And yet the books will be there on the shelves, separate beings, That appeared once, still wet As shining chestnuts under a tree in autumn, And, touched, coddled, began to live In spite of fires on the horizon, castles blown up, Tribes on the march, planets in motion.

-Czeslaw Milosz, And Yet the Books

When you reread a classic you do not see more in the book than you did before; you see more in you than was there before

-Clifton Fadiman, author of The New Lifetime Reading Plan

Books are where things are explained to you; life is where things aren’t. I’m not surprised some people prefer books. Books make sense of life. The only problem is that the lives they make sense of are other people’s lives, never your own.

-Julian Barnes, Flaubert’s Parrot

Books are meat and medicine And flame and flight and flower Steel, stitch, cloud and clout, And drumbeats on air.

-Gwendolyn Brooks, “Books Feed and Cure and Chortle and Collide”

As you read [a book] word for word and page by page, you participate in its creation, just as a cellist playing a Bach suite participates, note by note, in the creation, the coming-to-be, the existence, of the music. And, as you read and re-read, the book of course participates in the creation of you, your thoughts and feelings, the size and temper of your soul.

-Ursula K. LeGuin author of The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas

Do not, under any circumstances, belittle a work of fiction by trying to turn it into a carbon copy of real life; what we search for in fiction is not so much reality but the epiphany of truth.

-Mark Twain, author of The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

The man who doesn’t read good books has no advantage over the man who can’t read them.


Reading and writing should be emancipatory acts. When students are taught to read ‘the word and the world,’ as Brazilian educator Paulo Freire wrote, then their minds become unshackled. . . We must teach students how to ‘read’ not only novels and science texts, but cartoons, politicians, workplaces, welfare offices, and Jenny Craig ads. We need to get students to ‘read’ the inequitable distribution of funds for schools. This is ‘rising up’ reading—reading that challenges, that organizes for a better world. -Linda Christensen Reading, Writing and Rising Up
Course Overview:
This course operates from the perspective underlying the controversial question, “What are English studies for?” Possible answers include: Literacy development. Canonical disciplinary development (e.g., learning Shakespeare and Salinger). Querying humanity, promoting democracy and justice. Exposure to diversity. This course will examine these questions and promote effective strategies for teaching reading comprehension and literary interpretation; for selecting, organizing, and teaching literacy and literature to secondary (and post-secondary) students as situated response to the question “What are English studies for?”

Course Purpose:
This course is designed for individuals who are preparing to teach reading and literature, grades 5-12 and beyond. The purpose of the course is to provide prospective teachers with knowledge, pedagogy, and attitudes about teaching reading and literature in English classrooms. The course is based upon current research, professional association guidelines (NCTE/IRA) and the common core state standards, and informed best practices in the teaching of reading and literature. This course prepares teachers to design, implement, and evaluate methods of teaching reading and literature in the English classroom. Reading/writing workshops, small and large group discussions, demonstrations, and mini-presentations are used to create a community for reading, responding to, and understanding literatures. Students experience and reflect upon their responses to, and engagements with, a variety of literary genres.

Course Description:
The central premise of this course circles around the fact that literature lies at the heart of the English language arts. Most English teachers enter the profession because of their love for literature and reading. They hope to encourage their students to engage in reading and to be captivated by its magic. We English teachers also associate with literature an experience that moved us and that was represented in fiction, nonfiction, poetry, or drama. We have favorite authors, lines, scenes that we carry with us much as other people carry recollections with them from their childhood. Literature is, for many of us, a cosmic member bank of sorts, and the conflicts and characters and metaphors of our favorite books can take on a deep and highly personal resonance.

While not all students in English classes will appear to react with the same enthusiasm regarding all the literature we read and respond to in the classroom, literature is, for most students, the most enjoyable part of language arts. It is an opportunity for them to literally lose themselves in a book. Students also find themselves in other characters as well as being able to live vicariously in other lives and in other eras. Finally, reading literature can be, for students an opportunity to experience the sheer art of a well-crafted plot, the delineation of a character, the unfolding of an important theme. However, we should also note that some students believe as Ralph B Holmes, Jr. pronounced that “English class ruined every good book I ever read.” One purpose of this class, then, is to learn how to avoid ruining books for secondary school readers.

Good readers employ a number of strategies when they make sense of text. Helping students read literature is a matter of helping make connections to what we have taught and will eventually teach so that students recognize these links and experience any particular discipline as a coherent field of study. As a result, an important objective for this course is to learn how to establish a literate and literary culture in your secondary classroom. We will also learn various reading strategies and interpretation techniques to help readers succeed as readers given the range of needs and abilities of the students we will find in our classrooms. Good readers make connections between ideas, authors, and subjects. One of our jobs is to give readers a reason to make such
connections between the text and their lives, but to make other sorts of connections also: between themselves and the outside world, between this subject and others, between the past and the present, the personal and the public. We can and should help them develop the strategies needed to think and read across domains and see all knowledge as integrated.

The unifying questions-at-issue for this course are:

- What are English studies for?
- What constitutes a “literary” text?
- What finally is the point of reading literature?
- Why do we read literature?
- What literature should we read?
- How do we read literature? How might we read literature with middle and high school students given our answers to these questions? (a perspective radically different from teaching literature to middle and high school students).
- Finally, how do we read literature with middle and high school students given the range of needs and abilities of the students we will face in our classrooms?
- What is the teacher’s role?
- What purposes might we hold in mind as we select and read literature with our students?

We will examine answers to these pivotal questions as we practice using various strategies and techniques to help our students improve as readers; implementing methods for motivating students to read literature; organizing and selecting literature to read with students; and deciding how and why to read literature with students in particular ways.

**Course Objectives:**

To provide prospective teachers with the knowledge of and experience with reading literature in an instructional setting, including understanding of and practice in the following:

- The reading process: comprehending and interpreting processes
- Response to literature: theories and practice
- Different genres of literature
- The structures and formats of literary works
- The effect of language upon readers
- Identifying and assessing the developmental stages and abilities of readers

To provide prospective teachers with opportunities to practice and develop the following abilities:

- Design, implement, and evaluate structures that support reading and literature development
- Explore a variety of literature appropriate to diverse cultural groups and individual learning styles
- Collate lesson and units and use reading to assess students’ learning through literature
- Collate lessons and units and use writing to assess students’ learning through literature
- Collate lessons and units and explore strategies to organize students to write, view, speak, and listen in ways that support readers as they develop their responses to literature
- Collate lessons and units that use conference and response strategies to assess students’ abilities and accomplishments
- Interpret assessment of students’ reading growth to students, parents, and educators
To develop in prospective teachers the attitudes that
- Teachers teach who they are and need to be clear about that
- Appreciate the literacies students bring with them to the learning situation
- All learners and languages/dialects have value and worth
- Teachers need to take informed stands on professional issues
- Teachers need to understand developmental stages of growth in reading literature
- Teachers need to know how to interpret various responses to literature
- Teachers need to encourage all readers to respond to literature and to discuss justly their own and others’ ideas
- Teachers need to create communities of learners
- Teachers need to encourage all students to become literate, creative, empathetic and responsible individuals
- Teachers need to model the value of reading literature as a way to learn and develop personally as well as a way to communicate with others

This course is part of the English Teaching major and satisfies methods for teaching reading and English literature requirements for secondary licensure students. Students interested in certifying in other subject areas are welcome, but must also take ENT 440 in order to satisfy literacy teaching requirements for certification. All participants will be expected to develop the skills and dispositions of exemplary professional educators. While we will all craft our own teaching styles, the basic minimum includes being prepared, punctual, and organized. In addition, you will be expected to work collaboratively to solve problems, take responsibility for your own learning, construct defensible arguments about your choices, and strive to understand your colleagues—especially those who are different from you.

