

EDUCATION 487-4 (For Undergraduate students)

EDUCATION 807-5 (For Graduate students)

SPECIAL TOPICS: LITERACY - PRACTICE, THEORY AND RESEARCH

FALL, 1980

INSTRUCTOR: Prof. Suzanne DeCastell

CAMPUS

Wednesdays 4:30 - 8:30

Recently, a great deal of attention has been focussed on the issue of literacy. But what is literacy? A functional competence or the ability to transform experience through language? And what educational intervention, if any, is appropriate in response to the recent (1979) report of over 20% of the population "functionally illiterate"? Is the data base of literacy/illiteracy in this country adequate to support contentions of a "literacy crisis"? This course examines historical and current conceptions of literacy, literacy-related instructional changes, and research paradigms within historical evaluations of literacy. Theory and research in reading and composition will be critically considered. Finally, data on literacy in B.C., 1920-1980 will be examined, and various frameworks for the interpretation of that data will be explored.

Four areas will be focussed on:

1. Introduction: Literacy as the foundational educational competence.
2. Historical: Concepts of literacy - Matthew Arnold; the "High Literacy" paradigm; transition in the 19th century via the rise of vocationalism leading to notions of "functional literacy" (1870 - 1920); systematized by the U.S. military, further developed by Kirch & Guthrie, Thomas Sticht. The relation of paradigms of "literacy" to methods educational evaluation and social context.
3. Composition Instruction: Review of curriculum, theory and research  
Reading Instruction: Review of curriculum theory and research
4. Contemporary view of literacy:  
The relationship of reading/writing/oral expression  
The Data Base: interpretation and validity  
What criteria of "literacy" were used to gather data? What factors must be taken into account in the interpretation of that data? What inferences, if any, can be drawn from the data to direct curricular and instructional change?

INDICATIVE READINGS:

COPP, P.; THE LITERACY HOAX

JUDY, Stephen; THE A.B.C.'S OF LITERACY

CHALL, Jeanne; LEARNING TO READ: THE GREAT DEBATE

RESNICK & RESNICK; THE NATURE OF LITERACY: AN HISTORICAL EXPLORATION;  
Harvard Ed. Review, V47, 3, August 1977

STICHT, Thomas (ed.); READING FOR WORKING: A FUNCTIONAL LITERACY ANTHOLOGY