

Literacy, Language, and Education

Linguistics/German 385, Fall 2010

MWF 2:00-2:50pm

Prof. Hiram Maxim

hmaxim@emory.edu; (404) 727-9234

Modern Languages 214; Office hours MW 1-2 and by app't

Course description:

This special topics course will introduce students to the notion of literacy with specific focus on the role that language plays in defining, understanding, and developing literacy. To that end, the course will have one text that will serve as the main introduction into the field of literacy studies, but there will also be weekly supplemental readings to provide different perspectives and more in-depth treatment of certain issues. Throughout the course we will examine how the readings and our discussions help us to better understand four central issues in literacy studies:

- The definition of literacy (what is literacy? What capacities/skills/credentials does it encompass? Is it helpful to think in terms of literacies instead of literacy?)
- The acquisition and development of literacy in school and society (how is literacy acquired? What are the different approaches to literacy development in formal schooling? How is literacy in a second/foreign language developed?)
- The consequences of literacy acquisition (what are the consequences of literacy for the individual and for society? How does literacy attainment affect individual and societal factors, such as identity, socioeconomic status, gender roles, cognition?)
- The role of literacy in contemporary society (why is literacy an issue of interest in contemporary discourse? How is literacy discussed, portrayed, assessed, researched? Who speaks for/against/about literacy?)

As we will see throughout the semester, there are many ways of viewing and understanding literacy, but a constant and underlying theme to the course will be that literacy and literacy practices are socially and culturally contextualized phenomena. The implications of this approach will be thematized repeatedly throughout the course.

Class meetings will focus on comprehension, discussion, and analysis of assigned readings. For each reading assignment there will be typically a few guiding questions to help focus your reading and to prepare you for class discussion. Students will have the opportunity to engage the material in more depth in periodic short writing assignments. In addition, students will be expected to reflect about their own literacy development by maintaining a so-called literacy journal in which they will document their evolving definition of literacy, their literacy development, and their experience with literacy events and practices during the semester. At the

end of the semester students will present and turn in a research-based case study of a literacy project of their choosing.

Materials:

- Gee, J. P. (2008). *Social linguistics and literacies. Ideology in discourses*. 3rd edition. New York: Routledge.
- Supplemental readings available as pdf files on course Blackboard site

Grading:

Participation, preparation, attendance (20%). Attendance, preparation, *and* participation are essential to your success. You will be allowed a maximum of 3 absences for routine doctor visits and travel for non-emergencies, etc., during the semester without penalty. Beginning with the 4th absence, a penalty of -1% will be levied on the earned final grade for each class missed. The best policy to adopt is to **keep me informed** if you miss any classes or assignments. Extended illnesses and family emergencies will be treated as exceptions, and absences for these purposes will be excused. Be prepared to show proof of the need for the absences, however, if your instructor asks for it.

Weekly assignments (35%). Eight times during the semester you will be asked to respond to a reading or readings. This could take the form of a true response in which you take a position regarding a particular issue in the text, or you might be asked to try your hand at one of the exercises presented in the reading.

Literacy journal (15%). Over the course of the semester you will keep a log of your experiences and thoughts regarding literacy acquisition and development. You will turn in this log four times during the semester.

Case study report and presentation (20%). Beginning about mid-term you will start working on an in-depth investigation of a project or initiative that aims to develop the literacy of a particular population. You will present your findings orally in class and in writing at the end of the semester. Students who signed up for the course through the German Studies Department must focus on a project in the German-speaking world.

Final exam (10%). There will be a oral final exam in which you will be asked to synthesize much of the information covered during the semester.

Honor Policy:

All courses in the Department of German Studies strictly adhere to the Emory College Honor and Conduct Code. The general rule to remember is that any work that you turn in to your instructor should be your own. If you want help with an assignment, set up an appointment with your instructor before turning it in.

Semester overview:

8/25 Introduction	10/25 Gee, ch6
8/27 Gee, Intro	10/27 Reading 11: Intertextuality (Bakhtin)
8/30 Gee, ch1	10/29 Reading 12: Discourse analysis (Derewianka)
9/1 Assignment 1	11/1 Discourse analysis
9/3 Reading 1: Grassroots literacy (Blommaert)	11/3 Discourse analysis
9/6 Labor Day	11/5 Discourse analysis
9/8 Reading 2: Multiliteracies (New London Group)	11/8 Assignment 6
9/10 Reading 3: Multimodality (Kress)*	11/10 Gee, ch7*
9/13 Gee, ch2	11/12 Reading 13: FL literacy (Swaffar et al.)
9/15 Reading 4: Schema theory (Steffensen et al.)	11/15 Gee, ch8
9/17 Assignment 2	11/17 Gee, ch9
9/20 Reading 5: Adult literacy programs	11/19 Assignment 7
9/22 Adult literacy programs	11/22 Literacy project workday
9/24 Gee, ch3	11/24 Literacy project workday
9/27 Reading 6: Literacy (Hasan)	11/26 Thanksgiving
9/29 Assignment 3	11/29 Presentations
10/1 Gee, ch4	12/1 Presentations
10/4 Reading 7: Technology (Bauerlein)	12/3 Presentations
10/6 Reading 8: Gaming (Gee)	12/6 Presentations
10/8 Assignment 4	12/13 Final exam, 8:30-11:00*
10/11 Columbus Day	* due dates for literacy log
10/13 <i>open*</i>	
10/15 Reading 9: Emory General Education Requirements	
10/18 Gee, ch5	
10/20 Reading 10: Naturalization (Fairclough)	
10/22 Assignment 5	