Course Topics:
- Reading and viewing as literacy processes
- Teaching reading at the secondary level
- Organizational structures and attitudes that teach love for a literate life
- Using critical theory to teach literature
- Reading/writing workshops and literature discussions
- Responding to students’ responses
- Types of genres and their characteristics
- Helping students trust and extend their responses
- Book Clubs and Literature circles and other grouping methods for reading/responding to literature
- Nurturing student-to-student responses
- Descriptive criteria for assessing levels and types of responses
- Developing literature curriculum
- Collaborative learning
- Research in literature and response to literature
- Guidelines for selecting literature/censorship issues
- Implementing Indian Education for All

Course/University Policies:
- 100% attendance and active participation in class activities are required. Students are expected to be punctual and to stay in class for the entire period. Tardiness and
early departure are not tolerated and will result in grade penalty. In-class activities and discussion are integral to the community we create in this course. An absence is an absence, regardless of the reason, they will all count. Therefore, if a student misses more than one class during the semester, grades will be adversely affected. In case of illness, please contact the professor as soon as possible. Students who are absent assume responsibility for missed work. Absence does not excuse due dates. Assignments are due on the date given. Additional attendance and participation criteria are listed in the assignments and evaluation section.

- No late assignments will be accepted (see below). Missing assignments receive the grade of F. Plagiarized work results in an automatic F in the course. No Exceptions.

- Incompletes are not assigned at the discretion of the student. Incompletes will only be allowed under circumstances outlined in the catalog. Students must petition the professor in writing for permission to take an incomplete in the course.

- Paper criteria and due dates are listed in the following section. The course uses a contract approach to grading. See outline below.

- Papers may not be revised for reconsideration following the final exam. The final exam is scheduled Thursday December 11 5:30-7:30. Attendance is mandatory. No exceptions.

Textbooks:

Books We Read Together as a Class to Establish Common Ground—Whole Class Reading:


**Book Club Texts—Books we read in groups— Organizing Classrooms to Teach Literature—**

**References:**


**Choice Books:**


**Bibliography of Additional Resources (available for check out from the professor):**


Rosenblatt, Louise M. *The Reader, the Text, the Poem.* Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois UP, 1994.


Nota Bene: There is a HUGE body of work on the relationships between gender, race, class and reading and literary study. There is also a large “green English” literature. In the interest of space, I did not cite those resources. If those topics are of more interest to you than the ones I have listed, let me know.

Required Assignments:

Preparation; Participation in Daily Assignments:

Punctual completion of all assignments. Careful reading of assigned material and thoughtful responses to that material, checked daily. Keeping current with reading and writing assignments. Students are expected to arrive on time and to be prepared to participate in class discussion and learning experiences based on the reading when class starts. Reflective difficulty papers addressing weekly readings and discussion questions will be assigned regularly along with the major writing assignments. Peer work and teacher conferences are scheduled regularly.

Attendance is mandatory and counts on your final grade. No late papers will be accepted for evaluation.

The standards and criteria that will be used to grade attendance and participation are based on the following:

One hundred percent attendance [If unable to attend a class session due to illness or an emergency, you must arrange with another student to get the notes and be able to summarize and analyze the content of the presentation.]

Listening carefully, taking notes and asking appropriate questions

Consideration of community: Avoidance of undue claims of time or attention from others.

Consideration of a productive learning community does not mean that we all have to agree. Varying opinions and the life experiences from which differing opinions derive are welcome; however, each member of a productive learning community has an obligation
to civility—to listening respectfully, to speaking without malice, to generating clear rationales and suitable evidence to support argumentative claims. In other words, consideration of community does not mean that “everyone has the right to their own opinion, regardless of how uncivil that opinion might be.” As teachers and future teachers, we must nurture a professional commitment to social justice—to liberty, democracy, and equity for all—and particularly for those who have been underserved and poorly served by education because of the nature of their identities and backgrounds. In that regard, some opinions and worldviews are better (more morally virtuous) than other views. You need to be aware of students’ gender, religion, sexual orientation, language, and abilities and of how your own background and worldviews affect your teaching. This awareness is a lifelong process, but this course requires you to be sensitive to diversity issues in your classroom interactions, choice of materials, activities, and assessments. As a result, racist, sexist, classist, homophobic and other positions/opinions that discriminate on the basis of identity will be unequivocally repudiated. Your professional attitudes, knowledge, and pedagogy should contribute positively to the literacy, skills, and success of your students.

**Awareness of and appropriate response to the learning dynamics required in class.** Teachers need to hone their powers of observation. They need to be aware of the feeling tones and emotional responses generated by the disequilibria encountered during the processes of learning. They need to watch for body language and other verbal cues that signal discomfort, disengagement or retreat. Fine tune your observation skills by noticing body language and other cues that suggest you have spoken too often or too long or too unthinkingly. All that discomfort is not bad, but too much emotional pain inhibits possibilities for learning. Ask others who you think may be struggling if you might help or assist them. Ask for help or assistance if you need it.

**Academic honesty.** Academic honesty is an expression of an ethic of interpersonal justice, responsibility, and care. It demands that the pursuit of knowledge be conducted with sincerity and care. Therefore, academic dishonesty, including plagiarizing the work of others, downloading or purchasing lesson plans or other written work from the internet and representing it as your own, cheating on tests, violating copyright laws, or conducting research on human subjects without IRB approval, will make the individual subject to discipline which may range from failure on the assignment to dismissal from the university.

**Technology.** This is the 21st century. You are expected to incorporate technology and print/non-print media into your instructional materials and planned classroom activities. Technology may include resources from the Internet; software programs; lessons involving hands-on computer or web-based instruction; instruction in digital environments; film, television, video or other visuals; graphic organizers, or whatever your creativity with available resources invents. You might want to subscribe to the NCTE Inbox, which is a monthly email newsletter with news and teaching tips.
Difficulty Papers, Triple-entry pages to spark discussion:

The purpose of these informal, speculative papers is to respond to the difficulties you had in reading the material assigned for class and to give you some material from which to discuss your developing habits of mind about teaching reading and literature in response to what you read. Difficulty papers should be approximately 1-2 pages in length and should reflect upon your reactions to the text. Reactions may include news flashes, surprises, puzzlements, queries, reviews. You should also focus your response on questions the reading raises for you in terms of teaching reading and literature and pedagogical thoughts the reading inspires, confuses or complicates. The audience for these papers is yourself, your colleagues, and the professors.

