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Education 513, 621-1843 or 621-1311 (secretary)

Office hours: Tues. 1:00-2:00 & 5:00-7:00 p.m., Wed., 1:00-2:00 & 7:00-8:00 p.m. (by appt)

**LRC 583**  
**LITERATURE DISCUSSION:**  
**INVITING READERS TO TALK ABOUT BOOKS**  
**Fall 2008**

**COURSE INTENT:**

The purpose of this course is to critically address the many issues involved in creating learning environments which support readers as they engage in critical dialogue about literature. Theory, research, and practice related to reader response, talk, the social construction of meaning, and social relationships in groups will be explored. A special focus will be placed on research and practice as related to literature discussion groups and strategies for organizing these groups and supporting thoughtful dialogue. Participants in this course will experience literature discussions, read and discuss theory, research and practice related to literature groups and reader response, share from their experiences with students and literature, and engage in inquiry about responses to literature.

This course is designed to facilitate interaction among class members as we share our experiences and inquiry with each other. You are each encouraged to explore issues about literature discussion related to your current understandings, concerns, classroom setting, and educational responsibilities. The responsibility for what you learn and how much you learn lies with you and the choices you make in class sessions, readings, and projects.

This class is based on the following assumptions about learning:

1. Learning is an active process.  
We will immerse ourselves in reading and responding to professional readings and children's literature.
2. Learning is a social process of collaborating with others.  
We will explore our thinking about our reading experiences through dialogue in small groups.  
We will engage in inquiry with others who have similar questions and concerns.
3. Learning occurs as we make connections to our own experiences.  
Responses to literature will focus on personal responses and connections to our lives and teaching experiences. We will share ideas and concerns from our teaching and professional experiences and will design projects that fit our current needs and interests. We will search for connections between our experiences as readers and our experiences as teachers and librarians.
4. Choice allows learners to connect to their experiences and feel ownership in their learning.  
We will have choices in the books we read, our responses to readings and to literature and the specific focus of projects and small group activities.
5. Learning is reflective as well as active.  
We will have many opportunities to reflect on what we are learning through writing, talking, sketching, and self-evaluations.
6. Learning occurs in a multicultural world with many ways of knowing.  
We will search for literature and response engagements that reflect diversity in experiences and ways of expressing those experiences.
7. Learning is a process of inquiry.  
As learners we need to search out the questions that matter in our lives and develop strategies for exploring those questions and sharing our understandings with others.

## **SHARED READINGS:**

Comprehension through Conversation, Maria Nichols

Getting Started with Literature Circles. K. S. Noe & N. Johnson.

**OR** Literature Circles in Middle School, B. Campbell, K. Noe, & J. King

Shades of Meaning, Donna Santman

The Red Scarf Girl, Ji-Li Jiang

Articles for whole class discussions (D2L)

Articles and books for small group and individual inquiry

## **CLASS SCHEDULE:** 4:15-6:45 **\*\*Class will begin promptly at 4:15.**

Literature Circles and Engagements

Discussions of professional readings

Whole group presentations/demonstrations/discussions

Inquiry groups

Reflection

## **COURSE PROJECTS AND LEARNING EXPERIENCES:**

### **1. Participation and Attendance**

Attend class regularly and actively participate in class discussions, literature circles, written responses, and class activities. Class sessions involve many discussions and collaborative engagements. If you are absent or not prepared for class, your actions will have a significant impact on others as well as on your own learning. If you absolutely must miss a class session due to illness, leave a message for me in advance at the LRC office (621-1311) or on e-mail. Contact a class member so that you are fully prepared for the next class meeting. **More than one absence or excessive tardiness/leaving early will affect your grade for the course.**

Read and reflect on the professional readings and always be prepared to discuss them in small and whole group settings. Actively participate in literature discussion groups by reading the literature, preparing for the discussion, engaging in dialogue with group members about the literature, and reflecting on the discussion process. Create artifacts related to class sessions, e.g. literacy time line, story ray, etc.

### **2. Learning Log**

The purpose of the learning log is for you to reflect on a regular basis about what you are reading and learning related to literature discussion. We often get so involved in our teaching or in reading what others have said that we do not stop to make our own connections and create our own understandings. The purpose of this log is not to "prove" you have read an article or learned a particular concept. It is not a place for notes, summaries, or retellings. It is a place for you to reflect on your own ideas, questions, and connections related to talk about literature. These may be new understandings and issues or ones that you are rethinking because of your experiences.

- You can write reflections in your log about understandings, questions, and connections on: class sessions and discussions
- your reading of professional articles or children's literature
- your own classroom teaching experiences
- professional meetings or inservices
- discussions with professional colleagues
- readings and experiences related to your inquiry project

Make 1-2 entries a week in your log. Think about your own schedule and the best time for you to write in your log. Come up with a time and place that will work for you on a regular basis. These entries are

reflective entries, not something you quickly write at the beginning of class. You will hand in these logs each week so they need to be in a looseleaf notebook or some other form where you can add entries.

