

EDUCATION 487:
LITERACY: ORIGINS, CONSEQUENCES AND IMPLICATIONS
FOR EDUCATION AND CULTURE

Spring, 1988
Wednesdays
4:30 - 8:20 p.m.
MPX 7506

Instructor: Dr. S. deCastell
Office: MPX 8545
Phone: 291-3627

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 the presentation of one of the assigned course readings - 25%
- (2) a mid-term exam - 25%
- (3) a final paper (for which both a first draft and a final draft will be required) on a topic of the students own choice, relevant to topics covered in the course - 50%.

REQUIRED TEXTS

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

A detailed outline of topics and schedule of readings will be made available at the first class.

[Text is available from Bernard. He has the book table just outside the main cafeteria on the southwest side of campus, near the CNIB stand]

Any additional readings will be made available to students at cost.