

**SFU/Matsqui  
Summer 1988**

**Education 341-3  
Literacy, Education and Culture  
Maureen Stout**

**Course Description**

This course provides an introduction to the study of literacy from an interdisciplinary perspective. We will examine the evolution of western literacy from its origins to the present day, selecting certain eras and events for particular study. We shall review some socio-economic changes relevant to this evolution and study the effects of literacy on cognitive and communicative processes. We will, in particular, look at the ideological and political infrastructures that affect both the defining of literacy and its transmission through formal educational institutions. Finally, we will critically evaluate some modern scholarship on literacy with perspectives from the disciplines of psychology, anthropology, sociology and linguistics, studying the pedagogical methods and their relevance to literacy development and its cultural impact.

Throughout the course, students should be critically examining the theoretical and practical problems associated with the range of definitions of literacy and its transmission. They should be able to identify some ideological problems associated with diverse and sometimes subtle pedagogical methods, and be able to evaluate current theories in light of contemporary institutions and practice. Students should have some knowledge of the origins and development of literacy and be familiar with the aesthetic, communicative and cognitive consequences associated with its acquisition. By the end of the course, students should be able to evaluate critically, both as a group and individually, the above topics, and arrive at an understanding of the critical import of the polemics of literacy definition and its impact on language, culture and education.

**Texts**

S De Castell, A Luke, and K Egan. *Literacy, Society and Schooling: A Reader*.

Various articles will be handed out at the beginning of the course and at appropriate times throughout the course.

**Course Requirements**

1. A short paper on one of the assigned readings or topics and the presentation of that paper to the class—25%.
2. A final paper (for which both a first draft and a final draft will be required) on a topic of the student's choice, relevant to the topics covered in the course—50%.
3. A final exam, essay-style, with a choice of 2 or 3 out of 5 or 6 questions—25%.

An outline of topics and readings will be handed out at the first class.