Course Overview

Early childhood literacy is sometimes referred to as the “learning to read” stage (as opposed to the “reading to learn” stage of the upper grades). Children enter school during the early childhood years and the expectation is that they will learn to read and write—and spend a lot of classroom time doing it. This phenomenon is the focus of this course.

Specifically, this course will focus on: theories and the historical context of early reading instruction, the fundamentals of reading (phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary development, fluency and comprehension), dynamic assessment, expressive language and writing development. This course also addresses how digital literacy resources inform the teaching of reading, how to work with families to support reading development and how to understand the way that reading intervention models work in schools. Ultimately, this course puts a premium on using assessment to guide instruction as well as on how to design differentiated instruction that responds to the diversity in today’s classrooms. This course is meant to be taken by graduate students who are in field placement sites; many of the assignments require you to carry out tasks in classroom settings.

Course Objectives

- To explore theories of reading and writing development in a historical context
- To understand research about how fundamentals of reading (phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency) work cognitively and socioculturally
- To critique digital media resources to inform the teaching of reading
- To gain experience with reading assessments and use results to drive instruction
- To learn how to implement standards-based reading and writing curricula that foster achievement and engagement for all children (independent of a commercial vendor)
- To gain an understanding of how local contexts (families/home environment, culture, a child’s primary language, classroom climate) inform reading instruction and achievement
- To learn to design standards- and research-based lessons that capitalize on young children’s confidence and competencies in literacy and language development.
- To gain experience in graduate-school writing and know how to write in the genres of: literature review, lesson plan, poster session/public speaking, summative case study, and a personal narrative.

Catalog Course Description: Language & Literacy in the Early Grades
Examination of issues, theories, processes and contexts involved in oral language and early literacy development, and the implications for curriculum and instruction in early childhood settings, birth through grade two. Integrated approaches to teaching methods and materials for literacy curriculum for the diverse language and learning needs of young children.
Course Structure:
A topic (or two) has been selected for each class session. Each class, there are related readings and an interactive lecture regarding this topic. Each week, you are expected to do all of the readings and be able to reference them during our class discussions—especially related to key themes listed in the weekly topic or in the key words listed in the title of the readings. There are optional readings that you are encouraged to read (or skim) if you are particularly interested in that week’s topic. It is expected that you do all of the assigned readings and be able to, at the very least, contribute a “readings tweet” in class (a 140 character statement or about 20 word message) synthesizing or commenting on each of the readings. Another option is to pick a “MVP” or “Most Valuable Phrase” from the readings that you feel is important to discuss in class or be ready to share something you underlined or highlighted in the weekly readings.

During each class, we will discuss the purpose of the readings and how they relate to your future practice as teachers of young children. For some of the textbook readings, you only need to read portions; these specifics are noted on the date those readings are due.

Attendance at all class sessions is expected. If you must miss or arrive late to a class for any reason, please give me at least 24hr advance notice. Additionally, if you do miss class, you are required to make it up by handing in an Absence Memo (Appendix 1 of Syllabus). This is to ensure that, even if you must miss a class, you will not miss all of the content. [Due: via email before the class session that immediately follows your missed class].

The course is divided into three thematic sections. We will spend the first several sessions putting early literacy into a historical, cultural and theoretical context, which lays the foundation for understanding literacy and language development in a global sense. The second part of the course focuses on literacy assessment, research-based teaching practices and the findings of the National Reading Panel. During the final set of sessions, we will focus on culturally responsive literacy, school-based interventions and how to differentiate, especially in the context of reading comprehension and writing development.

This course also focuses on how to use the Common Core Standards. They are required in class throughout the semester (and specific ones are noted on each date below). Anything that is due or that needs to be brought to class is highlighted below. All assignments are briefly described below. You will receive more details about each assignment as the due dates draw closer. There are also optional dates on which you may turn in the midterm and/or a piece of the final project for feedback. All final assignments are expected on the date they are due.

Office Hours: I am available by appointment. I am also regularly accessible by e-mail and by phone. I will make every effort to respond as promptly as possible to all e-mails.

