LANGUAGE ARTS
80-302

COURSE PURPOSE

This course is intended to help you design and prepare literacy learning experiences that are both appropriate and effective for children in grades 4-9 in Ontario public schools. We will look at the nature of children's literacy leaning in school and examine instructional practices and processes in light of literacy theory and research. To assist in achieving this, we will interweave and draw conclusions among three sources of learning knowledge:

- Professional readings on literacy learning
- Your own experiences of schools as learners
- Your present experiences as students and teachers

This course is designed to help you gain an understanding of language acquisition; learn skills for program development and assessment; explore theoretical issues; and acquire strategies to support students' language learning. It is hoped that by the end of the course you would have developed a deeper understanding of what literacy is; how people develop and use literacy; how schools structure literacy; how your own literate histories inform your teaching; and how beliefs about teaching and learning connect to teaching practice. What informs literacy instruction is becoming increasingly interdisciplinary, intertextual, socially and historically aware and politically motivated. This means in addition to course texts, we will draw our readings from diverse fields including philosophy, psychology, linguistics, anthropology, post-structuralism, critical theory and women's studies.

REQUIRED TEXT

Fountas, I. & Su Pinnell, G. (2001). Guiding readers and writers: Grades 3-6 – Teaching Comprehension, Genre and Content Literacy. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

COURSE FORMAT AND RATIONAL

The format for our classes will be varied: lectures, workshops, discussions, readings/writing, and critical inquiry into schooling practices around literacy. The material and learning experiences you will be exposed to in this course are committed to three basic principles:

- Teaching and learning are aspects of the same process
- Your view of the teaching/ learning process affects your classroom practice
- Reflective construction is necessary for the development of teaching expertise

In this course we will explore many issues of literacy development for Junior /Intermediate students. You will be asked to draw on your own experiences of speaking/listening, reading/viewing, writing and other ways of representing. Your personal history of reading and writing will affect your work as a teacher of language arts. In addition to your past experiences, you will draw on the experiences in your practice teaching classes. This connection will help bridge the gap between theory and practice.

My pedagogy in this course is grounded in some central assumptions about learning and teaching. The most salient are:

- Learning is in part a process of connecting personal practical experiences with research and theory in a spirit of critical inquiry
- Learning teaching is a social process involving interactions with colleagues, mentors, texts, and children
- A B. Ed. Program is an invitation into teaching; learning teaching is a life long project.

This course is dedicated to your own development as a teacher and a learner. Self knowledge, application, and critical reflection will be highlighted. I believe that learning takes place in a supportive learning community. Such a community encourages students to take risks, say what they think, and listen to each other. Whenever possible please share interesting materials and insights with us.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Class attendance & participation: your full attendance is mandatory as we have limited time together and a significant amount of material to cover. Absences due to illness or family emergency will necessitate that you catch up with missed work.. Classes will begin on time and run for the duration. Your active participation is an essential requirement for this course. You are expected to demonstrate involvement, concentration, time management, sensitivity to feed back, enthusiasm, empathy and consideration for others, respect for shared work space, open-mindedness and a sense of humor
2. Reading responses and short writing assignments: these include weekly responses to course readings, brief reflections on classes and short pieces of personal and academic writing
3. Text research, annotations and presentations: You will be asked to present critical commentary using given guidelines which will be part of the class collection.
4. Critical /Media text lesson plan and presentation: You will be asked to present a demonstration lesson to contribute to a class collection
5. Reading assessment: These include your own reading/writing histories and assessment/evaluation of a child using a number of assessment procedures. Use your evaluation to inform future instruction.
6. Writing assessment: This involves observing the writing strategies of a child writer using a variety of writing activities e.g. letter writing, written conversation, story writing, journal writing, etc. You will use the generated writing samples to evaluate the child's writing development. Use your evaluation to inform future instruction
7. Folder: This is a collection of all the above responses and inquires, plus language and teaching artifacts, offering you an opportunity to develop a teaching resource file and articulate your own leaning about language teaching.

