ENG 413/513: Theories of Literacy

SYLLABUS

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Texts

Greg Mortenson, *Stones into Schools*
Paolo Freire, *Pedagogy of Hope*
Additional readings in “Course Documents” on Blackboard

Films

Selections from video, "Teaching Adults to Read" (VT 616) (USA)
Freire and Critical Pedagogy: http://freireproject.org/content/critical-pedagogy-tv
"Inside Out" (U of O) available online
Selections from documentary "Waiting for Superman" (USA) and/or "The Race to Nowhere"
"Not One Less" on reserve (also available at the Knight Library in Chinese) (China)
"High School," Frederic Wiseman, on reserve (USA)
"The Class," on reserve (France)
Selections from Restrepo

Grades

1. Attendance, reading, and participation (15%)
2. Reflections and responses--essays posted on Blackboard Discussion (25%)
3. Midterm exams (ENG 413 only) (15% each for a total of 30%)
4. Final project: presentation/final paper (30%)

Assignments

*Both ENG 413 and ENG 513:*

*These classes include a practicum. You receive additional credit for this requirement: enroll concurrently in ENG 404 or ENG 604 for 1-4 internship credits.*

1. *Attend classes and participate fully* by offering ideas, experiences, and interpretations of readings. Attendance and participation count on your grade. Without further notification, your grade may be lowered because of absences. Generally each absence from the entire class gives you a failing grade for one-tenth of the course (that is, one week’s work). If you have a medical or other emergency, please notify us.

2. *Write weekly short reflective essays to be posted on Blackboard Discussion* (questions for these will be posted on each Forum of the Blackboard Discussion Group: “Reflections”). 250-500 words. You will receive an overall grade for these reflections at the end of the term. Your
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responses to the reflections of others can also be important. I review class participation on the "Discussion Group" when I am assessing the "Participation" grade.

Reflection grades:
- In order to receive an A, your reflections should be well written and demonstrate your ongoing process of thinking about literacy in theory and practice, with references both to specific details from the community and ideas from readings. Grammar, spelling and a sense of organization are all important.
- A B grade would be given to those whose reflections are thoughtful and well-written.
- A passing grade means that you have completed all the reflections on time and met length and content requirements.

ENG 413 only:

3. Two half-hour Midterm examinations: short essay questions on terms, concepts, and quotations from theoretical readings: These terms and concepts are highlighted for each week. Sample quotations will be distributed before the midterms. The second midterm is scheduled late in the term—during the 9th week—to address specific theoretical concepts before you write your final paper.

4. Powerpoint presentation and Final Paper. Create a research paper on the model proposed by Linda Flower, which combines theory and internship practice:
   - Apply controversial or significant claims of literacy theory to a problem you have observed during your internship practices,
   - OR develop a significant literacy project with an explanation of how it is related to theories of literacy texts we have read.
   - Present this to the class in a Powerpoint presentation during the "Final Exam" meeting of the class, and submit the final draft of a 5-7 page research paper to BB Discussion. Alternatively, you may create a web site which incorporates material you can present to the class and the material you would include in your paper. I encourage you to include visual and sound elements in your presentation.
   - Come discuss your presentation and paper with me as you develop your ideas and your drafts.
   - No matter what form your research takes, you must submit a bibliography, and in particular include the primary sources (interviews, observations) and online sources as well as print sources that you have used. This research project in whatever form must be posted to the Discussion group for Final Projects in order to receive a grade. You may post a url if you have a web site. Due Monday, June 6 of finals week by 7 p.m..

ENG 513 only:

3. Choose a research project that incorporates both theory and community practice in discussions with me, and gather material from primary and secondary sources, using online, archival, and library resources (images and audio content as well as text). Prepare a 10 minute Powerpoint presentation for class on the "Final Exam" day and complete a research paper that uses your results. You may include literacy narratives, observations, and the results of your empirical reflections within this paper as primary sources together with the secondary sources you use. Write it in the form of a conference presentation (10-11 pages--formal, tightly written) or in the form of a longer research paper (15-25 pages--may be more impressionistic). Include a complete Bibliography for whichever format you choose. Due Monday, June 6 by 7 pm--finals week.
Schedule of Readings--to be previewed and read the week before and discussed the week they are listed.

