

Kathy G. Short

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Office Hours: By appointment, Tues, 4:00-6:00 p.m. and Wed, 12:00-2:00 p.m.

**LRC 696d-2, Spring 2011**  
**Language Research Methodology in Education:**  
**Critical Content Analysis of Texts for Children and Adolescents**

**Catalog Description:** Investigation of procedures for a specific type of research design appropriate for language, research in education; critical analysis of evidence supporting literary practices

**Course Description**

This research methodology course explores the theoretical frames and research processes for critical content analysis, particularly in relation to children's and adolescent literature as texts, although class members may want to look at other forms of text. Text can be defined as a chunk of meaning that has unity and can be shared with others and so can be created from a range of sign systems. Content analysis examines *what text is about*, instead of focusing on *what authors do* as found in literary analysis. Content analysis is a conceptual approach to understanding what a text is about, considering content from a particular theoretical perspective. What makes a study "critical" is not the methodology but the theoretical framework used to think within, through, and beyond the text. We will explore the critical within content analysis as an interest in locating power in social practices and in understanding, uncovering, and transforming conditions of inequality, using theoretical frames such as critical discourse studies, postcolonialism, critical race theory, cultural studies, and childhood studies.

Despite the frequent use of qualitative content analysis as a research method to examine children's literature as text, the procedures for this analysis are not usually described in detail in published studies or research methodology textbooks. This analysis involves determining a research focus/interest, identifying possible texts, and examining the theoretical frames of most relevance to this focus before moving into analysis of the texts. We will explore the range of methodological tools that can be used alongside different critical theories to analyze adolescent and children's literature. Critical theories are put into dialogue with texts so that we can more deeply understand the cultural, social, political, and economic contexts of children's texts and the ways in which these texts shape how students view and interact with the social world. In turn, these theories and approaches to critical content analysis also provide tools and understandings that students can use to engage as critical readers of texts.

**Our class experiences are based on the following beliefs about learning:**

- Learning is an active process.  
We will immerse ourselves in reading, writing, talking, and responding to theory and research and to adolescent and children's literature as well as engaging in analysis of a range of texts.
- Learning is a social process of collaborating with others.  
We will explore our thinking about our reading and experiences through dialogue.
- Learning occurs as we make connections to our own experiences and as we explore tensions with our current beliefs.  
Responses to our readings will focus on connections to our own research interests and

experiences with texts and life. We will also identify and explore tensions with our beliefs and experiences to interrogate our values. We will explore the tensions that arise from exploring alternative critical interpretations of literature.

- Choice allows learners to connect to their experiences and feel ownership in their learning.  
We will have choices in the books and studies that we read, the data we collect, and the specific focus of the final project.
- Learning is reflective as well as active.  
We will have many opportunities to reflect on what we are learning through writing, talking, charting, sketching, and self-evaluations
- Learning occurs in a multicultural world with many ways of knowing.  
We will explore a range of critical theories that reflect differing cultural perspectives on the world and that challenge hegemonic assumptions, particularly those based in mainstream Western views of the world. We will also explore the range of interpretations of our readings that arise from our differing sociocultural experiences.
- Learning is a process of inquiry.  
As learners we need to search out the questions that matter in our lives and to develop strategies for exploring those questions and sharing our understandings with others.

### **Course Format**

The course is divided into three parts. The course will begin with an introduction to content analysis, critical theories, and critical content analysis as a methodology. We will then move to the major focus of the seminar on examining critical theories that can frame critical content analysis and analyzing critical content analysis studies to examine their theoretical frames and analysis procedures. We will try out analysis strategies on short texts in class sessions. The third part of the class will focus on the book inquiry groups and final projects of your own critical content analysis.

### **Learning Experiences and Course Projects:**

#### 1. Participation and attendance

Attend class regularly and participate in discussions, sharing, small groups, research analyses, and class activities. An essential aspect of participation is to read and prepare for discussions and analyses of the literature and the professional readings. Preparation and participation in class is significant, not only for your learning, but for the learning of others.

If you are absent or not prepared for a class session, your actions will have a significant impact on others in the class as well as on your own learning. If you absolutely must miss a class session due to illness, leave a message 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. Meet with me at the next class session to determine how you will make up the work for the class you missed. **More than one absence or excessive tardiness/leaving early will affect your grade for the course.** Your attendance and active participation in course engagements is highly valued and an essential aspect of the course.

#### 2. Seminar Readings

We will read articles and chapters from a range of sources on content analysis, critical theories, and critical content analysis studies as well as several pieces of literature to give us a body of common readings to discuss during class sessions. Since these readings will form the basis of our discussions, each class member will need to prepare for these discussions weekly in some way such as writing notes in the margins of the book, using post-its to mark particular pages, or writing reflective journal entries on the readings. You will be asked to document the theoretical frame and analysis procedures for studies and these entries go into your research notebook along with any other reflective entries.

