ED582 Critical Literacy  
Spring 2009  
Tuesdays, 4:50-7:30  
Dewey 1-160B  
Warner School, University of Rochester  

Instructor: Dr. Mary Jane Curry  
Office: Room 1-160G Dewey Hall  
Tel: 585-273-5934 (o); 585-442-9242 (h)—M-F before 9 p.m.  
Email: mjcurry@warner.rochester.edu  
Office hours by appointment, but I will be on campus Tuesday afternoons, as well as many Wednesdays and at least the first Friday of every month.  

Course description  
This doctoral seminar will consider the origins and contemporary applications of the concept of critical literacy. We will begin by examining its roots in critical pedagogy and critical theory, contemplating the role of power in literacy and education as well as what it means to empower and be empowered. We will explore critiques of critical pedagogy/literacy as well as the ways that critical literacy has been implemented in a range of contexts, including media and digital literacies. Finally, we will study the growing dominance of the English language in an era of globalization and critical literacy responses to this hegemony.  

Required texts  
- Readings on Blackboard online course system (denoted by BB in schedule)  

Grading scale: A: 95-100; A-: 90-94; B+: 86-89; B: 83-85; B-: 80-82; C: 71-79; F: ≤70  

Course assignments and grade percentage  
- **Class attendance, preparation, participation (15%)**  
You are expected to attend each class, unless you have made a previous arrangement with me or have an emergency (in which case please alert me ASAP). More than two absences (for any reason) will lower your participation grade. Please be prepared to participate actively in class. To this end, for each class please bring **one short question about the readings** (all together) that will serve as a springboard for small or large group discussion.  

- **Leading discussion of ONE reading (10%)**  
You will lead a 30-40 minute discussion of **one of the course readings**, to be selected during the first class. To prepare, you should:  
  - Read the article/chapter/book in advance
- Consider what struck you as interesting and important? What perspectives on language, power, and literacy does the reading put forth? What questions, dilemmas, or insights for education does the text raise?

- Prepare to facilitate discussion about the reading by drawing the class to the reading’s key points and argument, and making connections between this reading and others for the course. (Choosing key quotes from the reading can help focus the discussion and keep us focused on unpacking the text.)

- Prepare to briefly summarize the key points from the reading (in 5 minutes) and present us with 3 rich discussion questions to start us off on a 30-35 minute discussion of the reading. You may decide to facilitate the discussion in small groups, whole group, or both.

Written Assignments (see Course Schedule for due dates)

- **CRITICAL COMMENTARIES** 15% each, total of 45%

Guidelines
For your critical commentaries you should choose a key theme or topic that has arisen in most of the readings assigned for the course up to and including the date on which the commentaries are due. Critical commentaries should NOT be summaries of the readings, but rather a discussion (possibly including reflection based on your experience or knowledge of other research literature, making an argument or taking a stand, raising a key question) that pushes your thinking on an important issue. Commentaries should interweave points from the theoretical readings as well as the ethnographies of literacy. You may wish to include mention of other research literature, in which case you must include a Reference list with full citations. The commentaries should be 2-4 double-spaced pages, following APA format. They don’t need to have a cover sheet. Samples are on Blackboard.

- **LITERATURE REVIEW** (30% total: 1-2 page proposal, 5%; project, 20%; presentation and handout 5%)

Unless you propose something else to me, your final project will be a 15-20 page literature review on a topic of your choice. We will discuss literature reviews in class, but you should also consider attending the Writing Support Services workshop on “Critiques and Literature Reviews” on Saturday, Feb. 7 (as well as other workshops). Sample lit reviews are on Blackboard.

Components of proposal

- **Research topic/question**: This question related to language and/or literacy should be as focused and specific as possible

- **Rationale**: Why is your topic/research question important and relevant to the field of education?

- **State of the art**: What do you know of the research literature at this point? (This section will be developed by your annotated bibliography.)

- **Plan for conducting research**: What do you want to find out, and how do you propose to do so?
Final presentation
This will be a 7-10 minute presentation during our final class, using PowerPoint or other presentational means, including a 1-2 page handout (NOT the PowerPoint printout of slides!) in which you present your topic/research question/findings.

