

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

EDUCATION 341-3

LITERACY: ORIGINS, CONSEQUENCES AND IMPLICATIONS
FOR EDUCATION AND CULTURE

Fall Semester, 1989
Monday
4:30 - 7:20 p.m.

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Overview

This course provides an introduction to the study of literacy from an interdisciplinary perspective. We shall explore the origins of western literacy, the conditions which favoured its development and the role of literacy in social evolution, the economic and cultural values of literacy, and the effects of literacy on cognitive processes. Of particular interest is the reliance on formal educational institutions for the mass transmission of literacy. We will be looking in some detail at the varying conceptions of literacy that educators have traditionally valued, and we will be looking at some of the current research and scholarship that attempts to explain, justify and prescribe educational practices intended to increase literacy.

Purpose

By the end of the course, students should be able to identify, analyze, and justify or criticize the aesthetic, communicative, cognitive and socially-transformative consequences attributed to or associated with the acquisition of literacy. They should know something of its history and be aware of the range of definitions traditionally and currently given to literacy. They should have some understanding of the distinctive contributions of conceptual study and empirical research into literacy, and understand both the capacities and limitations of each of these approaches to literacy research and practice.

Evaluation

Grades are based upon three components:

1. consistent and active participation in seminars, including presentations of assigned course readings - 30%.
2. a major paper on a topic of the student's own choice, relevant to topics covered in the course - 40%.
3. A final exam, for which questions will be provided in advance - 30%.

Required Texts

Literacy, Society and Schooling: A Reader (eds. S. deCastell, A. Luke and K. Egan). Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986.

Additional readings will be made available to students at cost.

A detailed outline of topics and schedule of readings will be made available at the first class, along with a list of recommended readings.