II. Texts
A. Required Texts
1) Gunning, Creating Literacy Instruction for All Students 8th Edition
4) Articles (on our class site) & Common Core Language Arts Standards (K-2). Note: You may also use the Common Core App if that is easier for you. It is available as a free download.
III. OVERVIEW OF ASSIGNMENTS

Note: For each of the written assignments below, you will receive an assignment sheet (referred to as an Appendix) with further description of the related requirements. Please note that all assignments should be single-spaced and in 12 pt font. All assignments must be turned in on time and as a hard copy and all work for this course must be original. Adherence to the Academic Code of Integrity is expected. See http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/policies/academic_integrity for details for this policy. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, it is highly recommended that you complete a plagiarism quiz that can be found at: https://www.indiana.edu/~tedfrick/plagiarism/index2.html.

A. Written Reflection: Early Literacy Development (15%)
Your first assignment for this class is a written reflection (1-2 pages, single spaced) on yourself when you were approximately ages three-seven years old. It is also a reflection on the literacy practices and structures in your current field placement. Further guidelines for this assignment are in Appendix 2 [Due Feb. 12]

B. Lesson Plan: Read Aloud (10%)
For this assignment, you will design a lesson plan for a read aloud that you will conduct in your placement site. The lesson plan includes a brief reflection after you’ve implemented the lesson. The lesson plan and reflection should indicate that you have understood the purpose of believing in your choice of literature and purpose, planning adequately and reflection based on what you planned and what happened. Details for this assignment will be in an Appendix and discussed during the fourth week of class. [Due March 5]

C. Midterm Paper: Children’s Literature (20%)
The midterm paper is a study of the way that a particular topic is addressed in children’s literature. Young children have many questions about the way the world works and there are many high quality books that address the diverse and complicated nature of our world. After picking a “difficult” topic that kids have questions about, you will find 3-4 children’s books that address this topic. The paper requires you to synthesize the way in which the topic is addressed and then choose a genre in which you want to present your synthesis and critique. You could choose to write a traditional analysis or position statement paper (2 pages, single spaced). Alternatively, you may choose a different genre: letter to parents summarizing the topic and the books, designing a catalog advertising these books, etc… More details will be given in an Appendix and will be discussed in class during the fourth week of class. [Due April 2]

D. Poster Session (15%)
Reading comprehension is an integral component of this course. There are a variety of research-based strategies to support students’ reading comprehension. In this poster session, you will present one of these strategies to the class and create a poster that addresses what the strategy is, how to implement it and why a teacher would choose it. You will also have the option to create a short PowerPoint or video explaining and critiquing it. You will receive an Appendix for this assignment and it will be explained in class [Due April 16]
E. Current “Events” Discussion and Response(s) (10%)
Increasingly, digital media is changing the way students read. Digital media offers limitless opportunities to teachers, as well. Indeed, the internet alone is a major resource in terms of understanding elements of reading instruction. From Weeks 5-13, two or three students will begin class by either bringing: a “current event” that relates to our course topics, showing a related video, presented a finger play/game/song for young children for language play, critiquing a website, or presenting a “real world literacy problem/phenomenon” of interest. The purpose of this assignment is to extend our collective knowledge and bring the “outside world” of media, politics, news and entertainment into our course sessions. It is also meant to foster facilitation skills and give experience leading discussions. Ultimately, this assignment is meant to keep our conversations current and applicable to the “read world.” Part of this assignment is also to watch a controversial TED talk by Steven Pinker about language development (over the missed class following spring break). We will discuss this more (and you will receive an Appendix) during Week 3

[Due on varied dates Weeks 5-13]

F. Literacy Case Study (20%)
For this assignment, you will identify a focal child and plan observations of him/her. You will also collect literacy artifacts from this child as a result of assessments you will complete with him/her (i.e. Interest Inventory, WTW inventory, writing sample, running record, high frequency word assessment, phonics assessment and phonemic awareness assessment). Based on your analysis of these artifacts and on your observations, you will be expected to interpret your findings and link them to the ideas discussed in class. Your final case study should be about 3 pages (single spaced). This final case study project is designed so that you create a word study game and share it with the class on May 1. Final projects need to be turned in on May 8th. You will receive further guidelines for this assignment during the fourth week of class.