Week One March 28:
Introduction
6:30 Guests to talk about internships
7:00 Literacy narratives--literacy is a personal experience; literacy is also a global issue, Literacy is connected to the social issues of citizenship, violence and crime
8:15 Video and site preview: "Critical Literacy"
http://freireproject.org/content/critical-pedagogy-tv (15 min)
How is literacy a "theoretical" issue?
Preview: Freire's Pedagogy of Hope
Preview: Stones into Schools,

Week Two April 4
Flower, Linda. “Partners in Inquiry: A Logic for Community Outreach.”
“Adolescent Vernacular Writing: Literacy Reconsidered.” (BB)
Freire, literacy campaigns from Cuba and Brazil and Chile: Pedagogy of Hope. Chap. 1
Concepts: inquiry, the vernacular, critical literacy, dialogue

Week Three April 11
Saussure, from Course in General Linguistics; Barthes, from "Mythologies" (6-14) in CCTR
"Not One Less," film.
Freire, continued. Chap. 2
Concepts: the sign (signified/signifier, arbitrariness, difference); critical pedagogy and community

Week Four April 18
Guest speaker: Prof. David Li, on "Not One Less"
Louis Althusser, from "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," CCTR (42-50)
Edward Said, from Orientalism, CCTR (55-61),
Guest Speaker, Katie Dwyer, and a short film: "Inside Out" --program with prison inmates and Freirean pedagogies
Freire, continued. Chap. 3
Concepts: orientalism, the other, multicultural, ideological state apparatus (ISA), subject, interpellation

Week Five April 25
Jacques Lacan, from "The Mirror Stage," CCTR (81-86)
Frantz Fanon, "Black Skin, White Masks"
Fanon, "Black Skin, White Masks."
Freire, continued, Chap. 4
First Midterm Examination
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**Week Six May 2**
Michel Foucault, from *Discipline and Punish* CCTR (94-101)
Selections from Frederic Wiseman, *High School, Waiting for Superman*
Accountability and Testing: selections from Diane Ravitch, *The Death and Life of the Great American School System*
Discussion of *Stones into Schools*, first half.
Concepts: surveillance, discipline, power, resistance

**Week Seven May 9**
Jacques Derrida, "Différance," CCTR (120-140)
“Becoming Literate: A Lesson from the Amish,” and “Citizenship Schools.”
Concepts: difference, deconstruction, literacy, schooling

**Week Eight May 16**
Rajeswari Sunder Rajan, from *Real and Imagined Women* CCTR (184-190)
Judith Butler, from *Gender Trouble* CCTR (191-196)
Freire, continued. Chap. 5-6
Excerpts, Restrepo, film.
Concepts: politics of body, nation, and identity (culture, race, gender),

**Week Nine May 23**
Freire, concluded. Chap. 7
Discussion of *Stones into Schools*, conclusion.
Concepts: Schooling and War
Second Midterm Examination

**Week Ten May 30 (No class--Memorial day)**
Post a final reflection on *Stones into School*

*Final Meeting June 6 at 7 p.m.*
*Powerpoint Reports in class to summarize and illustrate final papers. Four minutes each.*
ENG 413 and ENG 513 final paper or project due June 8 at 5 p.m. Submit by posting on the class discussion group.
*No Final Examination*
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Course Description:

A Semiotic Approach: Taking a semiotic approach to literacy means that you understand literacy as the process of entering into as well as learning the sign systems of language and culture. It is important for you to learn the meaning of key theoretical terms as well as to discuss critically how they are applied in literacy practices. "Theories of Literacy" will include very specific experiences that you encounter in the community; the class will bring those concrete instances together with the theories we read. This contact between theory and practice is dynamic and often contradictory. Many of the theories you study this term draw upon Saussure's analysis of language as a system of differences. This approach is particularly relevant to the consideration of difference and diversity.

A semiotic, or sign-based, account of literacy must be ecological--must see how the systems of signs function, in a grounded context of place, of bioregion, of persons, of interests, of survival, of desire, as well as of competition and violence. Storytelling is an important way that literacy is learned and expressed. So is the ability to participate in the many visual and performative means of expression in our heterogeneous culture—and that includes the new media. The texts for the class exemplify a semiotic and a cultural studies approach, taking both critical evaluation and cultural description into account, and putting both into dialogue with the class's experiences of literacy work in this community.

A Community Service Approach: You are required to be involved in a practicum experience along with this class—it is central to our intellectual and practical work. You receive credit for this requirement by enrolling concurrently in ENG 404 or ENG 604 for 1-4 internship credits. If you are working at a literacy job or already volunteering in a situation for which you do not wish official credit, you may meet the practicum requirement in these ways. This course takes theory outside, into the community—not to apply abstract ideas to helpless others, but to learn from others (who often know much more than we do about literacy) at first hand, with a mind open and ready to be instructed. Your instructors are ready to have our ideas changed, and we want theories to be challenged by experience.
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