

## **Differentiation in the English Language Arts 15:252:513:01**

Rutgers Graduate School of Education

Department of Learning and Teaching

Fall 2012 | Thursday 4:50 – 7:30 | Scott Hall, SC-201

### **Professor:**

Chantal Francois

chantal.francois@gse.rutgers.edu

w: 732-932-7496 x 8250; c: 917-664-0632

Office: Room 229A

Office hours: Thursdays 3:30 – 4:30 pm and by appointment

### **Course Description**

Reading allows us the opportunity to engage with texts, but it also allows us the opportunity to know ourselves, our realities, and society. The idea that reading is first a social activity frames this course. Following this line of thinking, this course will help you develop your stance as a literacy educator by sharing methods, ideas, and research on effective methods to differentiate reading instruction. This course will help you understand who each of your students are as readers, how to move them forward in every lesson, and how to use structures and systems in class that will facilitate their engagement with texts. This course primarily focuses on the teaching of reading, as other courses will aid your development in the teaching of writing. It also focuses on the teaching of reading in middle and high school, particularly in urban settings. You will find, however, that some of what you learn in this course connects to the experiences of younger children. Ultimately, you will design a unit of study with your colleagues that reflects your values as a literacy educator and all that you have learned in this course.

This course is also framed by the belief that to become an effective teacher of reading, educators must continually develop their own literacy practice. Thus, during the course, you will read books and participate in your own reading activities to grow awareness of how you connect to texts and other readers, how you use strategies to extract meaning from text, and how you analyze texts. This work will undoubtedly help you gain insight into the art of teaching reading.

### **Course Expectations**

Course attendance: Be present—physically, intellectually, socially, and emotionally—during class. Be on time. Let me know via email if you will miss a class session in advance, and please be in touch with a colleague to learn about and make up what you missed. Excessive absence—two or more sessions—will negatively affect your grade in this course.

I respect your observance of major religious holidays. Please notify me at the beginning of the semester about your wishes to observe holidays on days when class sessions are scheduled. I am happy to work with you on fulfilling any assignments on days you miss for religious observance.

You may want to consider bringing your laptop to class, especially during the latter part of the course as you are designing your unit of study. Please use your laptop in ways that enable you to be fully present in class.

### **Course Assignments**

Upload your assignments on time by the end of the due date on the course's Sakai site. **Be sure to put your full name in the document file.** Please let me know in advance if you expect to turn in an assignment late. I will lower your grade if you turn your assignments in late. Please use 12-point font, 1-inch margins, and other APA formatting for your papers.

#### Participation & Reflection Paper (15%)

Your attendance, punctuality, as well as your participation in discussion during whole-class and small-group discussion count for this part of your grade.

In early October, you will submit 2-3 page paper that you enables you to synthesize your ideas on the course so far. I want to know, how have readings, ideas, and discussions have resonated with you so far? What seems new and unfamiliar? In what ways, if at all, are the ideas from the course cultivating your identity as a literacy educator? You will not receive a grade on this paper, but your completion of it counts toward your grade.

#### Book Clubs Paper (20%)

To help you develop an insider's view of reading instruction and to think about how you would apply the strategies and skills you employ when you read, you will participate in two book clubs. The first one will be a small group of 3 or 4 people who have identified a common novel to read and meet each week for the first few sessions of the course (I expect that you'll choose fiction—please see the list at the end of the syllabus for suggested titles). You will develop your own pacing and mutual expectations for participation in the book club over four sessions in class.

You will also participate in a mini book club on a young adult text. You will read this text to first experience the power of young adult literature, and you will use this text to try out instructional strategies that you learn about in class.

After you participate in your book clubs, you will turn in a 3-5 page paper about your process of participating in the book club. In this paper, discuss implications for your teaching practice: What did you learn about yourself as a reader, and your book club participation, that can help you become a more effective teacher of reading and of the unit you design? How did course readings and discussions shape your reading of the text and/or participation in your book club? How did your participation challenge practices suggested in the texts you read? You can think about skills and strategies that you used to comprehend and interpret the text, and you can also discuss this experience in light of your reading motivation, identity, and your understanding about the world around you. You will receive more details about this assignment in class.

