

Education 488-4 Special Topics:
Literacy: Its Origins, Consequences, and
Educational Implications

INTERSESSION, 1986
Monday & Wednesday, 5:30 - 9:30
Location: MPX 7506

Instructor: Dr. S. deCastell
Office: MPX 8545
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Pre-requisites: 401/402 or equivalent, or 60 hours of credit.

Description:

This course focuses on the relationship between literacy and cognition with special reference to the central place of reading and writing in the school curriculum. We will explore two competing views of this relationship between literacy and cognition: on the one hand, the view represented by Walter Ong that "writing restructures consciousness", and on the other hand, the view represented by Shirley Heath that it is not literacy per se, but the particular functions and uses of literacy in any given social context that determine whether and to what extent literacy has significant effects upon cognitive development. This debate, labelled by one recent writer as "the great divide" controversy (Street, 1985) will be pursued in the course through the reading and discussion of two required texts: Ong's Orality and Literacy, which focuses on the origins and development of literacy, and Heath's Ways with Words, an ethnographic study of two lower working-class communities in the southern U.S., which proposes various ways in which teachers can and should approach literacy instruction as a means of promoting students' cognitive development.

Evaluation

Students will be asked to write a short essay on each text (25% each), to contribute actively to seminar discussions, and to submit a final essay (50%) on a topic of their own choosing relevant to course concerns. There will be no final exam for this course.

Required Texts:

Ong, Walter. Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word.

Heath, Shirley. Ways With Words: Language, Life and Work in Communities and Classrooms.