### **3. Reflection on Selecting Literature to Encourage Dialogue**

Evaluate your personal collection of children's/adolescent literature and pull out a set of books that you think would lend themselves to encouraging thoughtful dialogue among students. Use this set of books to think about your criteria for choosing books that have the most potential to support dialogue. Bring 3-5 books from your set on **September 17** to share with a small group and to discuss the criteria for selecting books for literature discussion. On **September 24**, hand in a written reflection where you list the books you selected and reflect on the kinds of books that have the most potential for encouraging thoughtful talk with the age group of readers that interests you.

### **4. Professional Observation**

Observe and take field notes of an actual literature discussion among the age group of students of most interest to you. The literature discussion can be whole group or small group, although you will find it easier to take notes of a small group. The group can be in your own classroom, but it needs to be a situation where you are an observer, not a participant. You may find it preferable to observe in another classroom context. The observation can occur in school, college, or community contexts. Bring the field notes and an initial reflection on the observation to class on **October 1**. That reflection should describe the context in which you observed the discussion and your initial reflections on the kinds of talk and thinking students engaged in during the discussion based on your observation and field notes. You will revisit these notes and reflect on your analysis after participating in the transcript analysis.

### **5. Mini-inquiry**

Based on the professional readings and our discussion of supporting conversations and dialogue about literature, choose a particular response engagement that you want to explore. You can explore this engagement in your own reading or in your work with another person or with your students. Write a reflection on what engagement you chose and why, what you did, what occurred, and the questions this experience raised for you. The mini-inquiry and reflection are due on **October 8**.

### **6. Literature Discussion Transcript Analysis**

After participating in a whole class analysis of a literature discussion, work in groups of 3 and tape one literature discussion. Transcribe that discussion and, as a group, analyze what is happening in the discussion. The transcript of the literature discussion is needed for class on **October 22**. On **October 29**, each group will share their analysis with the class through a handout or overhead that summarizes the categories and findings. Group members will hand in a reflection on this experience which gives a history of the group and their learning along with their transcript and categories.

### **7. Final Inquiry Project/Inquiry Groups**

Choose a question or issue of immediate concern to you in relation to literature discussion. Once you have decided on a particular question, decide how you will conduct your inquiry to explore that issue or question. You can research your focus through professional readings, discussions, interviews, observations, and/or work with children. You may want to audio or videotape discussions, take field notes on discussions, or collect samples of children's responses to literature as part of your analysis. You may work alone or with another class member(s). An inquiry plan is due **October 29**.

Form an inquiry group with other individuals who have questions similar to your's. The group will support each other in designing their inquiry, discussing related issues, and thinking through their findings and interpretations. Your group will make decisions about professional readings (books or articles) that the group wants to pursue related to the inquiry.

Please bring a 3 ring notebook with dividers to class which you can use for the inquiry sheets I will be giving you to think through your inquiry project and to keep notes, articles, etc. from your project.

You will present your inquiry project through some type of class presentation or sharing. This sharing will occur on **December 10 and 17** and will involve some type of oral sharing and a handout for class members. The format for these presentations will be decided once the inquiry projects are underway. A paper reporting your inquiry will be due on **December 10**. The paper will report on the nature of your inquiry, how you explored your question, what you found, and the implications of this inquiry for you.

## **7. Other**

You may have other personal goals that you want to pursue within this course. These goals might include continuing your reading of children's or adolescent literature, collecting resources to use in your classroom for literature groups, organizing these resources, reading particular professional materials, visiting classrooms, etc. Develop a plan for these goals. You do not have to set other goals. The projects that are part of this class may already meet your needs. Please talk to us if you have particular needs that are not being met by the course readings or projects so we can negotiate a way to meet those needs.

## **EVALUATION**

Self-evaluation and reflection are essential to learning. For each major project, you will write a self-evaluation in which you state your goals for that project and evaluate the process you went through in reaching those goals. I will add evaluative comments based on your goals. You will also write a mid-term evaluation of your learning and an overall self-evaluation of your learning at the end of the class.

Your final grade will be based holistically on both your and my evaluation of your growth and learning, the quality of your written work, and your attendance, participation, and preparation for class sessions. While you can negotiate the ways in which you define class projects, you must complete all of these projects to fulfill course requirements and your final grade for the course will be based on the thoughtfulness and quality of this work with a B reflecting the completion of all course projects at a satisfactory level. Incompletes will not be given for the course except in extreme situations and only with prior approval by the instructor.