#### Teaching a Special Topic on Differentiation on Reading Instruction (15%)

In addition to gaining knowledge about the major topics in reading instruction, you will gain expertise in a specific area that you will teach to your unit design group members. You'll have a choice of a few different areas (i.e. digital literacy, rigor, supporting ELL students, critical literacy). You will read a professional text (or the equivalent of one). Suggested titles are at the end of the syllabus and will read a professional text. As you design your units with your classmates, your responsibility is to ensure that the lessons in the entire unit are reflective of your learning about this area of reading instruction. You will receive more details on this assignment during the semester.

#### Lesson Rough Draft & Reflection Paper 15%

Teach a lesson in class connected to your unit. The purpose of this is to get a feel for the language, pacing, and clarity of your objectives with students. You will receive feedback on how to revise it; submit a 2-3 page reflection the following week that discusses your intentions for the lesson, how it was executed, feedback you received from peers, and revisions you made. You will receive more details on this assignment during the semester.

### Unit of Study (35%)

You will work collaboratively in small groups to design a unit of study that fulfills the objectives of this course. This assignment includes several individual components:

- a. An introductory essay that reflects your collective stance as literacy educators and a rationale for teaching this unit of study to these particular readers. Discuss how the unit is reflective of what you value about reading, and what you want your students to value. Furthermore, discuss how this unit is reflective of the major tenets of reading workshop. Also, discuss the overall scope of this unit: What standards, curricular plans, and assessment data have influenced the plan for this unit to ensure students grow into stronger readers? What prior teaching (in previous grades, and earlier in the year) will this unit build upon? Finally, incorporate your new knowledge from the specific area of reading instruction that you studied—how have those ideas shaped your unit?
- b. Concrete, observable goals for the unit. Your teaching needs to align to these goals, they need to be observable, and your assessments need to provide you feedback on progress towards these goals. These will be shared by your group.
- c. What formative assessments will you use before, during and after the unit, so as to understand and track students' skill development, and so as to align your teaching to whatever you learn through these assessments? This will be shared by your group.
- d. A four- to six-week plan for the teaching and for the work your students will be doing. This will include teaching points and session-write ups, building on texts that we read in class. These will be written by all the members of the group.
- e. Two or three of your own lessons, written in detail, aligned to all the other mini lessons that others write in the unit plan.
- f. Two or three write ups for small group strategy lessons that you taught or imagine teaching in conjunction with this unit, written with your groups' unit of study in mind.
- g. Evidence of your efforts to differentiate the unit to support diverse learners, while still managing to plan a do-able unit. The responsibility for supporting differentiated groups might be distributed among different members of your task force but must work as a whole.
- h. An annotated bibliography of children and young adult literature related to your unit. The work can be done collaboratively.

### **Course Readings**

#### Required Texts:

Robb, L. (2010). *Teaching Reading in Middle School: A Strategic Approach to Teaching Reading that Improves Comprehension and Thinking*. New York: Scholastic.

You will also read the following:

- Journal articles and book chapters (accessible through the library and course reserves)
- One adult novel (from the suggested list at the end of the syllabus)
- One young adult novel (from the list at the end of the syllabus)
- One additional professional text (possibly from the suggested list at the end of the syllabus).

### **(Tentative) Course Schedule**

#### **September 6<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup> — How is the teaching of English a sociocultural activity?**

Moll, L. C., Amanti, C., Neff, D., & Gonzalez, N. (1992). Funds of Knowledge for Teaching: Using a Qualitative Approach to Connect Homes and Classrooms. *Theory Into Practice*, 31(2), 132.

McCarthy, S. J., & Moje, E. B. (2002). Identity Matters. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 37(2), 228-237.

*Teaching Reading in Middle School* Chapter 1 & 2

Due 9/13: Be prepared for your first book club meeting; Access and read the unit of study on analyzing character on the Sakai site

#### **September 20<sup>th</sup> — Developing Readers through Volume, Stamina, & Differentiation: How and why do we support students in choosing books that matter, and engage meaningfully with what they read?**

*Teaching Reading in Middle School* Chapter 9

*The Reading Zone* Chapters 1 – 2, Available on Sakai site.

Due: Be prepared for your second book club meeting

#### **September 27<sup>th</sup> & October 4<sup>th</sup> — Assessing Reading: How do we ensure that every reading interaction grows students to be more powerful?**

*Teaching Reading in Middle School* Chapter 3, 8, & 10

*Small Group Reading Instruction* Chapters on Sakai Site.

Read assessment documents on course website

Due 9/27: Be prepared for your third book club meeting; Access and read additional units of study on Sakai site; Email me with a rank of the young adult book that you would like to read.