Acknowledging difficulty and complexity are fundamental conditions for learning and deepening knowledge. Confronting difficulty creates opportunities for intellectual and pedagogical growth. To deal with challenges in learning and in teaching requires an ability to engage tough questions and design enabling solutions. To make a difference in the world means to face the difficulties of the world.

Difficulty is the quality of being hard to understand. Paying attention to difficulty means noticing what you believe is “hard to understand” in a text. Ideas or concepts might be “hard to understand” for different reasons—because they are perplexing, obscure, mysterious, remote, strange, unfamiliar, uncomfortable, disconnected, meaningless, confusing, ridiculous, contradictory, hypocritical, inconsistent, ideologically contrary to your worldview. Please take notice of whatever slows you down or brings to a halt the physical activity of reading, leaving you mystified, wondering why, what and how.

Readers who engage, rather than avoid, a text’s difficulties can deepen their understanding of why they read and how they read. Teachers who pay attention to their own difficulties with text are better able to help students with their reading difficulties.

See handout from Salvatori and Donahue on The Difficulty Paper and Triple-Entry Pages.

These will be due at the beginning of class and serve as a basis for discussion and questions.

Appreciating Existing Literacies: A Literacy Memoir and Reflection on Pedagogical Proclivities:

Due September 4

For this assignment, think how you might narrate an illustrative memoir that would describe your relationship with reading and literature. Bomer might provide some food for thought. For this assignment, you might choose to describe/depict your first positive or negative encounter with literature; you might choose to describe/depict your first encounter with a favorite, feared or a loathed novel, story, poem, play, &tc.; you might choose to describe/depict your favorite place to
read or absence of a place to read; you might describe/depict the ideal conditions required by you for reading literature. These are suggestions only. You will want to use the memoir to illustrate your independent reading life and your answer to the “So What?” question of why and what we read. Showing details will carry the message of “So What?” more than telling explanations. This does not have to be great literature—simply an opportunity for you to practice writing in a genre you might choose to teach students. Try to have more fun than panic with this assignment.

Pre-composing suggestions will be handed out in class. Once you have engaged in any pre-composing activities, use your notes as an organizational aid to compose a literature/reading memoir (narrative, identity map or multimodal composition) in which you describe/depict memorable experiences that have had a significant influence on you as a reader. Analyze the experiences to illustrate the influence it has had on your perceptions about yourself as a reader of literature. In the finale of the composition, draw some generalizations about what these experiences tell about what you believe may be the best way to use literature as a tool for learning in your classroom.

The result should be brief—a narrative no more than (5) double-spaced pages in length; a one-page illustrated and labeled literacy identity map; or a 5-6 minute multimodal media presentation.

**Microteach Colloquia:**

**September 18; October 23; November 13**

Microteaching is a teacher education technique whereby a teacher reviews a videotape or snippet of a lesson after each session, in order to conduct a "post-mortem". Teachers find out what has worked, which aspects have fallen short, and what needs to be done to enhance their teaching technique. Invented in the mid-1960s at Stanford University by Dr. Dwight Allen, micro-teaching has been used with success for several decades now, as a way to help teachers acquire new skills.

In the original process, a teacher was asked to prepare a short lesson (usually 20 minutes) for a small group of learners who may not have been her own students. This was videotaped, using VHS. After the lesson, the teacher, teaching colleagues, a master teacher and the students together viewed the videotape and commented on what they saw happening, referencing the teacher's learning objectives. Seeing the video and getting comments from colleagues and students provided teachers with an often intense "under the microscope" view of their teaching.

Micro lessons are also used in methods classes as great opportunities to present sample "snapshots" of what/how you teach and to get some feedback from colleagues about how it was received. It's a chance to try teaching strategies that the teacher may not use regularly. It's a good, safe time to experiment with something new and get feedback on technique.

**Techniques**

Since its inception in 1963, microteaching has become an established teacher education procedure in many universities and school districts. This procedure is geared towards simplification of the complexities of the regular teaching-learning process. Class size,
time, task, and content are scaled down to provide optimal training environments. The supervisor demonstrates the skill to be practiced. This may be live demonstration, or a video presentation of the skill. Then, the group members select a topic and prepare a lesson of five to ten minutes. The teacher trainee then has the opportunity to practice and evaluate her use of the skills. Practice takes the form of a ten-minute micro-teaching session in which five to ten pupils are involved.

Feedback
Feedback in microteaching is critical for teacher-trainee improvement. It is the information that a student receives concerning his attempts to imitate certain patterns of teaching. The built-in feedback mechanism in micro-teaching acquaints the trainee with the success of his performance and enables him to evaluate and to improve his teaching behavior. Electronic media gadgets that can be used to facilitate effective feedback are a vital aspect of micro-teaching. (Teg, 2007).

Once a month during the course, we will meet in small groups to share teaching ideas as they are developing out of units and inquiry projects that you are contracting to complete following a microteaching concept. Every member of the group gets 5-7 minutes to present/teach and 3 minutes to get feedback from the group. Protocols will be distributed.

Designing a Year-Long Literature Curriculum

School Board Simulation: December 4
Curriculum Due: December 11

The purpose for this assignment is to equip you with alternatives to the anthology or prescribed curriculum. It is to give you an opportunity to organize a year-long curriculum, which you might implement and revise as you teach. This is an opportunity for you to practice the work of planning to teach. It is also to give you a chance to create your own idiosyncratic “canon” of works, what you would include as essential for all of your students to read and know. You will get to practice the work of teaching by thinking of the range of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, drama and the ideas that you would hope for your students to consider as students of the word and the world. This assignment will allow you to select a range of texts/units, to articulate your reasons for choosing particular texts, to articulate a rationale in support of particular works of literature, and to explain what you think students will “get” from reading this literature. It will help you to judge how well your selections represent racial, cultural, geographical, and gender diversity and why diversity is an important criteria for selection and teaching.

For this assignment you can work alone or in a group (no more than 4). You will design a year-long thematically organized literature curriculum for a specific grade level (5-12). Imagine that you and your partners are the curriculum planning committee for literature. Your goal is to create the rationale, select themes and representative works, determine readability and political issues, and create a flow chart for this thematic literature curriculum.

You will present your year-long curriculum to the class, who will role play a school board and parent advisory group. The school board and the parent advisory group will ask questions regarding your rationale, theme, and works. Each person on your team should be prepared to respond to questions that might emerge.
Final exam:
Thursday December 11 5:30-7:30

Plan to keep track of your difficulty papers/triple-entry pages as you read your selected and assigned readings. Keep track of your difficulties, questions, and responses the books inspire. Keep track of your understanding and reactions to the ideas in the books. During a take-home final exam, you will draw on writing, class literature discussions, book club and individual choice readings and presentations to write a position paper that articulates your pedagogical position for selecting and organizing literature for particular purposes in the secondary English/language arts classroom. The format and audience for this final paper will be described before the exam. However, you will want to plan to declare your intents for why, what, and how you plan to teach literature in the secondary classroom. Additional information and evaluation criteria will be distributed in class.

