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Office Hours: Please make an appointment
Tues., 4:00-6:00 p.m.
Wed., 12:00-2:00, 7:00-8:00 p.m.

LRC 584, Fall 2006
LITERATURE AND LITERACY FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

Course Intent

The primary focus of this course is children's literature and its role in the literacy development of young children (preschool-grade 3). Both the types of books appropriate for young children and the kinds of curricular engagements that bring children and books together will be explored through professional readings, discussions, and class experiences.

Our primary focus is on the use of literature in classroom settings, but some class members will want to explore literature in library or family settings. We will take time to explore the books themselves as well as to discuss curricular and theoretical issues involved in their use in the classroom with young children. Each class member is encouraged to explore issues about literature for young children related to your understandings, concerns, and settings. These issues will be examined through reading current research, theory, and practice as well as through your inquiry projects. The responsibility for what you learn and how much you learn lies with the choices you make in the class sessions, readings, and projects.

Throughout this course, the concept of "storying" and narrative will be continuously explored. Storying highlights the process we engage in as we search for ways to give structure and meaning to our experiences with others. While narrative or storying may not be the only way we construct reality, it is considered by many as the primary way we go about making meaning from our experiences. Barbara Hardy argues:

Narrative is a primary act of mind....For we dream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticize, construct, gossip, learn, hate, and love by narrative. In order to really live, we make up stories about ourselves and others, about the personal as well as the social past and future.

We create realistic and imaginative stories about our experiences. Even the most abstract theory can be seen as just a "bigger story" that is used to make sense of our observations about the world. Inventing the story is not enough, the story must be told and so narrative is, at heart, a social process. For young children, the invention and telling of stories is continuously evidenced in their play and talk. We will explore how our use of literature with young children can build on their understandings of stories.

This class is based on the following assumptions about learning:

1. Learning is an active process of inquiry, of searching out and exploring the questions that matter in our lives.
2. Learning is a social process of collaborating with others.
3. Learning occurs when we make connections to our experiences.
4. Learners need choices to make connections and feel ownership.
5. Learning is reflective as well as active.
6. Learning occurs within a multicultural world with many ways of knowing.
7. Learning is an inquiry process in which we search for and investigate questions that are significant in our lives.

Course Structure:

The following time blocks will be part of the course but the weekly schedule will depend on the particular class focus and on how we negotiate our use of time in the class.

- Browsing and discussion of particular kinds of books for young children
- Presentations and demonstrations
- Small group discussions of professional readings/Inquiry groups
- Sharing and Reflection

Course Readings:

Articles and chapters on D2L

Wally's Stories. Vivian Paley. Harvard Press.

Reading Magic. Mem Fox. Harcourt

Perspectives on Shared Reading. Bobbi Fisher & Emily Medvic. Heinemann.

Negotiating Critical Literacies with Young Children, Vivian Vasquez

Professional book for small group discussions

Related articles, chapters, & books available in our professional library

Course Projects and Learning Experiences:

1. Participation and attendance

Attend class regularly and participate in discussions, sharing, book browsing, small groups, written responses, and class activities. Bring books to contribute to the browsing time. Two important aspects of participation are to read and prepare for small group discussions on professional readings and to respond to the learning log of another class member.

More than one absence and/or chronic tardiness will impact your grade for the course. If you must miss a class session, leave a message in advance in the LRC office (621-1311) or by email. Contact a class member so that you are fully prepared for the next class. Meet with me at the next class session to determine how you will make up the work for the class you missed.

2. Learning Logs

The purpose of the log is for you to reflect on your learning about literature for young children and to enter into dialogue with others. Record your understandings, questions, and connections - the focus is on personal response rather than summaries of readings or class notes. These understandings and issues may be new to you or ones that you are rethinking because of your experiences.

Make 1-2 entries a week in your log. Your entries can be reflections on any of the following experiences: 1) professional readings, either assigned or self-selected; 2) our class sessions; 3) children's books; 4) classroom, library, or family experiences; 5) other professional experiences

You will hand in your log every two weeks (see schedule). Make a photocopy of your log entries because you will be giving your log to two people: me and a class member. Both of us will respond to your log entries and you will have a week to read our responses before again exchanging the logs. Please use some type of loose-leaf notebook for the log so that you can easily add entries and can write entries even when someone else has your log.

3. Mini-inquiries on the literacy of young children

You will do two mini-inquiries on some aspect of young children's literacy related to storying and to literature. You might want to look at children's understandings of story and literature through observing a young child who is reading a book by telling the story, a child engaging in oral storytelling, a discussion of literature in a small group or whole class, children interacting with books during independent reading,

or children who are playing and using literary language and stories in their play. You might want to have a young child engage in bookhandling tasks to examine their knowledge about language. You will meet in a small groups with other class members who are interested in a similar aspect of young children's literacy and use of literature. These mini-inquiries will be due on September 13 and October 11.

4. Reading Children's Literature

As you read literature for young children during the course, record those readings using whatever system you have already developed or develop a system that makes sense for your needs. You will need to decide how much emphasis you want to put on reading literature for young children vs focusing on curricular and theoretical issues relating to literature for young children.