- a. Format for documenting critical content analysis studies – Purpose of the study, research question, theoretical frame, selection of texts, analysis procedures, major themes or categories for reporting the findings.

Additional, self-selected readings will be based on your own interests and final project and will be woven throughout the course. Books and articles on critical content analysis and critical theories will be available for check-out during class sessions. Some class sessions will involve you finding one or two articles that relate to the class focus and your interests to bring to class for discussion.

- a. Critical Theory Reading--Choose one type of critical theory that particularly interests you in relation to your own work and read about that theory. Prepare a handout listing the major beliefs and possible themes/ issues/questions that could be used to frame an analysis.
- b. Critical Content Analysis Book – Small group inquiry around a selected book of critical content analysis studies. Read and discuss the studies in the book to document the theoretical frames, analysis procedures, etc. Share your insights from the book with the class and prepare a handout on the types of questions, theoretical frames, and analysis procedures.

3. Research Notebook The research notebook will collect and organize the various research activities and readings in which you engage as part of this seminar. You can personalize this notebook in your own way to create your research toolbox by including sketches, photographs, artifacts, and other items to document your process of inquiry. You will need a loose leaf notebook and dividers for several sections.

a. Reading Reflections: This section of the notebook will be a place for you to keep reflections on your readings, both the required readings and additional self-selected readings.

b. Critical Theories: This section will contain theoretical readings, handouts, and reflections on possible critical theoretical frames that could be used to frame analysis.

c. Research Strategies. This section will contain research studies and your documentations of research designs, approaches and strategies for critical content analysis.

d. Final project - paper on your critical content analysis using a research report format.

f. Research artifacts related to final project

#### 4. Individual or Collaborative Final Project

Based on your objectives for the course, participate in an individual or collaborative project related to critical content analysis of text. *Each course participant will plan, conduct, and report on a research project involving critical content analysis of a text or small group of texts for children or adolescents.*

Each participant will complete a research proposal outline (1-2 pages) and receive responses from the instructor and class members. The outline should also include a bibliography of 7-10 critical content analysis studies related to your focus. Final projects will be shared with other class members as well as submitted in a written research report form.

#### 5. Participation in the TLS Graduate Student Colloquy - February 16, 2012

The TLS Colloquy is a significant professional experience for all TLS graduate students. The colloquy is organized by graduate students to provide an opportunity for graduate students to present their work to each other as well as to hear a major speaker in the field. The colloquy brings together all members of the

department, students and faculty, as a community to think about current research and larger political issues related to language, literacy and culture. The colloquy will include a keynote speaker in the early afternoon and in the evening as well as sessions where students present to students, and an evening meal. You are encouraged to attend the entire colloquy but are required to attend either the afternoon sessions or evening keynote as part of our course and then write a reflection connecting the sessions you attended to the issues of theory and research we are discussing in our class.

#### 6. Evaluation

Class members will complete a midterm reflection on their own learning and their goals for the remainder of the semester. Class members will also write a formal self-evaluation of their final project, their process of learning, and the quality of the product. Your final grade will be holistically based on both my and your evaluation of your growth and learning, the quality of your work, and your attendance, participation, and preparation for class sessions. I assume you will complete all of the projects listed on the syllabus to fulfill course requirements, unless you have negotiated another option. Your final grade 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 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) and notify me of your eligibility for reasonable accommodations.
- Policies against plagiarism. <http://dos.web.arizona.edu/uapolicies>
- Policies against threatening behavior <http://policy.web.arizona.edu/~policy/threaten.shtml>

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

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 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 LRC.

