://www.nifl.gov>

<http://www.cast.org/udl/FamilyandCommunityLiteracy335.cfm>

<http://instructional1.calstatela.edu/mmousta/>

<http://www.susanohanian.org/>

<http://quest.carnegiefoundation.org/~dpointer/gallery/index.htm>