

The University of Edinburgh
The Moray House School of Education
School Postgraduate Studies Committee

28 August 2013

**New Course proposal: Critical literacies and critical pedagogies
in L1 and L2 contexts**

Brief description of the paper

This is a proposal for a new course which will sit within the MSc in Education: Language – theory, practice and literacy.

Action requested

For approval and forwarding to Board of Studies.

Resource implications

Does the paper have resource implications? ~~Yes~~/No

Risk assessment

Does the paper include a risk analysis? Yes/No

Equality and diversity

Does the paper have equality and diversity implications? ~~Yes~~ /No

Freedom of information

Can this paper be included in open business? Yes/~~No~~

Any other relevant information

Pauline Sangster will attend the meeting and may be joined by Lynne Pratt and Yvonne Foley.

Originators of the paper

Dr Pauline Sangster
Lynne Pratt
Dr Yvonne Foley.

Critical literacies and critical pedagogies in L1 and L2 contexts

Level: 11

Credits: 20

Semester: 2

Open to outside students? Yes

Entry Requirements: None

Rationale

This course develops students' critical knowledge and understanding of the relationship between critical literacy theories, critical pedagogies and the impact of these in L1 and L2 learning contexts. The course is centrally informed by sociocultural perspectives on language and literacy and development. It will consider the term 'text' in its broadest definition, and students will thus be engaged in the close, critical and fine-grained analysis of a wide range of print and non-print texts including moving images and multimodal texts. The aims of the course are to: (a) develop further students' awareness of texts as situated, political and powerful means of communication; (b) provide them with the critical and analytical tools required to become critically literate and, potentially, agents for change.

Short description

The course will be of interest to students with an interest in text and the languages used to create them; intercultural perspectives on texts and their purposes and audiences; and how language is used to establish power and manipulate readers and viewers. Consequently, emphasis will be placed on:

- developing students' understanding of the ways in which literacy is embedded in particular sociocultural practices;
- introducing them to important concepts within critical literacy theories such as power; marginalization; the dynamic, unstable and evolving nature of 'texts'; and countertexting;
- developing students' understanding of the various metalanguages required to a rich and varied range of 'texts';
- helping students to move between theoretical understandings of critical literacy and to consider how such understandings can impact on their professional contexts.

Learning objectives

By the end of the course students will be able to:

1. identify and discuss critically their own situated literacy practices;
2. engage critically and analytically with the relevant academic literature;

3. reflect critically on 'literacy' as a politically and culturally nuanced construct;
4. analyse critically a wide range of texts to examine power and how this is situated in discourses of race, gender, sexual orientation, poverty, class etc.
5. critically examine and use countertexting.

Teaching mode

This course is delivered in 9x3 hour sessions. Teaching is characterised by collaborative and dialogic practices. Most sessions will begin with an interactive tutor-led lecture, and this will be followed by collaborative group work on tutor-designed tasks and activities. There will also be an opportunity in each session to discuss key readings. Students will be asked to prepare and deliver collaborative presentations to the whole group.

Delivery period

9 weeks across Semester 2 – January to March.

Indicative content

Each session will have a key focus:

1. What do we mean when we talk about literacy? This session examines the ways in which literacy is constructed in society across different cultures and considers who determines what 'literacy' is and what it means to be 'literate'. Students will examine the ways in which literacy is constructed in their own cultures, and which aspects of literacy are valued, by analysing culturally-located test of literacy;
2. Different theoretical understandings of critical literacy are introduced through tutor input on the historical development of critical literacy theory and a focus on seminal thinkers and theorists. In this way significant debates and contested areas will be introduced. These are revisited as part of ongoing seminar work and in tutor-designed tasks;
3. Analysis of texts is introduced early in the course and revisited throughout. In looking closely at such texts students will learn about the dynamic and shifting nature of the definition of text in the 21st century. They will also learn how to use the different languages required to analyse such texts – the languages of conventional literary criticism, visual literacy and media literacy, framed through critical literacy theory;
4. Representations of literacy in fiction and in life will be analysed and then compared and contrasted with its representation in students' lived experiences;
5. Countertexting and transformation are important and valuable responses to texts, and they are introduced and developed in relation to texts of the students' own choosing;
6. Learner autonomy and sharing power – tensions and risk. This session is based on a group reading of Ira Shor and looks at the complexity of critical pedagogy in practice. The text looks at the difficult experiences and the loss of hope Shor felt when the theory did not work. The session then moves on to consider confronting controversial issues in order to manage risk/explore risk through critical literacy;

