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Rhode Island College • Department of Educational Studies

CURR 501: Media Literacy, Popular Culture & Education

Summer Session II – 2015 (two week intensive)

Monday, June 29 (8:30am - 3:30pm)

Tuesday, June 30 (8:30am - 3:30pm)

Wednesday, July 1 (8:30am - 3:30pm)

Thursday, July 2 (8:30am - 3:30pm)

Tuesday, July 7 (12:00pm - 4:00pm)

Wednesday, July 8 (12:00pm - 4:00pm)

Thursday, July 9 (12:00pm - 4:00pm)

Friday, July 10 (12:00pm - 4:00pm)

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Course Description:

The skills and tools of “literacy” have been at the center of the educational agenda in this country since the early days of public schooling. Knowing how to read, write and communicated ideas to others are some of the most basic prerequisites for participating in public life. But in 2015, print literacy is not enough. Youth and adults alike need skills to read, analyze, interpret, and produce visual and digital texts as well as written ones. Digital technologies, film, television, music, advertising, fashion and other forms of popular culture shape the daily lives of all Americans whether we celebrate or resist their influence. And yet, the United States is far behind other countries such as Canada, England and Australia in providing media literacy preparation in elementary and secondary schools. This course will take popular culture seriously as a site of education and will seek to expand the experiences that teachers have with digital technologies in their classrooms. The course will engage a cultural studies perspective as we explore conceptual and practical tools to help teachers, principals, youth workers, counselors and/or parents integrate digital technologies and media literacy into kids’ lives (and into their own).

Relationship to the Conceptual Framework of the FSEHD

This course is designed to explore the concept of media literacy in relationship to the contemporary practices of public schooling in America. Specifically, it intends to promote *reflection* on the influences of popular culture in the daily lives of teachers and students. Through the course assignments, participants will gain practice in *planning* for cultural and curricular change in their work environments and will be encouraged to act on those plans. Participants in this class will gain *knowledge* related to theoretical underpinnings that are intimately bound to the study of ideology thus asking questions about relations of race, class, gender, sexuality, ability and the like. This perspective will assist participants in exploring issues related to the *diversity* of American public schooling and American society. Ultimately, the course will offer participants the opportunity to practice *pedagogical* strategies aimed at developing their skills as reflective practitioners who are interested in media literacy for the 21st century.

Course Objectives:

- Reimagine students as ‘digital natives’ in the 21st century
- Rethink and reframe traditional educational models
- View, analyze and interpret media as an ideological text
- Become aware of digital tools to recreate teaching and life tasks in new ways
- Understand the relationship between consumers and producers of media texts
- Produce new media and digital texts that can be applied to classroom environments

The Genre of the “One Week” Intensive Course:

As a “one-week” intensive workshop, this course makes some particular demands of all of us. From the instructor perspective, the course will have to maintain a rapid pace to keep up with the concepts and themes I hope to cover, and I will work hard to keep each of you engaged in the course materials. From the student perspective, you must be active in advocating for yourself as learners in this classroom. Advocating for yourself means participating actively during the day as well as reading thoroughly and blogging each night. Advocating for yourself also means talking with me about classroom practices that do or don’t work for you as learners. If you have any special needs or learning disabilities, talk to me on the first day so that the week will be productive for you as a student. I will help you in any way I can.

Texts and other course materials:

We will be using a text from Rethinking Schools called *Rethinking Popular Culture and Media*. I ordered copies that you can purchase from me for \$18.00 (discounted from the website where you can purchase for \$18.95, plus tax and shipping). Or you can order an electronic copy (pdf) at RethinkingSchools.com for \$13.95. I think this will be an excellent resource for you to keep in your professional library to use with students. Other reading assignments for this course will be handed out in class, posted on the Adams Library Electronic Reserves, or posted on the class blog for you to read.