Due 10/4: Be prepared for your fourth book club meeting; Reflection paper due

#### **October 11<sup>th</sup> & October 18<sup>th</sup> Responding Thoughtfully and Critically to Literature: How can we support students to use texts to interrogate their own lives and the world around them?**

*Teaching Reading in Middle School* Chapter 7

*Engaging Readers and Writers with Inquiry*, Chapters 3 & 4, on Sakai site

Read your young adult book, at least a third of the way by Oct. 11<sup>th</sup>, and the rest by Oct. 18<sup>th</sup>

Due 10/18: Come prepared to discuss a bit about the special topic you chose (a chapter, an article, etc.)

**October 25<sup>th</sup>: Special Guest, Elisa Zonana**

Due: Book club paper, October 25<sup>th</sup>

**November 1<sup>st</sup>--From Skill to Context: How can fix-up strategies help students apply discrete skills to meaningful reading?**

*Teaching Reading in Middle School* Chapter 6

Due: Special topic presentations in class & paper, November 1<sup>st</sup>

**November 8<sup>th</sup> & November 15<sup>th</sup>-- Reading to Learn:  
How do we apply our newly developed methods to the teaching of nonfiction reading?**

*Pathways to the Common Core* Chapters 1 & 7 available on course reserves

Access additional nonfiction reading documents on course website

Due: Small group lesson, November 8<sup>th</sup>; Reflection paper on lesson, November 15<sup>th</sup>

**No class on November 29<sup>th</sup>:  
Plan a time to meet with your unit of study group**

Due: Rough draft of unit, November 30<sup>th</sup>

**December 6<sup>th</sup> —Harnessing The Structures that Bring Reading to Life:  
How do the routines and rituals of English instruction cohere for students and teachers in meaningful ways?**

Due: Final draft of unit, December 13<sup>th</sup>

**Adult Book Club Suggested Titles:**

*Zeitoun*, Dave Eggers

*Into the Wild*, Jon Krakauer

*Interpreter of Maladies*, Jhumpa Lahiri

*Kindred*, Octavia Butler

*Thousand Splendid Suns*, Khaled Hosseini

*Middlesex*, Jeffrey Eugenides

*Half of a Yellow Sun*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

*Blindness*, Jose Saramago

*Brief Wonderful life of Oscar Wao*, Junot Diaz

*The Color Purple*, Alice Walker

*A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, Betty Smith

*Art of Fielding*, Chad Harbach  
*Bel Canto*, Ann Patchett

*A Fine Balance*, Rohinton Mistry  
*Fingersmith*, Sarah Waters

**Young Adult Book Club Titles:**

*Divergent*, Veronica Roth  
*The Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian*, Sherman Alexie  
*Marcelo in the Real World*, Francisco X. Stork  
*Luna*, JulieAnne Peters  
*Response*, Paul Volponi  
*The Fault in Our Stars*, John Green

**Suggested Texts for Special Topics:**

Supporting ELL Students

*50 Strategies for Teaching English Language Learners*, Adrienne Herrell & Michael Jordan  
*Literacy Instruction for English Language Learners*, Nancy Cloud, & Fred Genesee  
*Scaffolding Language, Scaffolding Learning: Teaching Second Language Learners in the Mainstream Classroom*, Pauline Gibbons

Critical Literacy

*Critical Literacy/ Critical Teaching: Tools for Preparing Responsive Literacy Teaching*, Cheryl Dozier, Peter Johnston, and Rebecca Rogers  
*Girls, Social Class, & Literacy: What Teachers Can Do to Make a Difference*, Stephanie Jones  
*For a Better World: Reading and Writing for Social Action*, Katherine Bomer and Randy Bomer

Rigor

*Critical Encounters in High School English: Teaching Literary Theory to Adolescents*, Deborah Appleman  
*Engaging Readers and Writers with Inquiry*, Jeffrey Wilhelm  
*Fresh Takes on Teaching Literary Elements*, Michael Smith and Wilhelm

Hybrid, multimodal, popular texts:

*Linking Literacy and Popular Culture: Finding Connections for Lifelong Learning*, Ernest Morrell  
*Popular Culture in the Classroom: Teaching and Researching Critical Media Literacy*, Donna Alvermann, Margaret C. Hagwood, Margaret C. Hagood, Jennifer S. Moon