Literacy log

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In this portion of the course you are being asked to reflect on your own experiences with various literacy practices. Specifically for this assignment, you are to look more systematically at your own involvement in literacy events and practices. Questions to consider include

- In which domains and contexts (e.g., home, work, school, community) do you encounter literacy events? Do you feel a need to distinguish the domains further?
- In which literacy practices do you participate?
- Which texts do you consume and produce?

You will turn in your log four times during the semester. For each submission you should document in detail the range of literacy events and practices in which you participate. Most likely this will involve focusing on the different domains in which you circulate and then the specific literacy events within each domain.

In addition to the actual documentation of your literacy practices, other questions to consider as you discuss the use of your literacies include

- How does your participation change over the course of a typical day at Emory?
- Which social and cognitive demands do the different literacy events make upon you and others?
- How well are you able to participate in the different events? Why might you be better able to participate in some than others?
- Are any of the readings in the course relevant for helping you understand your literacy encounters?
- What conclusions can be drawn from your examination of your literacy practices regarding your understanding of literacy, its acquisition, and its role in contemporary society?

The length of each submission is hard to quantify but 5 double-spaced, typed pages would seem to be sufficient.

Adapted from Street, B.V. & Lefstein, A. (2007). *Literacy. An advanced resource book*. New York: Routledge.

Semester project

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For this assignment you will conduct an in-depth investigation of a project or initiative that aims to develop the literacy of a particular population. You have a fair amount of freedom to select your topic/project/initiative as long as it has or claims to have an educational purpose. Possible ideas already mentioned in class include

- An adult literacy program
- A tutoring program
- A video/computer game
- A departmental, institutional, state, or national curriculum

Your presentation of this project both in class and in writing should focus on the following components:

- 1) Description (from the perspective of the project/initiative itself)
 - a. Background and overview of the topic that includes a description of the type of literacy targeted
 - b. Approach and methodology for developing that literacy
 - c. Consequences of literacy acquisition within this project for its participants
- 2) Analysis (reference to relevant terminology, readings, and methodology from course)
 - a. Targeted audience
 - b. Definition of literacy
 - c. Approach to literacy development
 - d. Predominant cultural model
 - i. Metaphors used to discuss literacy
 - ii. Choices made regarding language use
 - iii. Assumptions made about the contexts associated with the project
 - iv. Use of naturalized discourse
 - v. Degree of harm involved
 - vi. Implications of the cultural model for participants, literacy development
 - e. Role / expertise / position of instructor / organization
- 3) Recommendations on some or all of the following:
 - a. Self-presentation
 - b. Methodology / pedagogy
 - c. Materials
 - d. Audience

You will present your findings orally in class and in writing at the end of the semester. Students who signed up for the course through the German Studies Department must focus on a project in the German-speaking world. Topics are to be selected and communicated to Prof. Maxim by November 1, 2010.

The length of the project is hard to quantify but 10 double-spaced, typed pages would seem to be sufficient. The written project is due on Wednesday, December 8. The oral presentations are scheduled for Wednesday and Friday, December 1st and 3rd and will be given in small groups in class. See the guidelines for in-class presentations for more information on how to prepare appropriately.

Bibliography

Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). The Dialogic imagination: Four essays by M. M. Bakhtin. Austin, University of Texas Press.

Bauerlein, M. (2008). The dumbest generation. How the digital age stupefies young Americans and jeopardizes our future [or don't trust anyone under 30]. New York, Tarcher/Penguin.

Blommaert, J. (2008). Grassroots literacy. Writing, identity, and voice in Central Africa. London, Routledge.

Derewianka, B. (1990). Exploring how texts work. Newton, NSW, Australia, Primary English Teaching Association.

Derewianka, B. (1998). A grammar companion for primary teachers. Newton, NSW, Australia, Primary English Teaching Association.

Fairclough, N. (1989). Language and power. New York: Longman.

Gee, J. P. (2008). Social linguistics and literacies. Ideology in discourses. 3rd edition. New York: Routledge

Gee, J. P. (2009). Literacy, video games, and popular culture. The Cambridge handbook of literacy. D. R. Olson and N. Torrance. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 313-325.

Hasan, R. (1996). Literacy, everyday talk and society. Literacy in society. R. Hasan and G. Williams. London, Longman: 377-424.

Kress, G. (2010). Multimodality. A Social Semiotic Approach to Contemporary Communication. London, Routledge.

The New London Group (1996). "A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social futures." Harvard Educational Review **66**(1): 60-92.

Steffensen, M. S., C. Joag-Dev, et al. (1979). "A cross-cultural perspective on reading comprehension." Reading Research Quarterly **15**(1): 10-29.

Swaffar, J., Arens, K., and Byrnes, H. (1991). Reading for meaning. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.