Grading Criteria:

Given the nature of a one-week intensive summer course, you will not be asked to produce a final paper or written exam for this course. Rather, your grade will be based on four criteria:

- 1) Attendance:** You are expected to attend from 8:30- 3:30 for four days of the course, and from 12:00 - 4:00 the remaining four days. Any missing time will be reflected in your grade.
- 2) Participation:** Active participation in this class is an essential requirement. I encourage you to take risks here — ask questions and reflect on the answers. Share your insights and your confusions. Don’t forget to listen to others. Active participation can take on many forms. I expect that you will:
 - engage in class discussions
 - collaborate with others
 - complete all blogging/reading assignments in class and at home
 - find me if you have additional questions
- 3) Media Blog:** On the first day of class, you will spend some time setting up a blog for this class on the site www.blogger.com. Some of you already have blogs, so you can focus your energy starting a new one and/or improving the gadgets and gizmos on your existing blog. This will be the space on which you keep your all wonderings, questions, reflections and course assignments. I expect each assignment to be completed thoughtfully, with attention given to class concepts and themes. While this is a shared intellectual space, your posts can be written in a casual, reflective voice. You will also need to read and comment on one another’s blogs each night as a way of preparing for our conversations in class.
My blog: www.medialiteracysummer2015.blogspot.com
- 4) Final Project:** The culminating project for this course will be a Digital Literacy Project where you will create something practical for your personal or professional life using one of the digital tools we explore in this class. A detailed description of the project and its requirements will be handed out on the second day of class.

Course Anchors and Guiding Assumptions

This course is grounded in three basic assumptions that serve as anchors for everything we will do together this week:

1) YOUTH AND NEW MEDIA:

Kids today are shaped by the media/digital world around them. This course begins with the assumption that youth today are part of the Millennial Generation, or Net Gen, or sometimes called Digital Natives to borrow from the work of Marc Prensky (www.marcprensky.com). Current research suggests that those who have grown up fully immersed in digital technologies not only experience the world in new ways – their brains are actually changing to adapt to the changing world around them. While growing up digitally does not guarantee the development of digital *literacy* skills, this reality does reframe our basic knowledge about who kids are and how they engage the world.

2) CRITICAL PEDAGOGY AND EDUCATIONAL REFORM:

The educational landscape of 2015 is a conflicted place where the realm of standardized testing, regulation and routine bumps up against the needs of creativity, innovation and learning. This course rests on the assumption that public schools should be driven by a commitment to social justice, equity and inclusion that values all learners, an assumption that challenges the current educational status quo.

3) MEDIA AS IDEOLOGY:

Popular culture is not just a form of entertainment. The media play a critical role in teaching us about the world. Film, television, music, the internet, advertising, fashion and other forms of popular/digital culture shape the daily lives of all Americans whether we celebrate or resist their influence. We must learn to see the things we take most for granted, to analyze and interpret the media around us in order to understand how these things contribute to how we think about what is “normal,” “natural,” and “good.” In this class, we will take the media seriously as an educating force.

Calendar and Assignments:

Monday, June 29: *Introduction to the Course*

Goals for the Day:

- Introduce the course and each other
- Develop working definitions of key concepts and anchor frameworks
- Set up blogs

Morning Activities: *Introductions*

- Overview of Syllabus and Introductions
- Anchor #1: Digital Natives: Why Media Literacy?
- Setting up the blogs at www.blogger.com

Lunch: 11:30-12:30 (feel free to stay to work on your blog)

Afternoon Activities: *Reform and Ideology*

- Anchor #2: Educational Reform — Challenging Assumptions About Learning
- Film: *Education's Death Valley* (Sir Ken Robinson, Ted Talk 2013)
- Anchor #3: Media as Ideology
- Thinking about Dominant Ideology — S.C.W.A.A.M.P. (adapted from Leslie Grinner)
- Read: "Introduction" to *Rethinking Popular Culture and Media* (also available online: http://www.rethinkingschools.org/publication/rpcm/rpcm_intro.shtml)

Tuesday, June 30: *Kids, New Media, and Schooling*

Assignments due today:

<u>Read</u> :	Danah Boyd, from <i>It's Complicated</i> Chapter 7: Are Today's Youth Digital Natives? (http://www.danah.org/books/ItsComplicated.pdf)
<u>Read or Watch</u> :	Mike Wesch, "Knowledge-able"
<u>Blog</u> :	What do you make of the (divergent) positions of Boyd, Prensky and Wesch? Where do you stand on the "digital native" terminology?