5. Inquiry Project

Choose a question or issue of concern to you in relation to literature for young children. Once you have chosen a particular question, decide on how you will conduct your inquiry to explore that question or issue. You can research your focus through professional readings, readings of children's books, discussions, interviews, observations, and/or work with children. You can choose to do your inquiry project alone or with others. The only limitations on this project are that it needs to relate to literature and young children and should be on a question that matters to you. The inquiry projects will be presented to class members on December 6 and 13. In addition, a written report of your inquiry will be due on December 6.

Form an inquiry group with other individuals who have a similar focus. Your group will make decisions about professional readings (books or articles) to pursue for their discussion. The group can decide to read from the same materials or from related materials. The group will support each other in designing and discussing your inquiries and related issues.

The following are some possibilities for the project:

1. Your inquiry project can focus on a particular area of the curriculum such as literature discussion groups, oral storytelling, or readers theatre.
2. You might explore a particular issue such as children's visual literacy in their reading of picture books, your role as a teacher in discussions about literature, the understandings your students bring to school about story, evaluation of young children's literary understandings, family storytelling, gender differences in children's storytelling, children's use of literature in their play, children's use of literature in their inquiry and research, shared reading experiences with predictable books, using literature to support children in developing their reading strategies, or biliteracy issues related to literature.
3. You can focus on a particular type of literature such as wordless books by reading wordless books and exploring ways these books might be integrated into the curriculum. You could also engage in a critical analysis of a particular type of book for young children.
4. Another option is to take a broad focus on your classroom curriculum and explore how you want to integrate literature into your curriculum. You would need to identify the major types of experiences in your curriculum and how you want to organize and use literature in these experiences.

6. Evaluation

For each major project, you will be asked to turn in 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 my evaluative comments based on your statement of goals. You will also complete a mid-term evaluation of your learning and the course that includes your goals for the rest of the semester, as well as an overall self-evaluation of your learning throughout the class at the end of the semester.

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 and complete 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. An incomplete will not be given for the course except in extreme situations and only with prior approval by the instructor.

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. 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 under-represented 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.

Class Sessions - Tentative Schedule

August 23	Introduction to the course	
August 30	Why do we tell stories?	Engel, Paley, p. 1-107
September 6	Whose stories are told and heard?	Paley, p. 108-223 Dialogue Journals
September 13	Bringing stories to school Curriculum framework for literacy learning	Winston, Gallas
September 20	Organizing for literacy learning	Short; Morrow; Collins Mini-inquiries on storying Dialogue Journals
September 27	Learning Language	Fox, Gallas
October 4	Learning about Language	Fisher & Medvic Dialogue Journals
October 11	Learning through Language	Articles
October 18	Literature to teach reading	Peterson, Pierce, Power Mini-inquiry on literacy learning Dialogue Journals
October 25	Evaluating books for young children	Mid-term reflections; Inquiry Plan Jacobs and Tunnel
November 1	Literature as a tool for critical inquiry	Vasquez Dialogue Journals
November 8		
November 15		Dialogue Journals
November 22		
November 29		
December 6	Class sharing of projects	Final projects due
December 13	Class sharing of projects	Final evaluations due

Other important dates:

September 9, Arizona Literacy Teacher Educators Conference, Those Who Can, Teach, ASU
October 7, SazAEYC Annual Conference, Supporting Young Children's Learning, University of Arizona
October 6-7, Arizona English Teachers Association State Conference, Chandler, www.asu.edu/aeta
October 14, Tucson Teachers Applying Whole Language, Soleng Tom Elem. School,
www.tucsontawl.org
October 28, Latin American Celebration, Arizona State Museum
November 3-4, Arizona Reading Association Conference, Marana

Topics that could be considered in this course:

The role of storying in children's lives

Issues of culture and gender in children's storying

Family and community storying - the stories children bring to school

Why do children need "real" books? How do texts teach?

Shared Reading/Guided Reading

Big Books and Predictable Books

Developing reading strategies through shared reading

Predictability vs readability

Choral reading

Role of rereading books

Teaching for strategies - using literature to learn about language

Independent Reading

Books to support children in their reading development

Individual Conferencing about books

Partner reading

Reading Workshop

Literature within a Writing Workshop

Discussion of Literature

Read aloud discussions

Small group discussions of shared books and text sets

Biliteracy/bicultural issues related to literature

Oral Traditions

Oral storytelling by teachers and students

Young children's use of literature for information and research through inquiry

Visual aspects of books

Discussions about illustrations

Imaging as a strategy in reading

Drama and literature

Use of improvisational drama to dialogue about literature

Readers theatre

Young children's integration of play and literature

Kinds of Literature that Could be Explored

Song Books

Nursery rhymes

ABC and Counting Books

Concept Books

Wordless Books

Predictable Books

Beginning-to-read Books

Short Chapter Books

Participation Books

Picture Storybooks

Genres of literature as related to young children

Realistic Fiction

Fantasy

Folklore

Historical fiction

Informational books