7. Reading picturebooks/curiosity/creating space for critical literacy and critical thinking using Shaun Tan's *The Lost Thing* with 'poor readers';
8. Critical literacy and adult learners; this session will focus on adults who, for many and complex reasons, did not become literate in the accepted sense during their years of compulsory education, will examine the disempowerment and exclusion they have experienced because of this, and will explore how critical literacy can be used to empower.
9. Application of theoretical perspectives on critical literacy and critical pedagogies in students' own contexts/professional areas (this will be a formatively assessed task).

Assessment

Formative assessment

1. Students must keep a weekly online learning log in which they discuss their reading and learning on this course strand. In particular they should reflect critically on how their own understanding of literacy and critical literacy develops over the course and how this has impacted on their practice.
2. Students will work in groups, select texts from their professional areas, analyse these texts using a critical literacy framework, using appropriate metalanguages of criticism and analysis. These analyses will be presented to the whole group and peer feedback will be given.

Summative assessment

4000 word assignment

In discussion with tutors, student will select their own area for the focus of the assignment. They will (a) select text(s) for analysis, (b) drawing on different bodies of literature, produce an analysis of the texts which demonstrate a secure theoretical understanding.

Indicative Reading

Critical Literacy and critical pedagogy

Cooper, Karyn, and White, Robert, (eds.) (2008). *Critical Literacies in Action: Social Perspectives and Teaching Practices (Transgressions: Cultural Studies and Education)*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Darder, A., Baltodano, M. and Torres, R. (2008). *The Critical Pedagogy Reader* Routledge (2nd Edition)

Erling, E.J., and Seargeant, Philip (eds.) (2013) *English and Development: Policy, Pedagogy and Globalisation (Critical Language and Literacy Studies)* Multilingual Matters.

Freire, P. (2005). *Education for Critical Consciousness* Continuum. New Ed. Edition

Freire, P. (1995). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Penguin.

Giroux, H. A. (2011). *On Critical Pedagogy*. Continuum Publishing Corporation.

Hamilton, Mary (2012) *Literacy and the Politics of Representation*. Routledge.

hooks, bell (1994). *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. Routledge

hooks, bell (2003). *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope*. Routledge

- Janks, H. (2009). *Literacy and Power (Language, Culture and Teaching series)*. Routledge
- Lankshear, C. (ed.) (1993). *Critical Literacy policy, praxis and the postmodern*. State University of New York Press
- Lankshear, C. and Knoble, M. (2011) *New Literacies: Everyday Practices and Social Learning: Everyday Practices and Classroom Learning*. Open University Press 3rd Edition
- Morgan, W. (1997). *Critical Literacy in the Classroom: The Art of the Possible*. Routledge.
- Morrell, E., Duenas, R., Garcia, V., and Lopez, J. (2013). *Critical Media Pedagogy: Teaching for Achievement in City Schools (Language and Literacy Series)*. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University.
- Muspratt, S., Luke, A. and Freebody, P. (eds.) (1997). *Constructing Critical Literacies: Teaching and Learning Textual Practice (Language and Social Practices)*
- Parmar, P., and Krinsky, H. (2013). *Critical Literacy in English Literature (Critical Praxis and Curriculum Guides)*. Bern: Peter Lang Publishing Inc.
- Smyth, J. (2011) *Critical Pedagogy for Social Justice*. Continuum
- Shor, Ira (1997). *When Students Have Power: Negotiating Authority in a Critical Pedagogy*. University of Chicago Press
- Vasquez, V., Tate, S., and Harst, J. (2013). *Negotiating Critical Literacies with Teachers: Theoretical Foundations and Pedagogical Resources for Pre-Service and In-Service Contexts*. New York/London: Taylor and Francis.