ED582 Course Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week/Date/Themes</th>
<th>Readings due for class</th>
<th>Assignments due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Jan. 20 Critical pedagogy</td>
<td>▪ Freire, <em>Pedagogy of the oppressed</em></td>
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| 2. Jan. 27 Critical theory and definitions | ▪ Giroux, Critical theory and educational practice  
▪ McLaren, Critical pedagogy: A look at the major concepts  
▪ Apple, Au & Gandin, Mapping Critical Education | One question per class relating to the readings |
| 3. Feb. 3 Reading critical pedagogy critically | ▪ Ellsworth, Why doesn’t this feel empowering? Working through the repressive myths of critical pedagogy  
▪ Gore, What we can do for you! What can ‘we’ do for ‘you’?  
▪ Freedman, Is teaching for social justice undemocratic?  
▪ Gee, Language & literacy: Reading Paulo Freire empirically |                                     |
| 4. Feb. 10 Critical literacy and power | ▪ Shor, What is critical literacy?”  
▪ Lankshear & McLaren, Introduction to *Critical literacy: Politics, praxis and the postmodern*  
▪ Luke, Genres of power? Literacy education & the production of capital | Critical commentary #1 |
| 5. Feb. 17 Critical literacy in practice | ▪ Behrman, Teaching about language, power, and text: A review of classroom practices that support critical literacy.  
▪ Rogers, ‘That's what you're here for, you're supposed to tell us’: Teaching and learning critical literacy  
▪ McKinney, Developing critical literacy in a changing context | Proposal for final project |
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tr>
<td>6. Feb. 24</td>
<td>Critical Language Awareness</td>
<td>• Clark &amp; Ivanic, Raising critical awareness of language</td>
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<td>• Granville, Comprehension or comprehending? Using CLA and interactive</td>
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<td>• Janks, CLA: Curriculum 2005 meets the TRC [Truth &amp; Reconciliation</td>
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<td>• Alim, Critical language awareness in the United States</td>
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<td>7. March 3</td>
<td>Multimodality/Digital literacies</td>
<td>• Kress Ch1, The futures of literacy: Modes, logics and affordances</td>
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<td>&amp; Ch 4, Literacy and multimodality: A theoretical framework</td>
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<td>• Jewett, Multimodality &amp; literacy in school classrooms</td>
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<td>• Mosley &amp; Rogers, Posing, enacting, and solving local problems in</td>
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<td>a second-grade classroom</td>
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<td>8. March 10</td>
<td>Critical media literacy</td>
<td>• Kellner &amp; Share, Critical media literacy, democracy, and the</td>
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<td>reconstruction of education</td>
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<td>• Johnny &amp; Shariff, Critical media literacy to counter Muslim</td>
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<td>stereotypes</td>
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<td>• Curry, Media literacy for English language learners: A semiotic</td>
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<td>approach</td>
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<td>9. March 17</td>
<td>Critical Adult &amp; Family</td>
<td>• Westerman, Folk schools, popular education, and a pedagogy of</td>
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<td>Literacies</td>
<td>community action</td>
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<td>• Papen, Literacy and development: What works for whom?</td>
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<td>• Schoorman &amp; Zainuddin What does empowerment in literacy education</td>
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<td>• Pitt, Family literacy: A pedagogy for the future?</td>
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<td>March 24</td>
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<td>No class (AAAL conference)</td>
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<td>10. March 31</td>
<td>Participatory critical literacy</td>
<td>• Morrell, <em>Critical literacy and urban youth</em></td>
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<td>11. April 7</td>
<td>Critical literacy and critical thinking</td>
<td>• Curry, Critical thinking</td>
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<td>• Walsh, In the wake of Katrina: Teaching immigrant students</td>
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<td>learning English about race and class in the United States</td>
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<td>• Benesch, Critical thinking</td>
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<td>Date</td>
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| 12. April 14 | Teaching writing as a critical practice    | Guest speaker: John Albertini, RIT  
  - Albertini, Critical literacy, whole language, and the teaching of writing to deaf students  
  - Ware, Writing, identity, and the Other: Dare we do disability studies?  
  - Canagarajah, Understanding critical writing | Critical commentary #3                                                                 |
| 13. April 21 | English as a global language               |  
  - Fairclough, Global capitalism and critical awareness of language  
  - Lam, Re-envisioning literacy  
  - Auerbach, Connecting the local and the global: A Pedagogy of Not-Literacy | Peer review of final projects—bring 2 copies to class                              |
| 14. April 28 | Final presentations, with handouts         | Final project due.                                                                     |                                                                      |
References


Critical Commentaries Rubric

1. Does not demonstrate understanding of the content of the readings or just a summary of the material. Too many personal remarks, including those not related or tangentially related to the material. No attempt to integrate the readings. Inconsistent organization, vague and confusing statements. No citations to works outside the syllabus. Mechanical errors in writing. Incorrect or unclear use of terminology. APA style not used.

2. Summary of the content of the readings is problematic. Weak or problematic integration of readings, may focus on a single reading while ignoring others. More consistently organized with clearer arguments, including some evidence from the readings. No or few citations to works outside the syllabus. APA style used inaccurately. Some mechanical errors in writing. Limited vocabulary.

3. Competent summary of the content of the readings. Draws on points from several readings. Clearly organized with competent argument and support of the argument using specific, accurate, and relevant information from the readings. Minimal mechanical errors in writing and APA format. Correct use of vocabulary.

4. Demonstrates strong understanding of the content of the readings by presenting a position clearly and persuasively. Thoughtfully challenges, questions, corroborates, and/or disagree with the material. Strong integration of readings that summarizes and analyzes common issues or themes. Well-organized with strong argument supported with illustrations or examples from the readings. All parts support the whole. No or few mechanical errors in writing, appropriate use of citations where applicable, correct use of APA format. Varied and appropriate vocabulary.

5. Demonstrates an excellent understanding of the content of the readings. Strong, integration of course readings to explore, challenge, and question the arguments and findings of the readings. Purposeful integration of the readings to summarize and analyze common issues or themes. Clearly organized with strong arguments supported by illustrations or examples from the readings. Connects educational, theoretical, and methodological issues under discussion to larger social/theoretical context; integrates previous readings with current ones. No mechanical errors in writing; appropriate use of citations where applicable; APA format is correct; use of varied and appropriate vocabulary.