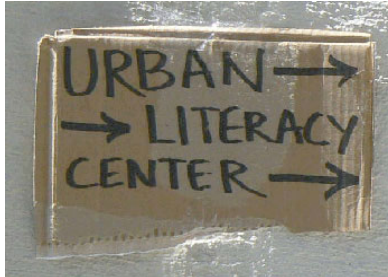


WRD 542 – Urban Literacies

Tuesday, 6:00-9:15 p.m.

Spring 2013

Darsie Bowden



Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Relate theories of literacy and conceptual frameworks to the service in which they have been engaged;
- Come to an appreciation of the socio-political and historical context of the service organization in which they have provided service;
- Come to an appreciation and respect for the role of diversity within the community; and
- Reflect upon literacy and service and its relationship to their careers and lives.

COURSE OVERVIEW: This course is designed as an exploration of the multiple and controversial definitions of literacy with a special emphasis on adult literacy in an urban environment. Much of the course will deal with examinations of the relationship between theory and practice. In our readings and discussion, we will cover theories of literacy from psychology, cognitive science, education, composition & rhetoric and linguistics. In addition, we'll explore the politics of literacy and the concept of "community literacy," always attempting to make connections with the pragmatic aspects of working on literacy issues with real people, in this case, Chicago-area adults (age 16 and up).

Most people think of literacy as the ability to read and write. But read and write what? And how? Ultimately, literacy is about power and oppression, about wealth and poverty, and about race and gender. The problems of illiteracy become even more complex when we consider adult literacy. The adults (and we are defining adult as 16 and up) whom we will be working with have, in many instances, been failed by the institutions – in this country and elsewhere – that were supposed to serve them. We will consider these elements and more, through classroom study – including the exploration of excerpts from key works by literacy theorists and historians – and through practical, hands-on experience working with adults in Chicago-area literacy programs.

We will work at the following sites:

- Erie Neighborhood House 1347 W Erie St, Chicago 60642
- 826CHI, 1331 N. Milwaukee Ave, Chicago (Kendra Curry)
 - Golder College Prep (near Ashland and Chicago)
 - Clemente High School, Humboldt Park (Division and Western)

- Instituto del progreso latino (IDPL) - http://www.idpl.org/idpl_adult_edu.html; 2520 S. Western Ave | Chicago, Illinois 60608 | Phone: (773) 890-0055 |

TEXTS AND MATERIALS:

- Kozol, Jonathan. *Illiterate America*. **This book is out of print. All readings are posted on .pdf files on the course D2L site. Print this out and read assigned chapters.**
- Cushman, Kintgen, Kroll & Rose, eds. *Literacy: A Critical Sourcebook*
- Smith, Frank. *Understanding Reading*
- Hillocks, George. *The Testing Trap*
- Other readings as assigned located on D2L

PROJECTS AND ASSIGNMENTS:

Journal: Please keep a response journal where you respond to readings and work sessions at the literacy sites. Post these in the D2L Digital Dropbox weekly by class time on Tuesday. Be sure to bring a copy to class to use in discussion. Plan on writing reading responses to 2 pieces of assigned reading per week and 1 tutoring or work session. Take about 20 minutes for each response (not including reading time). As we move through the quarter, use the responses to make connections between what we read and what happens at the sites.

FOR READING RESPONSES: You can respond to individual chapters, sections, paragraphs or the reading as a whole. Please indicate the title, author, and specific page numbers. Note the date of response.

FOR TUTORING RESPONSES: Please list the date, first name of student, and the context (including what you were working on); then write an extended comment. Note that during the first few weeks of the quarter, you may not yet be working with adult students; in this case, respond to training or orientation sessions. Because these experiences and responses are extremely useful to the project of the class, please post these responses on the Discussion Board (Blackboard) on the Monday before each class. If you post later than Monday, post on the next week's forum.

Projects: There will be three formal projects – spaced throughout the quarter – in addition to the journal and discussion board.

Project #1: A reading protocol. A short, 3-page protocol on **how you read**, using Frank Smith's book as a starting point.

Project #2: Literacy Site Ethnography -- A "thick" description of your literacy site and an analysis. (4 pages). This may or may not serve as a starting point for your Final Project (below).

Project #3: Final project – We have a wonderful opportunity this quarter to submit a project that might be suitable for publication. Michael Moore, editor of the *Community Literacy Journal* will come to class the second week of class to talk about possible submissions. Thus, I'd like to present two options for the final project:

OPTION 1 - Work on a collaborative piece for the Community Literacy Journal from the purview of your work in one or more Chicago-area literacy sites. See Sample on D2L (Fero et al, "A Reflection on Teaching and Learning in a Community Literacies Graduate Course")

OPTION 2 - Write single-authored piece instead.

Useful Websites

LiteracyWorks of Chicago - <http://www.litworks.org/>

Literacy Chicago - <http://www.literacychicago.org/>

Literacy Volunteers of Illinois - <http://www.literacyvolunteersillinois.org/about.asp>

The Literacy List (Web-based resources) - <http://www.alri.org/>

Dennis Baron's blog ("The Web of Language) on language and technology - <http://illinois.edu/blog/view/25>

National Assessments of Adult Literacy (NAAL) - <http://nces.ed.gov/naal/>

Commission on Adult Basic Educaiton, Inc. - <http://www.coabe.org>

National Center for Family Literacy - <http://www.famlit.org>