**Tentative Course Schedule:** Wednesday, 4:15-6:45

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January 11	Course Introduction: What is analysis?
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January 18	What is the difference between literary analysis and content analysis in literature as text?  <b>Read</b> Chapter by Galda, Ash & Cullinan on research in children's literature Locate and read two articles of analysis of children's or adolescent literature, one of which is literary analysis and the other content analysis <b>Due</b> Reflection on the articles on the differences between literary and content analysis Document your use of analysis for a week and bring an example to class Read <i>Smoky Night</i> and write a personal response.
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January 25	What is content analysis? What is the history of content analysis? Guest speaker – Melissa Wilson, My journey of critical content analysis  <b>Read</b> Krippendorff C. 1-2, Heich & Shannon, and White & March <b>Due</b> Take notes on: Definition of content analysis, types of content analysis and questions, types of research strategies. Bring with you to class.
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February 1	What is the "critical" in critical content analysis?  <b>Read</b> Read chapters from Willis, C 1-4; Beach, et al article; <i>The Day of Ahmed's Secret</i> <b>Due</b> Reflection on definitions of critical, listing of possible critical theories <b>Bring</b> <i>Smoky Nights</i> by David Diaz
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February 8	What is critical content analysis?  <b>Read</b> Read <i>Leon's Story</i> Read chapters from Botelho & Rudman – C. 1, 5, 7 <b>Due</b> Write a personal response to <i>Leon's Story</i> BEFORE read the chapters List critical theories and the analysis procedures in C. 1 and 5 Document the research design for C. 5
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February 15	What is critical content analysis?  <b>Read</b> Clare Bradford paper and the two related articles <b>Due</b> List the critical theories and the analysis procedures Document the research design
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February 16	Attend the TLS Colloquy – The Many Ways of Knowing: Bridging School, Home, and Community Knowledge
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February 22	Postcolonialism as a theoretical frame for critical content analysis  <b>Read</b> McGillis intro, Nodelman article, Bradford Intro <b>Due</b> Reflection on postcolonialism as a theoretical lens and identification of the major themes/issues that could frame an analysis from a postcolonial perspective Reflection on colloquy <b>Bring</b> <i>Smoky Nights</i> and <i>Leon's Story</i>
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February 29	Postcolonialism as a theoretical frame for critical content analysis
	<p><b>Read</b> Bradford, C. 1 and 5 Read related children's novel</p> <p><b>Due</b> Document the research design for C. 1 and 5 Personal response on children's novel</p>
March 7	Theoretical frames for critical content analysis
	<p><b>Read:</b> Read Brooks &amp; several critical content analysis articles that use a critical theory of interest to you</p> <p><b>Due:</b> Document the research design in Brooks and your selected article Mid-term reflection</p>
March 14	Spring Break
March 21	Theoretical frames for critical content analysis
	<p><b>Read</b> Choose a critical theory that relates to your interests and read about that theory. Include at least one primary source</p> <p><b>Due:</b> Handout that defines the theory and lists major themes/issues/questions</p>
March 28	Engaging in critical content analysis
	<p><b>Read:</b> One shared article, Chapters selected by book groups</p> <p><b>Due:</b> Document the research design Research Outline and bibliography of related critical content analysis studies</p>
April 4	Engaging in critical content analysis
	<p><b>Read:</b> One shared article, Chapters selected by book groups</p> <p><b>Due:</b> Document the research design Data Analysis/Project Groups</p>
April 11	Engaging in critical content analysis
	<p><b>Read:</b> One shared article, Chapters selected by book groups</p> <p><b>Due:</b> Document the research design Data Analysis/Project Groups</p>
April 18	Engaging in critical content analysis Presentations by book groups
	<p><b>Read:</b> One shared article</p> <p><b>Due:</b> Document the research design Handout on the book inquiry Data Analysis/Project Groups</p>

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April 25      So What? Critical content analysis with students

**Read:** Article or chapter

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May 2      Project Presentations

**Due:** Final Projects and Research Notebooks

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May 9      Project Presentations

**Due:** Final Self-evaluations

Please consider submitting a review of one of the books from your critical content analysis to WOW Review at the worlit.org web site. You can submit for the themed issue of WOW Review on **Representations of Contemporary Global Communities – Reviews due May 15, 2012**. Contemporary images of global communities are often difficult to locate in international literature for children and adolescents. The available resources are frequently historical perspectives on events and people or folklore that offers insights into cultural values. This overemphasis on the past in text and illustrations can lead to misconceptions and stereotypes of these global cultures. Contemporary literature provides an important context for considering diverse images of modern-day people, events, and lifestyles and is critical to young readers developing authentic perspectives of life around the world. *WOW Review* issues a call for reviews of books that present contemporary representations of specific global cultures. Within both picture and chapter books of all genres, we are looking for reviews of books that provide excellent points of connection, contemplation, and conversation as teachers and learners work to position themselves within a particular contemporary society and understand people with whom they share the world. The reviews may include titles representative of any genre and any aspect of contemporary life—the realism of daily living; social, political and environmental issues and their effects on the people of a community, the natural world, urban and rural life, or other topics that reflect today’s world. As young readers in a world where technology continues to shorten the path between global cultures, these future citizens will be expected to build relationships and make critical decisions within an international context. This issue of *WOW Review* is intended to provide examples of excellent resources for teachers who realize their role in preparing an informed and involved future citizenry.

**Or the Unthemed issue of WOW Review, Due August 15, 2012**

We invite reviews of any children’s or adolescent title that is international in nature and of any genre. Topics can be related to social issues, cultural diversity, or universal topics, such as humor or fantasy. The review should take a critical stance in terms of the book’s cultural authenticity and accuracy. Particularly consider recent titles as well as titles from smaller presses that may not be as well known. Please carefully read the guidelines that provide the required format and conceptualize the expected content of the review. Also read through published reviews in our previous issues and use the same format for a submission. Additionally, by examining previous reviews, a reviewer can discover various approaches that others have taken to discussing authenticity and determine the titles that have already been reviewed. If you have questions regarding a submission, please email [Janelle.mathis@unt.edu](mailto:Janelle.mathis@unt.edu).