Thinking Through What to Teach, Why to Teach it and How:

The social, cultural and political habits of mind of teaching and learning.

See choices in contract options below.

Contracted Unit Options: Benchmark due dates—Oct. 2, Oct. 30, Dec. 4

Designing Genre-Based Study: A 3-part Unit on Poetry and Memoir

For this option, you will develop a reading/writing workshop in which you explore the genre of memoir with your students. You should first identify several memoirs (or excerpts of memoirs) you might choose to read with students in addition to the poems you have already selected and microtaught. The texts the students read will provide models of memoir for what they will write. Decide on a grade level to which you plan to teach these selections. Determine the order in which you plan to teach these selections and identify the writing prompts and activities you will use to explore memoir with your students. Design instructional mini-lessons and activities that encourage students to explore memoir, refer to the text, write memoir and make connections with their lives. As you design your unit plan, consider all the language arts (reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, visually representing) and the different learning styles/multiple intelligences. Additional evaluation criteria will be distributed in class.

Designing an Author Study—Native American Writer

For this option, you should identify a Native American writer with whose work you will develop an extended unit of reading and writing workshop-style study for a specific grade level of students. Generally speaking, students seldom come across several pieces by a single author. The reason has partly to do with instruction. More often than not, teachers serve students a smorgasbord of texts, hoping that one will pique their appetite for more. Works by Native American writers are rarely examined, and when available, short poems usually appear as sidebars in literature anthologies. Rather than developing a deep knowledge of a particular writer’s work, students emerge with a very vague sense of an author’s oeuvre. This is not the kind of experience that makes students recognize or love the work of a particular writer. Textbook
anthologies promote a topsoil approach to teaching literature by scattering quite short “multicultural” works throughout their tomes. A few poems by Native American authors do not create a diverse collection of voices nor understanding of the rich textures of work accomplished by various Native American writers. What can offer balance to traditional approaches to literature study is the in-depth examination of work by a single author, written over many years and in a variety of moods and historical moments. When they do so, they begin to determine for themselves what is unique about a writer, what makes him or her worthy of the exalted title, “artist.” Select a number of works by a single Native American writer (perhaps one novel and several poems, or a novel and a couple of short stories, and poems, or several short stories and several poems…) and develop a reading and writing unit for use with a particular grade level of students. Be sure to include appropriate cultural materials that will help students interpret the work in a culturally sensitive manner. Bruce Goebel’s Reading Native American Literature: A Teacher’s Guide is a good resource as is Dorothea Susaq’s Roots and Branches: A Resource of Native American Literature—Themes, Lessons, and Bibliographies. A good model for this assignment is Bruce, Baldwin & Umphrey Sherman Alexie in the Classroom. Additional criteria will be handed out in class.

**Designing a Controversial Topics/issues Literature Unit Using a Book Club Classic and Companion Texts:**

For this option, you should identify a controversial topics/issues unit (see Beach et al.) that represents an important question/concern/issue for students. Using the “classic text” from your book club reading and other selections of fiction, nonfiction, drama, and poetry, plan to teach a Tough Talk, Tough Texts related unit. Determine the critical theoretical frameworks with which you might examine the literature and themes. Decide on a grade level to which you plan to teach these selections. Determine the order in which you plan to teach these selections. Design instructional minilessons with critical response questions and activities that encourage students to explore the controversial topic or issue, refer to the text, and make connections with their lives. As you design your unit plan, consider all the language arts (reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, visually representing) and different learning styles/multiple intelligences. Decide which texts will be read independently, in pairs or book clubs, and as a whole class. Additional information and evaluation criteria will be distributed in class.

**Unit of your choice:**

You also may choose to model a unit of your choice after any of those outlined in Blau, Bomer, Frey & Douglas or Rief.

**Independent/Buddy Reading Book Tease, Book Trailer, Book Review:**

Select a professional book from the bibliography on a topic of interest to you to read alone or with a buddy. Produce a book review, book tease or book trailer that summarizes the text and invites other readers in. Grad students may use this to begin work on their inquiry projects.
Outline of Content and Schedule of Course Work:

August 28: Course Introduction: What are English Studies for? Why do we read? What do we read? How do we read? Who do we teach?

“Poetry 180”: A poem a day. “Books,” “First Reader” by Billy Collins and excerpt from Junot Diaz Address to NCTE Annual Meeting 2009, Philadelphia, PA. WIC

Introductions and pedagogical commitments. Predictable routines.

Discuss organization of reading, difficulty papers/triple entry pages, final Exam December 11 5:30-7:30. Overview Syllabus. Introduce contract grading and choice units. Literacy identity memoir—who you are as a reader and writer impacts who you will be as a teacher of reading and writing.

What does literature do for readers or require of them that other types of texts do not? What is literature in an era of increasingly blended texts (i.e., texts that incorporate multiple genres and media)? Is film really literature, and does it have a valid place in our curriculum? How best do we describe an English teacher’s role in relation to literature: To transmit the culture through a canon of texts? To teach students a set of skills? To develop students’ literary tastes? Today we will explore these questions and extensions from them as we begin to think about the discipline called English and what it must do to help students prepare for unknown conditions. Robert Scholes argues that the best preparation we can give our students will be the highest level of competence as readers and writers, producers and consumers of the various texts they will encounter (1998). Scholes asserts that “the future will belong to English departments wise enough to embrace rhetoric and the media themselves and to find ways of connecting these contemporary texts to their more traditional concerns.” Scholes dismisses the long-standing tradition of literature as the sacred text, advocating instead for a canon of textual skills that will prepare students to be “textual animals,” able to read anything that comes along.

Arthur Applebee asks us to consider the primary challenge to our field: What is the purpose of English and the teaching of literature in our society at this point? Applebee lobbies for “curriculum as conversation,” for “the knowledge-in-action that is learned through participating in living traditions of knowing and doing” (1996).

Marshall Gregory (1997) maintains that English makes six contributions to student development:
- Literary content
- Cognitive skills
- Aesthetic sensitivity
- Intra- and intercultural awareness
- Ethical sensitivity
- Existential maturity

Judith Langer (1999) found the following six features of effective instruction:
- Students learn skills and knowledge in multiple lesson types
- Teachers integrate test preparation into instruction.
- Teachers make connections across instruction, curriculum, and life.
- Students learn strategies for doing the work.
- Students are expected to be generative thinkers.
Classrooms foster cognitive collaboration.

These premises will help us as we begin to find complex answers to the framing questions for the course:

- What are English studies for?
- Why do we read?
- What do we read?
- How do we read?
- Who do we teach?

Readings assigned for September 4: Read part I-II Randy Bomer *Building Adolescent Literacy in Today’s English Classrooms*. Write a 1-2 page difficulty paper or triple-entry pages in response to spark discussion in class.