[Due May 1, May 8]

G. Class Participation and Attendance (10%)
Class participation and attendance is a crucial part of this course. Indeed, each week, we will be addressing a key idea in early literacy as well as working to synthesize and understand readings. Full class participation is expected during each meeting. Although you are not required to do weekly reading responses, you are strongly encouraged to bring some key themes from the weekly readings to ensure that you have begun to synthesize the material.

If you must miss class, please inform the instructor at least 24hrs in advance. Additionally, if you do miss class, you are required to make it up by handing in a response to the weekly topic/ readings that you missed. The makeup work requirements can be found in the Appendix 1 of this syllabus and is part of your participation grade. This is to ensure that, even if you must miss a class, you will not miss all of the content.

[Due: via email or at the first class session that follows your missed class]
Quick Reference Summary of All Assignments and Due Dates:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Written Reflection: Early Literacy Development (15%) (field-based)</td>
<td>2/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson Plan: Read Aloud (10%) (field-based)</td>
<td>3/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm Paper: Children’s Literature (20%)</td>
<td>4/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poster Session Presentation: Comprehension Strategies (15%)</td>
<td>4/16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current “Events” Discussion and Response(s): (10%)</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy Case Study (20%) (field-based)</td>
<td>5/10 (Friday following the last class. You may also turn it in at the last class, 5/7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Presentation of Instructional Game and Final Project</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation and Attendance (10%)</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IV. OUTLINE OF COURSE

Part I:
Putting Early Literacy Into Context: History, Theory and Socio-Cognitive Frameworks

Week 1 (Jan. 29)

Topic: Beginning to Define What “Literacy” Means for Young Learners: Introduction to Course Structure and Content

Week 2 (Feb. 5)

Topic: Emergent Literacy, Literacy-Based Play, Interactive Writing & Storybook/eBook Reading

Readings due: 1) Gunning, Chapter 4: ‘Fostering Emergent/Early Literacy’
              2) Stahl, Chapter 4: ‘Emergent Literacy’

Assignment due: —

Optional: Chapter 1 of The Read Aloud Handbook (BB)
Week 3 (Feb. 12)

**Topic:** Theories of Literacy Development & Putting Reading Instruction into a Historical Context

**Readings due:**
1) Gunning, Chapter 1: ‘The Nature of Literacy’
2) Gunning, Chapter 11: ‘Approaches to Teaching Reading’
3) Stahl, Chapter 1: ‘Introduction to Reading Assessment’

**Assignment due:**
Written Reflection
Bring Common Core Supplement: Literature (for Kindergarten, 1st, 2nd): Informational Skills (Kindergarten, 1st, 2nd)

Optional: [www.readingrockets.org](http://www.readingrockets.org) “Basics of Reading”

**Part II:** Diagnostic Literacy Assessment and Research-Based Teaching Practices

Week 4 (Feb. 19)

**Topic:** Setting the Foundations and Considering Sociocultural Contexts

**Readings due:**
1) Gunning, Chapter 2: Teaching All Students
2) Young Children’s Linguistic Resources in an Urban Classroom (Course Site)
3) WTW, Chapter 4: ‘Word Study for Learners in the Emergent Stage’

**Assignment due:**
Bring an image/ and or map of classroom library (preK-3rd grade) and be ready to discuss how it facilitates reading and collaboration or discourages it. What is the role of authors and audience? How are students and families involved with classroom library and book exchanges? What would you add/change?

Bring Common Core Supplement: Speaking and Listening (Kindergarten-Grade 2) and Foundational Skills (Kindergarten-Grade 2)

Week 5 (Feb. 26)

**Topic:** Reading Assessment & Running Records: Using Assessment to Guide Instruction

**Readings due:**
1) Stahl, Chapter 3: Informal Reading Inventories *(ONLY PGS.66-74 THAT COVERS INFORMAL READING INVENTORIES)*
2) Gunning, Chapter 3: ‘Assessing for Learning’

**Assignment due:**
Bring Common Core Supplement: Writing (Kindergarten-Grade 2)
Bring Emergent Literacy/Phonemic Awareness Supplement

Optional: Read entire chapter (rather than just portion above) of Stahl, Chapter 3: ‘Informal Reading Inventories and Other Measures of Oral Reading.’ Survey [www.starfall.com](http://www.starfall.com)
Week 6 (March 5)