Goals for the Day:

- Explore the changing terrain of knowledge in American schools
- Discuss hybrid pedagogy and visual data
- Experiment with tools of digital output

Morning Activities: *Youth and New Media Pedagogy*

- Introduce Final Project
- Prensky, Wesch, and Boyd: Who are Youth?
- Guest Speaker: Dr. Josh Stenger from Wheaton College on New Media, New Pedagogy

Lunch: 12:30 - 1:30

Afternoon Activities: *Producing Knowledge*

- Produce: Poetry in Motion — Digital Literacy Projects

Wednesday, July 1: *Ideology and Power*

Assignments due today: Read: Christensen, “Unlearning the Myths That Bind Us” (189) and “Looking Pretty, Waiting for the Prince” (201)
 Watch: [Brave](#) (2012) and [take notes](#)
 Blog: What is your relationship to Disney and animated children’s culture? What role did these texts play in your life as a child, if any? In that of any children you share time with? How do your memories challenge or reflect Christensen’s claims? How does *Brave* meet or challenge your memories of princess culture?

Goals for the Day:

- Explore the concepts of pleasure and critique around Christensen and fairy tales
- Understand the cultural context in which Disney has produced “princess culture”
- Practice textual analysis using the latest princess text, *Frozen*

Morning Activities: *Textual Analysis, Audience Reception and Political Economy*

- Pleasure and Critique: Christensen meets our Childhood Memories
- Croteau: Can the media both challenge and reify dominant ideology?
- Political Economy: Cinderella Ate My Daughter

Lunch: 11:30 - 12:30

Afternoon Activities: *Practice makes Practice: Textual Analysis with Frozen*

- Film: *Frozen* (2014)

Thursday, July 2: *Tools and Toys – Consumers become Producers*

Assignments due today: Read: Pick any chapter from the RS Book to read
 Blog: Write about your chapter on your blog in a way that will help teach it to the rest of us who have not read it. Include major argument (thesis) and any supporting examples the author uses to explain his or her point.
 Assignment: Spend a couple hours learning one of the digital tools you were assigned in class on Wednesday, and prepare to teach the class what it can do and how it works in a blog post you will construct on Thursday morning.

Goals for the Day:

- Share models and resources from the Digital Toolbox
- See theory in practice from real teacher in the field
- Prepare for the Media Literacy Project

Morning Activities: *Tools and Toys*

- Show and Tell (8:30-10:00): AT HOME – Construct a short tutorial on your digital tool. You will email this to my blog following the instructions you received in class.
- Present and Discuss (10:00-11:30): Work with a team in class to present and discuss.

Lunch: 11:30-12:00 (note short lunch)

Afternoon Activities: *What does media literacy look like?*

- Guest Speaker: Kelly Reed, English teacher @ Attleboro High School, MA
- Brainstorm/Troubleshoot project ideas

Holiday Weekend: July 3-July 6

Assignments over weekend:

- Read: Sherry Turkle, "[The Flight from Conversation](#)" (posted on my blog;)
Wesch, "[Crisis of Significance](#)"
- Blog: What is the relationship between Turkle and Wesch? Do you see them as allies or opponents in this discussion of new media and technology? (post by Monday, July 6 @ midnight)
- Assignment: Prepare Media Literacy Project presentations

Tuesday, July 7: *Alone/Together?*

- Assignments due today: Read: Review Turkle/Wesch; Explore the [This I Believe archive](#) on Education/Knowledge and listen to at least three of the 4 minute missives (no blog due)
- Assignment: Prepare Media Literacy Project presentations

Goals for the Day:

- Discuss Turkle vs. Wesch: Is technology about connection or isolation or both?
- Learn from an Instructional Technology Practitioner
- Craft an Educational Mission Statement

Afternoon Activities:

- Tensions and Struggles: Wesch and Turkle
- Guest Speaker: Dr. Susan Patterson, Associate Professor @ Lesley University, MA
- This I Believe...

Wednesday, July 8: *Theory in Practice*

- Assignments due today: Read: none
- Assignment: Prepare Media Literacy Project presentations

Goals/Activities for the Day:

- > Present media literacy projects and discuss

Thursday, July 9: *Final Project Presentations*

- Assignments due today: Read: none
- Assignment: Prepare Media Literacy Project presentations

Goals/Activities for the Day:

- > Present media literacy projects and discuss
- Film: *Build a School in the Cloud* (Sugata Mitra, 2013 Ted Prize Winner)

Friday, July 10: *Working Day*