Literacy identity memoir due Sept. 4. Also, begin collecting resources for the 3-part unit on memoir.

**September 4  Building Adolescent Literacy in Today’s English Classrooms  Pts. I-II**

Poem.

**Literacy identity memoir due. Readaround.**

We teach who we are. Who we are determines what pedagogical goals we have for teaching. Who we teach influences choices we make. What we teach is a selective process that grows out of why we teach, who we teach, and where we teach. Teachers are constantly reflecting on these questions to plan and revise what they do. Thinking about these issues in relation to what experienced and confident teachers say about who, what and why they teach helps us to develop the habits of mind of teaching.

Teachers of literature deal inevitably with its human implications. Must they then become experts in the social sciences? The answer obviously is no. But they are responsible for scrutinizing their assumptions about human nature and society in the light of contemporary thought. This is the work of a sensitive teacher—one who can turn away from the literature itself to clarify some of the concepts about human and social/cultural relations that underlie social insight to literary sensitivity and judgment. Rosenblatt argues in *Literature as Exploration* that these are key ideas with which teachers should be familiar and which are more important than any of the specific findings of the various disciplines that study human behavior.

Literary materials—the poem, the short story, the novel, the drama, creative non-fiction, journalism, and by extension, film, hypertext, new media, video and television contribute powerfully to the really important things in the education of youth which cannot be taught in formal didactic manners; they are things which are experienced, absorbed, accepted, incorporated into the psyche and personality through emotional and aesthetic experiences. Of all the elements that enter into the educational process—except, of course, the actual personal relationships and activities that make up the democratic community life that we hope to create in school—literature possess the greatest potential for that kind of assimilation of ideas and attitudes. For literature enables youth to live through—and to reflect on—much that in abstract terms would be meaningless to him or her. S/he comes to know intimately, more intimately perhaps that would be possible in actual life, many visions of the ways in which the world might be. Through literature,
students may vicariously share their struggles and perplexities and achievements with others. They may become a part of strange environments, or see with new emotions the conditions and the lives about them. These vicarious experiences have at least something of the warmth and color and immediacy of life. Any insight or clarification students derive from literary works grows out of their relevance to certain facets of the students’ emotional or intellectual nature. Literary works may bring into play and be related to profoundly personal needs and preoccupations that make it a powerful potential educational force for social change.

Randy Bomer is a teacher/scholar whose work I deeply admire. He is no-nonsense and abhors the stupidification of literacy that passes for much of what we are expected to do in the high school classroom. He critiques the mindless gimmicky that so often passes for English teaching. He appreciates the literacies and lives that students bring to learning. He is an advocate for the pursuit of fairness and justice in the English classroom. In this book, which is heady and delicious to read, Bomer provides a framework for making key instructional decisions that support student engagement, authenticity, and deep intellectually rich classroom activity that builds a literate life.

Bomer is a graduate and proponent of the “New Hampshire School” in his orientation to reading/writing workshop—creating conditions in classes where students have freedom of choice to pursue literate engagement authentically. In a reading/writing workshop, students participate in reading and writing for real purposes and audiences. Students are focused on their literate activity. The develop habits of engaging—ways of becoming involved and invested in literate tasks that are significant to them, not because they were born to love reading and writing but because of the ways the literate activities they pursue connect to other things in life that matter to them.

In the sections we read for today, Bomer looks at fixing attention in an attention economy and inviting engagement. He looks at ways to organize and think about the reading we would like our engaged students to do. This may be a difficult read for prospective teachers as what Bomer addresses goes against the stereotypical grain of what many think the teachers job might be. Instead of standing front and center telling students “do this, do that, and do it by when….”, you will find the meditations and suggestions of a deeply engaged, confident, experienced teacher talking about how he creates conditions in classrooms for engaging a lifelong project in literacy.

Assignments for September 11: Read Part III-IV Bomer Building Adolescent Literacy in Today’s English Classrooms. Write a 1-2 page difficulty paper or triple-entry pages in response to spark discussion in class.

**September 11 Building Adolescent Literacy in Today’s English Classrooms Pts. III-IV**

Poem.

Today we will consider Parts III and IV of Bomer in which they talk about engaging students with text, helping them to understand, and introducing us to the general processes of reading, especially focusing on ways to assist students who may have difficulty with reading. Given the fact that readers’ strategies vary according to different genres, Beach et al. overview the basic building blocks of teaching genre-specific reading by integrating drama techniques and talking and writing about literature. They also introduce ways to view texts through multiple theoretical lenses and why we would want to do so, a concept we will address more thoroughly when we read Carey-Webb’s Literature and Lives. Finally in this section, they address ways to assess and
evaluate student learning. Finally, they suggest ways to reflect on teaching and engage in professional development, knowing that learning to teach well is an ongoing process.

This book is a comprehensive book that addresses the world of teaching reading and literature in the secondary schools through the perspectives of a master teacher who resists the political contexts constraining teachers and schools today. In its pages is an excellent overview to expectations that most schools have of teachers of secondary English literature. I think it is a superb text to orient prospective teachers to schools as they are and as they might be and to scaffold beginning teachers into the complexities of teaching in an English classroom.

In the final sections of his new book, Bomer addresses the role of writing in the English classroom. Although we separate out the teaching of reading from the teaching of writing in the English Teaching curriculum, that separation is for pragmatic reasons only. The teaching of writing and reading should always be done in concert and in deeply connected ways. Much like Bomer’s pedagogical approach to reading workshop, writing workshop is self-directed. A notebook pedagogy is a way of making complex processes of inquiry more concrete and manageable for teachers and their students—not an orthodox model of the one and only writing process. A writer’s notebook is meant to change the way the use pays attention to the world. The writer notices more because she has a notebook and a responsibility to write in it. She has a problem to solve—what to put in the notebook today—and the solution to that problem involves tuning into her own thoughts—noticing when she has them, becoming aware of their relationships, and following them where they might lead. Writer’s notebooks are intended to help writers notice, and to write into the seams of the writer’s day, to develop a writing life.

Pay attention to your response to teacher ego in Bomer’s descriptions of teaching in this section. What role do you surmise he suggests? He talks about how a teacher has to establish a balance between (a) giving students lots of space for decision making and (b) providing enough support so that they don’t feel abandoned and empty. That balance is crucial throughout the teaching of notebooks, and the key is to make students responsible for making decisions, but to teach actively what students need to know to make good decisions. The teacher in a workshop classroom is more of a coach and guide than a “stand and deliver.”

In the fourth section of the book, Bomer addresses teaching toward participation in a digital culture, approaches that make grammar study socially and politically meaningful, dealing with the world of a testing culture, and thoughts about planning a year. Chapter 17 will be very helpful to you as you think about developing a year-long curriculum schematic.