- **University Policies Approved Absences** All holidays or special events observed by organized religions will be honored for those students who show affiliation with that particular religion, Absences pre-approved by the UA Dean of Students (or Dean's designee) will be honored
- **Students with Disabilities:** If you anticipate issues related to the format or requirements of this course, please meet with me. I would like us to discuss ways to ensure your full participation in the course. If you determine that formal, disability-related accommodations are necessary, it is very important that you be registered with Disability Resources (621-3268; [drc.arizona.edu](http://drc.arizona.edu)) and notify me of your eligibility for reasonable accommodations. We can then plan how best to coordinate your accommodations
- **Policies against plagiarism.** See the Student Code of Academic Integrity [.http://dos.web.arizona.edu/uapolicies](http://dos.web.arizona.edu/uapolicies)
- **Policies against threatening behavior by students.** See the university policies.

## **STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES ON MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION**

Department of Language, Reading and Culture, University of Arizona

The term “multicultural education” expresses the essential mission of the department and the university. Multicultural education is not just “about” certain subjects; it does not merely offer “perspectives” on education: It is an orientation to our purposes in education – and ultimately an orientation to life, one that values diversity of viewpoints and experiences and sees people as valuable contributors to the experience of school and society. Life in universities is a self-consciously multicultural experience, from the varieties of personal, social, and cultural backgrounds represented in it to the full spectrum of ideas and disciplinary traditions that compose the community of scholars. Our recognition of this central tenet leads us to commit ourselves to the following general principles.

Learners bring a variety of linguistic and cognitive strengths from their families, communities and nations into the classroom; these strengths are resources to be appreciated as such by educators.

Education must expand on the linguistic and cognitive strengths that learners already possess and bring with them to the classroom, rather than ignore or try to replace them with others.

Respect and appreciation for cultural and community knowledge means that universities serve the interest of education when they allow for an exchange of views, rather than rely exclusively on a transmission model of instruction.

We recognize the existence of a variety of communities – each with its own voice and interests – both within and outside the university; a broad education offers the opportunity to hear and study as many of these voices as possible. Such an accommodation must include those communities which have traditionally been excluded or underrepresented in the university.

Recognition of the validity of these general principles must be reflected in our courses, our relations with students, staff and other faculty members, and in the community life of the Department.

### Other important dates:

September 19-20, Arizona Reading Association Conference, Glendale, AZ

<http://www.azreadingassoc.com/>

September 27, SazAEYC Annual Conference, Communities of Hope, Creators of Change, University of Arizona

October 10-11, CERCLL Conference, Developing and Assessing Intercultural Competence, University of Arizona. <http://cercll.arizona.edu/events.php>

October 24-25, Arizona English Teachers Association State Conference, Mesa, AZ  
[www.asu.edu/aeta](http://www.asu.edu/aeta)

November 1, Tucson Teachers Applying Whole Language, Pueblo Gardens Elementary School  
[www.tucsontawl.org](http://www.tucsontawl.org)

November 19-23, NCTE Annual Convention. San Antonio, TX\_ [www.ncte.org](http://www.ncte.org)

December 3-6, National Reading Conference, Orlando, FL [www.reading.org](http://www.reading.org)

### **Tentative Schedule of Class Sessions**

August 27	Introduction to the course	
September 3	Reading as Transaction	Literacy Timeline Rosenblatt, Probst, Rosenblatt Nichols, C. 1-3
September 10	Creating a Context for Discussion Getting Started with Literature Discussion	Nichols, C. 4-7 GSLC-Intro, C1& 2/ LCMS-C.1
September 17	Creating a Context for Discussion Choosing Literature that Supports Discussion	GSLC - C.4/LCMS - C. 3 Articles, Red Scarf Girl Bring 3-5 books to share
September 24	Organizing for Literature Groups Introduce professional observation	GSLC - C. 3/LCMC - C. 2 Articles, Red Scarf Girl Reflections on literature choice
October 1	Supporting Conversation and Dialogue Introduce transcript project	GSLC - C. 5, 6/LCMC - C. 4, 5 Professional Observation due
October 8	The Role of the Teacher	Freedman, Short, et al., Moller Mini-inquiry due
October 15	Examining Students' Talk about Lit. Analysis of a Transcript	Eeds and Wells, Sipe, Martinez & Lopez-Robertson
October 22	Examining Students' Talk about Lit. Transcript groups analyze Introduce inquiry project	Laman Articles Mid-term Reflection due
October 29	Sharing from Transcript Groups Evaluation Share inquiry project ideas	Hill, article Transcript projects due Inquiry plans due
November 5	Supporting Comprehension and Interpretation	Santman, Chapters 1-4 Sumara. Reread Red Scarf Girl
November 12	Supporting Comprehension and Interpretation	Santman, Chapters 5-9 GSLC, C. 7
November 19	Responding across Sign Systems	GSLC - C. 8/LCMC - C.6 Short, Kauffman, Kahn
November 26	Critical issues related to literature discussion	Articles
December 3	Critical issues related to literature discussion	Articles
December 10	Class presentations	Inquiry projects due
December 17	Class presentations	Final evaluations