ASSESSMENT

Assessment in this course is based upon satisfactory completion of assignments, active engagement in course activities and process, contribution to the class, open-mindedness

and clarity of thought in discussion and writing, and willingness to critique one's assumptions and practices. The following expectations guide assessment:

- Attendance and punctuality is expected and students need to inform the instructor in writing of a necessary absence and late assignment.
- Class participation is an important part of this class. There is an expectation to actively collaborate during class by contributing to discussions, participating in learning activities, taking a leadership role in some activities, and reflecting on and assessing the activities and the discourse.
- Do weekly readings carefully and reflectively, preparing a written response before coming to class, demonstrating reflection and articulation.
- Be prepared for individual class presentation (text annotations, critical/media demonstration lessons)
- Fulfill assignments on time, demonstrating reflection, articulation and a willingness to revise.

EVALUATION

Given the above expectations/evidence, the following values guide evaluation.

Performance Tasks	Tentative Due Dates	Value
Class Attendance/ Participation (self-evaluation)	Ongoing	20%
Reading Responses	Ongoing	40%
Reading Assessment		10%
Text Research, Annotations, Presentation	As determined on schedule	10%
Critical/Media Text, Lesson Plan Presentation	As determined on schedule	10%
Writing Assessment	Final Week	5%
Summative Folder	Final Week	5%

COURSE OUTCOMES

Upon completion of this course you will be able to:

- Articulate a response to the question, "What is literacy?"
- Articulate personal beliefs related to speaking/listening, reading/viewing, writing/ other ways of representing
- Demonstrate an awareness of the Ontario Language Arts Curriculum
- Demonstrate an awareness of critical/media literacy
- Identify the component in a balanced literacy program
- Use a variety of methods for assessing and evaluating student progress in language arts
- Decide on instructional strategies based on how children learn, starting with the child's prior knowledge and experience
- Demonstrate an understanding of how to integrate the Language Arts into other subjects
- Build reading and writing esteem in yourself and others

- Reflect upon your own teaching and learning experiences in order to foster personal and professional growth
- Feel comfortable as a teacher of the Language Arts
- Collaborate with colleagues in the learning community

COURSE OUTLINE

The following outline is tentative. Topics and sub-topics will be developed and modified as the course proceeds

1. The Ontario Language Arts Curriculum/Principles of learning
2. Critical Literacy
3. Speaking/Listening
4. Spelling/Writing Development
5. Theories of Reading
6. Reading Development
7. Letters/Phonics/Words
8. Assessment and Evaluation
9. Assessing Oral Reading
10. Teaching for Strategies
11. Defining Literacy/Components of a Balanced Literacy Program
12. Guided Reading/Book Introductions
13. Role of Leveled Books
14. Classroom Management During Guided Reading
15. Independent Reading/Reader's Workshop/Response Journals
16. Fiction/Nonfiction
17. Reading Aloud/Shared reading
18. The Writing Process
19. Writer's Workshops/Effective Mini-Lessons
20. Spelling/Word Study
21. Poetry
22. Literature Circles

Peer-Evaluation Checklist for Weekly Responses

Characteristics	Proficient Development	Limited Development	Not Evident
1. Identification of significant ideas			
2. Compare/contrast to the OLAC			
3. Evidence of understanding the significant ideas			
4. Clear articulation of what was learned			
5. A written question, comment and quote for group/class discussion			
6. Connections to other readings or class discussions			
7. Inclusion of personal experiences (examples are appropriate for topic)			
8. The thoughtfulness of responses - moves beyond the superficial - relates topic to own self-development - "I think this because …" statements are present			
8. Conclusions drawn show understanding of the teaching/learning process			

Weekly Response Rubric

4 points: includes first 4 characteristics and at least 3 of the remaining characteristics

3 points: includes first 4 characteristics and at least 2 of the remaining characteristics

2 points: includes first 4 characteristics and at least 1 of the remaining characteristics

1 point: includes first 4 characteristics and none of the remaining characteristics