Readings assigned for September 18: Read Read. Write. Teach: Choice and Challenge in the Reading-Writing Workshop, Foreword; Introduction; The Essential Questions That Frame Our Year; Chapters 1-5. Write a 1-2 page difficulty paper or triple-entry pages in response to spark discussion in class.
Sept. 18  
*Read. Write. Teach: Choice and Challenge in the Reading-Writing Workshop*  
Foreword; Introduction; The Essential Questions that Frame Our Year; Chs. 1-5

Poem.

With Bomer for context and the big picture of English teaching, we will examine master teacher’s work in Linda Rief’s *Read. Write. Teach. Choice and Challenge in the Reading-Writing Workshop*. Reading-writing workshop has long been considered best practices for teaching reading and writing. Grounded in the idea that students learn to read by reading and write by writing, student choice and voice inspire literacy efficacy and achievement. Unfortunately, examples of reading-writing workshop at work are difficult to find in today’s corporate-engineered, assessment-driven culture of schooling, which is why Rief’s book is an incredible gift to budding (and experienced) teachers. This book shows us how to teach readers and writers. This is a story about Linda Rief’s thinking and feeling as she teaches. This is not a book that gives you gimmicks, which may be tempting to rely on early on, but will not feed your teaching life for very long. The point in reading Linda and her students’ stories isn’t to learn how to replicate her practices. The point is to learn how to think like a reading and writing teacher.

The Foreword by Maja Wilson states, “Teaching, like writing, is contextual. It’s one thousand decisions made every day, in context. It’s holding and honoring relationships and principles and a dogged insistence that students’ intentions and experiences matter.”

The chapters we will consider today demonstrate the basics of reading-writing workshop practices, how and why to set up a classroom organized around reading and writing workshop, and the value of immersion. This book shows us the minute details of the work Bomer introduced us to in *Building Adolescent Literacy in Today’s English Classroom*.

Readings assigned for September 25: Read *Read. Write. Teach. Choice and Challenge in the Reading-Writing Workshop* by Linda Rief Chs. 6-11; Afterword; References. Write a 1-2 page difficulty paper or triple-entry pages in response to spark discussion in class.

Sept. 25  
*Read. Write. Teach: Choice and Challenge in the Reading-Writing Workshop* Chs. 6-11; Afterword; References

Poem.

**1st microteach colloquia**

The first section of Chapter 6 is titled “In the spirit of ass kicking!” Rief writes,

I want my students to read and respond to reading *in the spirit of ass kicking*. I want them to think and feel and react as deeply, as passionately, as powerfully as Ashworth and Bill and Kirk and the rest of the class did—because the story touched them as human beings…. I want them to read to realize they are not alone. I want them to be able to step into worlds they can only imagine or could never imagine. I want them to learn and think and feel their worlds and other worlds. (102)

We need to help create conditions in our classrooms that allow students “to read and write as if their lives depended on it” (Rich) because they absolutely do.
In the sections we will consider for today, Rief helps us consider the question, what is English studies for? in a passionate and immediate way. She takes us through ways to develop reading and writing connections. She shows us the essentials of the reading-writing workshop, working with mentor texts, how to organize reading and writing around whole novels, author-genre studies and persuasive writing. She gives us everything we need to create classrooms that are alive with students reading and writing things that matter to them. She shows us how to read in the spirit of ass kicking.

Readings assigned for October 2: Read The Literature Workshop: Teaching Texts and Their Readers by Sheri Blau Sections 1-2. Write a 1-2 page difficulty paper or triple-entry pages in response to spark discussion in class.

Oct. 2  

The Literature Workshop: Teaching Texts and their Readers

Poem.

1st Contract Benchmark

Today I will model a response to poetry workshop and discuss reader response theory—its uses and abuses. We will work through Sheridan Blau’s “My Papa’s Waltz” reader response workshop with some other poems. Blau orchestrates reader response in ways that focus on reader difficulties. As a background caution, let me give you some background on reader response:

Reader response theory was initially introduced into the field of literary study by Louise Rosenblatt in her influential book on the subject Literature as Exploration. Rosenblatt makes three primary points about reader-response:

1. The literature itself must have some connection to the students’ lives.
2. The approach must, in order to capitalize upon the students’ lives, be inductive.
3. Students must be involved, must be engaged to the point where the discussion leads them, “to raise personally meaningful question...[and] to seek in the text the basis for valid answers.”

The undergirding principle is that text is a becoming, as critic Roland Barthes describes it in Image-Music-Text (De L’Oeuvre au Texte) something that is “held in language, only exists in the movement of a discourse...experienced only in an activity of production” (157). Text is, for Barthes and for many others, “the very plural of meaning...[dependent upon] the plurality of its weave of signifiers” (159. Thus, signifiers are not just readers; they are those who, in their time and place and with their individual backgrounds, make manifest the meaning of the text. While the students may be diverse, the signifiers are different and their weaves of patterns varied; their engagement with the literature is real and alive.

Five characteristics of a classroom that uses a reader-response orientation are (see Christenbury, Making the Journey. Second edition. pp. 129-138):
1. Teachers encourage students to talk extensively
2. Teachers help students make a community of meaning.
3. Teachers ask, they don’t tell.
4. Teachers ask students to make links to personal experience.
5. Teachers affirm student responses.

Although reader response orientations to literature teaching can be very engaging and effective, some important cautions are in order. Many well-meaning teachers cite Rosenblatt and reader response theory but are not sure what Rosenblatt has written and what reader response activities mean in a classroom. Certainly reader response does not imply that any student response under any circumstances carries complete authority. Reader response asks the student to bring his or her experience to the literature, and it honors that connection. It maintains that an individual reader can shape a piece of literature through his or her own interpretation, although the limits of that shaping are relatively crucial to delineate. Using reader response approach in a classroom is not an invitation to students or teachers to:

- Ignore completely what is in the text.
- Read into the text facts or inferences that are clearly not present or not defensible.
- Insist that “well, that’s my opinion” constitutes the last—and unassailable—word on the discussion.
- Reveal sensitive aspects of their personal lives in order to discuss the literature or defend their points.
- Misread cultural contexts that inform understanding of the text.

A reader’s response must be intelligent, thoughtful, and have some tie to the text, however tenuous that might first appear. To consider a discussion where students do not have to pay any attention to what they have read is not reader response—it’s irresponsible.

Sheridan Blau’s workshop approach to working through difficulties in reading texts gives us multiple points of entry for helping students develop meaning from what they read. His work is based on a couple of important principles 1) What is difficult is good for us and should be the focus of our attention; 2) Students should be doing the hard work of making meaning from text not hearing the teacher’s “right” perspective on what the text might mean. Blau insists on active, text-based reading that enables readers to work through the hard parts, not skip them.

Today following work with Blau’s workshop approach, we will look at other poems to examine possible ways to respond to the difficulties we encounter in literature.