**Topic:** Phonics and Word Recognition

**Readings due:**
2) Stahl, Chapter 5: Word Recognition and Spelling
3) WTW chapter: ‘Word Study for Beginners in the Letter Name-Alphabetic

**Assignment due:** Lesson Plan: Read Aloud
Bring Common Core Foundational Skills (Kindergarten-Grade 2)

---

Week 7 (March 12)

**Topic:** Spelling, Orthographic Development & Shared Writing

**Readings due:**
1) Stahl, Chapter 5: Word Recognition and Spelling
2) WTW, Chapter 2: Getting Started
3) Gunning, Chapter 4 (ONLY PAGES 141-154-SHARED WRITING)

**Assignment due:**
Bring Phonemic Awareness Assessment Results (with hard copies) and Interest Inventories, Writing Sample
Bring Common Core Supplement: Language (Kindergarten through Grade 2)

---

No class March 19. NYU Spring Break

Part III:

*Culturally Responsive Literacy Teaching: Understanding Differentiated Instruction*

(March 26)_No Class (Holiday)_

Over this missed class, the assignment is to watch Steven Pinker’s controversial TED talk about language development and write a response (details on the response will be discussed during Week 4 and will be in an Appendix; it is part of the Current “Events” assignment). You may choose to respond to the ongoing online discussion on the TED site; if you do so, just print out the page and hand that in:

http://www.ted.com/talks/steven_pinker_chalks_it_up_to_the_blank_slate.html

---

Week 8 (Apr 2)

**Topic:** Vocabulary Knowledge, Expressive Language Development & Linguistically Diverse Communities

**Readings due:**
1) Gunning, Chapter 6: Building Vocabulary
2) Hart & Risley, ’30 Million Word Gap’ (Course Site)

**Assignment due:** Midterm Paper: Children’s Literature
Week 9 (April 9)

**Topic:** Instructional Formats and Materials for Small Group Reading and Writing: The Workshop Model and Differentiation

**Readings due:**
1) Workshop (Course Site)
2) Gunning, Chapter 8, **(ONLY PAGES 370-384 QUESTIONING AND GUIDED READING)**
3) Young Children’s Sociocultural Resources Urban Classroom (Course Site)

**Assignment due:** —

Week 10 (April 16)

**Topic:** Comprehension, Language Processing & Analysis of Student Writing/Thinking

**Readings due:**
1) Stahl, Chapter 7: Comprehension
2) Gunning, Chapter 7: Comprehension Theory and Strategies

**Assignment due:** Poster Session on Ten Effective Practices: Comprehension

Week 11 (April 23)

**Topic:** What does “Differentiation” for All Learners Mean for Literacy Instruction?

**Readings due:**
1) National Reading Panel (as well as the ELL Appendix that goes with it) (Course Site)
2) Gunning, Chapter 5: **Only 247-259 Syllabic Analysis**
3) **Assignment due:** —

Skim and bring Fluency Supplement to Class (Course Site)
Skim and bring Cognitive Processes Supplement to Class (Course Site)
Optional - Turn in Literacy Case Study for feedback
Optional reading: Beginning to Teach Reading

Week 12 (April 30)

**Topic:** Talking and Conferencing About Writing with Students and Families

**Readings due:**
1) Gunning, Chapter 12: ‘Writing and Reading’
   2) Article: “Effective Writing Instruction for All Students (BB)

**Assignment due:** —
Optional - Turn in Literacy Case Study for feedback via email
**Week 13 (May 7)**

**Topic:** Course Review & Linking Assessment and Instruction: Differentiated Instruction and Case Studies

**Readings due:** —

**Assignment due:** Literacy Case Study Presentation and Game Showcase

Note: You are welcome to hand in your final case studies on the last night of class but they are not due until Friday, May 10th by 5pm to my mailbox at 239 Greene Street (2nd floor).

ACCOMMODATIONS:
ANY STUDENT ATTENDING NYU WHO NEEDS AN ACCOMMODATION DUE TO A CHRONIC, PSYCHOLOGICAL, VISUAL, MOBILITY AND/OR LEARNING DISABILITY, OR IS DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING SHOULD REGISTER WITH THE MOSES CENTER AT 212-998-4980, WWW.NYU.EDU/CSD