Readings assigned for October 9: Read The Literature Workshop: Teaching Texts and Their Readers by Sheridan Blau Sections 3-5. Write a 1-2 page difficulty paper or triple-entry pages in response to spark discussion in class.
Investment in teaching particular meanings for assigned texts sets up a problematic pedagogical dynamic already described—a dynamic that is at odds with a conscientious teacher’s equal desire to see students construe texts for themselves and become autonomous readers capable of producing their own interpretations of texts. The greater the teacher’s investment in a particular interpretation, the greater the danger that variant student readings will be suppressed and that alternative perspectives and intelligent readings against the grain will be discounted or marginalized. This is especially tricky with much multi-cultural or ethnic literature, which often offers experiences that many students do not have the background or cultural knowledge to understand. Under these circumstances, the conflict faced by a teacher may become more complicated both ethically and pedagogically. Students may not be offering alternative readings, but merely failing to apprehend the difficult or subtle meanings that a text offers, or they attempt to avoid the challenges of an assigned text by declaring it stupid, boring, a waste of time, or correlatively find the characters “crazy” because they cannot understand them.

This is where the possibility of a misreading or misinterpretation is grave and potentially damaging. Literary theory may be helpful here; however, many student-produced readings that might be said to challenge a normative or traditional reading do not represent an alternative perspective at all, but a failed or incomplete reading or a reading that misapprehends the text in the way that an observer of a visually obscured object from a distance might render a judgment about its identity, but would, upon closer inspection, regard his initial judgment as mistaken and now irrelevant. As we develop student-centered classrooms, we need to consider ways in which to bring theory to the mix.

In these sections Blau talks about interpretations and where they come from. He examines what is worth saying about a literary text and useful ways to approach writing about literature. He ends with a reach toward literary competence and why we might want to teach it to our students.


Oct. 16 O’Donnell Tough Talk, Tough Texts and Book Club Groups

[Attend MEA/MFT Annual Educator’s Conference Oct 16-17 Missoula, MT]

Cindy O’Donnell-Allen helps us think through ways to help our students participate civilly in the culture of controversy that surrounds us. While our world may not be more fraught with personal, social, and political conflict than at any other time in history, the
erosion of general civility, the trend toward polarization, and the unquestioned acceptance of popular media and their views make these conflicts more emotionally charged and less easily negotiated than ever before. Although bullying is on the rise and adolescents are just as able as adults to mimic the uncivil exchanges that ubiquitously surround us, many young people in our culture are up to task of addressing this problem, of figuring out how to bore through the complexity of difficult issues without clamming up or coming to blows.

As Robert Probst has pointed out, “There aren’t many models of civil discourse for our students to learn from” (Adolescent Literacy: Turning Promise into Practice; Heinemann, 2007, 45). O’Donnell-Allen’s book is based on the hopeful premise that English teachers can help students learn to exercise literacy to promote civility and social justice. By wrestling with tough texts on culturally sensitive issues, our students can learn to pose and grapple with difficult questions like:

What does it mean to make a difference in the world?
Is peace possible?
If you can’t change big things in our world, do small changes matter?

As we will see, O’Donnell-Allen describes how with careful preparation students can learn to pose and discuss such questions when we are not in charge of the conversation. And in the service of learning to listen and respond with empathy to one another, they can implement strategies that will allow them to become more critical and strategic readers, writers, and thinkers, both in and outside our classrooms.

O’Donnell-Allen will be a great resource if you decide to complete the controversial topics/issues unit.

Readings assigned for October 23: Read book club/literature circle selection and think about the controversial topics they incite. Write a 1-2 page difficulty paper or triple-entry pages in response to spark discussion in class.

Oct. 23       Book Club Selections: The High School Canon

Poem.

2nd Microteach colloquia.

Bomer cautions us that many of the books in the so-called high school canon are in the canon because they are in the book room. While many of these stories are of great merit, they also are somewhat “dated.” Nonetheless, I have listened for years to students who say that their first assignment is to teach one or more of these titles and that they haven’t read them since high school or not at all.

Today we will break into groups according to the books we selected and discuss the merits of the book, the controversial topics they raise, how we might think about ways to teach these books, and any other companion materials that we might bring into the mix to think in varied and diverse ways about the controversy each of these titles raise.
Readings assigned for October 30: Read *Literature and Lives: A Response-Based, Cultural Studies Approach to Teaching English* by Allen Carey-Webb. Write a 1-2 page difficulty paper or triple-entry pages in response to spark discussion in class.

**October 30: Literature and Lives**

Poem.

2nd contract benchmark.

The very limitations of reader response are precisely the strengths of a cultural studies approach to teaching literature. In a cultural studies classroom, everyone assumes that each individual has a complex social identity as well as personal interests, experiences, and concerns, and that a person’s understandings are necessarily influenced by the many groups and subgroups with whom she or he associates and identifies. It is also taken for granted that individuals will attribute different meanings to the works they read and that to rob them of these differences would involve rendering them invisible. It would make them less rather than more able to construct their own interpretations and to stimulate the thoughts of others.

Most individuals have a variety of experiences with literature, experiences that engage them in a variety of ways of thinking. Any theory of literary understanding must encompass this variety, focusing on students as individual human beings who are also members of various social and cultural groups, coming together as participants within the classroom community. Such a community involves tensions and balances between personal identity and group affiliation, individuality and connectedness. Recognition of these tensions and balances between individual and group helps us conceptualize and support the most effective learning and teaching.

The concept of underlying a cultural studies approach to reading literature with students requires us to regard the student as an independent thinker who is strongly influenced by group membership and history. In daily life, individuals exist, act, and learn both as members of various out-of-school groups to which they feel connected and as members of their school and class community. These multiple and sometimes overlapping and contradictory selves accompany students through the schoolhouse door, making themselves known at various times, in various ways. Teachers are, in a sense, always outsiders to students’ other worlds. But through literary experience, teachers can help students become aware of and use their various cultural selves to make connections, explore relationships, examine conflicts, and search for understandings through the literature they read and the interactions they have.

By now we may be asking, “What could contemporary literary theory possible contribute to literacy and literary understanding?” Many people consider literary theory arcane and esoteric. It’s dismissed as a sort of intellectual parlor game. What could contemporary literary theories (poststructuralism, critical race theory, deconstruction, feminism, Marxism, new historicism, gender studies, queer theory, &tc) that generally coalesce
under the rubric of cultural studies possibly have to do with the average adolescent, just struggling to grow up, stay alive, get through school, and make the most of things? Cultural studies emphasize the integration of literary works, even the most canonical, with the whole range of cultural expression. In the classroom, cultural studies calls for up-to-date and engaging thematic curriculums where culture, social structures, and historical circumstances are explored side by side with a particular emphasis on how those issues touch real people in the present day. Cultural studies approaches argue that contemporary literary theory provides a useful way for all students to read and interpret not only literary texts but their lives—both in and out of school. In its own way, reading with theory is a radical educational reform.

In *Textual Power: Literary Theory and the Teaching of English* Robert Scholes (1985) argues that there are three basic textual skills: reading, interpretation, and criticism. Although there are many secondary English teachers skilled in all three, all too often they relegate only the reading to their students. It is they, rather than their students, who determine the appropriate critical approach for each literary text. After their critical stance has been articulated, the teachers either allow students to create interpretations within the context of that critical approach or they provide a single privileged interpretation for the students. While the teacher may be well-schooled in theory, the students are not and therefore are limited in the interpretive choices they can make. We need to reposition the study of literature and clarify its relationship with the rest of the world. Contemporary literary theory opens the barriers between the literary text and “the social text in which we live” (Scholes). It is at the opening, this intersection, of text and social context that the explicit study of contemporary literary theory can help adolescent readers make meaning of literary texts. As Janet Emig pointed out (1990), “Theory then becomes a vivid matter of setting out the beliefs that we hold against the beliefs of others, an occasion for making more coherent to others, and quite as important to ourselves, just what it is we believe, and why.” The purpose of teaching literary theory at the secondary level is not to turn adolescents into critical theorists; rather, it is to encourage adolescents to inhabit theories comfortably enough to construct their own readings and to learn to appreciate the power of multiple perspectives. Literary theory can help secondary literature classrooms become sites of constructive and transactive activity where students approach texts with curiosity, authority, and initiative.

Today we will continue our discussion of literary theory and its value in developing textual and classroom encounters that will “allow our students to begin their own odysseys toward their own theoretical maturity” (Emig, 1990 94). We will examine ways to use a variety of critical lenses to examine literature in the classroom. We will discuss the ideas, methods and activities proposed by Carey-Webb as tools we might incorporate into our literature lessons and units.

Readings assigned for Nov. 6: Read *Reading Native American Literature(s): A Teacher’s Guide* by Bruce A Goebel. Write a 1-2 page difficulty paper or triple-entry pages in response to spark discussion in class.
Nov. 6  

Reading Native American Literature(s)

Poem.

Native American literatures offer a challenge, insisting that crossing cultures is not always easy. Other readings in addition to literature can help to provide contextual understanding to interpretation. Histories, stories, oral traditions, essays written about the first nation from which an author comes provide greater understanding and culturally sensitive interpretation. Native American literatures can be increasingly important as we attempt in Montana and elsewhere around the country to implement “Indian Education for All.” Native American literatures offer an important counterpoint to the heroic mythmaking of secondary school history textbooks that all but ignore the genocide and contemporary plight of Native peoples today. It calls into question the ways in which Americans have constructed notions of race and nation and forces us to reexamine our values in relation to such things as individualism, materialism, and the natural world. Native American novels, stories, poems, oral traditions, and non-fiction offer some of the best quality literature that any American author has produced and should be treated accordingly.

Different works beg for different approaches. Some texts are culturally familiar enough to the majority of students that a simplified reader-response approach works well. When reading *The Great Gatsby*, for example, most students are already vicariously familiar with notions of the American dream, the temptations of wealth, and the vagaries of love. There is little that is so foreign to them about the lives and society of the characters that they are in danger of grossly misunderstanding the work because of its context. For this reason, it may be sufficient that students simply “norm” their reading by discussing the likeliest possible meanings with one another. The collective experiences and perceptions of the students may well allow them to adequately explore and make judgments about the worldview of the novel and its implications for their own society.

On the other hand, some texts are so foreign to the experiences and perceptions of the students that no amount of discussion and debate will bridge the interpretive gap. In fact, in some cases, the simplified reader-response approach, and the way in which it encourages students to force the text to submit to their own experiences, suggests a kind of interpretive violence. This frequently happens in the encounter between inexperienced readers and multicultural literatures, including Native American literatures. Students will often be heard to declare “I hate that book” or “That author doesn’t know how to write,” only to discover that what really disturbed readers was their own inability to make sense of the text because of gaps in cultural knowledge.

We will discuss Goebel’s suggestions for inviting readers’ accessibility to and culturally sensitive interpretation of Native American literatures and consider how to incorporate appropriate teaching strategies in single author studies for those selecting that option.

Readings assigned for Nov. 13: Read *Reading in a Participatory Culture: Remixing Moby-Dick in the English Classroom* by Henry Jenkins and Wyn Kelley with Katie Clinton, Jenna McWilliams, Ricardo Pitts-Wiley, and Erin Reilly. Check out *Flows of Reading,* an
online digital book complementary to *Reading in a Participatory Culture*. Find the link on p. xiii. Write a 1-2 page difficulty paper or triple-entry pages in response to spark discussion in class.

**Nov. 13**  
*Reading in a Participatory Culture*

Poem.

Building on the groundbreaking research of the MacArthur Foundation’s Digital Media & Learning initiative, this book crosses the divide between digital literacies and traditional print culture to engage a generation of students who can read with a book in one hand and a mouse in the other. *Reading in a Participatory Culture* blends media studies with the Great White Whale in the English classroom. It is a collaboratively written book and tells the story of an innovative experiment that brought together playwright and director Ricardo Pitts-Wiley, Melville scholar Why Kelley, and new media scholar Henry Jenkins to develop an exciting new curriculum to reshape the middle and high school English language arts classroom. This book offers highlights from the resources developed for teaching Herman Melville’s *Moby-Dick* and outlines basic principles of design, implementation, and assessment that can be applied to any text.

The book models a new approach for teaching reading in a participatory culture, which has been field-tested in six different classrooms. It considers how 19th-century authors like Herman Melville, participated in the literary culture around them. It includes links to a complementary online digital book, *Flows of Reading*, that shares the many videos produced by Project New Media and models the application of these core concepts to a range of other texts, including *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Hunger Games*, and *Flotsam*.

Readings assigned for Dec. 4: Read *Rigorous Reading: 5 Access Points for Comprehending Complex Texts* by Nancy Frey and Douglas Fisher. Write a 1-2 page difficulty paper or triple-entry pages in response to spark discussion in class.

**November 20**  
Independent and Collaborative Study Time

Class will be on your own. I will be attending the Annual Meeting of the National Writing Project and the annual meeting of the National Council of Teachers of English in Washington, D.C.

**Nov. 27**  
No Class  
Thanksgiving Holiday

**Dec. 4**  
Year-long Curriculum Schematic School Board Simulation;

3rd microteach colloquia

3rd contract benchmark

Poem.
I will collect difficulty papers about *Rigorous Reading: 5 Access Points for Comprehending Complex Texts*. This book is situated directly in the Common Core State Standards calls for close, analytical reading of complex texts.

Frey and Fisher outline 5 access points toward proficiency

1. Purpose and modeling
2. Close and scaffolded reading instruction
3. Collaborative conversations
4. An independent reading staircare
5. Performance

Coming on the syllabus after so many revolutionary and exciting books, this one is probably going to be a letdown, but it will give you an overview to CCSS that you may need to be able to cite during interviews or to curriculum directors or department chairs while you are planning on teaching students reading and literature in the spirit of ass kicking!

It is written in fairly traditional teacher school ed-speak so it won’t be difficult to get through, but be prepared… it’s a much different style of book than all that came previously.

**Dec. 11 10:00 a.m.  Year-long Curriculum Schematic final due**

**Thursday December 11 5:30-7:30  Final Exam; graduate papers due**

*Have a Safe and Happy Winter Break!*