

Northwestern University
School of Education and Social Policy
MS ED 422: Teaching Reading and Writing in the Content Area
Winter 2014
Thursdays 1/9 – 3/13, 4:30 - 7:30 p.m.

Dr. Timothy Dohrer
tdohrer@northwestern.edu
(847) 467-4831 (office)
(847) 323-8887 (mobile)
Office Hours 9 am – 5 pm daily

Course Description

This course is designed to help middle school and high school teachers develop an understanding of specific strategies that readers must use to achieve deep comprehension of content material. We will explore cognitive foundations of reading comprehension and their influence on methods of instruction and assessment, as well as the interrelationships among reading processes and language learning. Theory and practice relationships will be explored as students experience and learn about: text structure, use of background knowledge, comprehension connections, inferences, strategies for active engagement, socio-cultural influences on reading, reading/writing relationships, text sets, and assessment of content reading. As a methods course, we will also discuss the elements of good teaching, the theory and history of teaching, curriculum design, instructional methods, and the developmental needs of adolescents, specifically how these interact with literacy.

We will approach this class from a variety of perspectives. As with all teaching, we must always understand the needs of the students in our classes. Therefore, some time will be spent discussing the needs of the learner, motivation, and obstacles to learning. Your previous and current experience working with students will be invaluable in this area. We will also understand reading from our own personal perspective as both a teacher and as a reader. We will spend some time analyzing our own reading ability and strategies. We will also try to understand how our personal assumptions about reading and learning can affect our decisions as instructors. The bulk of our work will be spent developing a “toolbox” for teaching literacy. Each week you will read about a variety of instructional strategies and have the opportunity to field-test these “tools.” At the end of the course, you should have a toolbox full of reading strategies and the knowledge of how and why we can use them to help students become better readers.

Course Goals

1. To become aware of recent research and best practices regarding literacy and the teaching of reading.
2. To link theories about reading and literacy to classroom curriculum and instruction.
3. To explore the contextualized nature of proficient reading in multiple contexts.
4. To embrace a broad-based understanding of reading and literacy that includes literacy in and out of the classroom.
5. To engage in reflective practice in relation to key instructional strategies and reading skills which occur before reading, during reading, and after reading.
6. To recognize reading in a broader context of learning, thinking, and understanding.

Northwestern Teacher Education Conceptual Framework

As active participants in the field of education, our candidates will strive for improvement and innovation, based on inquiry that is grounded in reflection and research. The candidates will have

A Vision of Learning that focuses on:

- 1.1 understanding student thinking about the subject matter;
- 1.2 reflection and research as a means of learning;
- 1.3 Learning as social practice, which encourages collaborative learning in which people clarify doubts, examine beliefs and work together to address questions and concerns;
- 1.4 authentic experience, where class sessions and assignments are designed to engage students’ interests and to have implication for the student beyond the classroom; and
- 1.5 the use of technology to extend learning opportunities and thinking.

A Vision of Learners that focuses on:

- 2.1 lifelong learning and development shaped by social contexts; and
- 2.2 student diversity as a resource for the educational community.

A Vision of Teaching that focuses on:

- 3.1 Connecting theory to practice, where the candidates understand that theories suggest questions and ideas about practice, and practice suggests modification of theory; and
- 3.2 professional conduct that is responsible and ethical.

Dispositions (as implied by the NUCF):

- 1. Willingness to systematically reflect on one's own practice. (NUCF 1.2, 3.1)
- 2. Commitment to understanding students' thinking about the subject matter. (NUCF 1.1)
- 3. Belief in the value of seeing students as individuals. (NUCF 2.2)
- 4. Enthusiasm for learning and teaching through collaboration. (NUCF 1.3)
- 5. Willingness to take the risks associated with engaging students' interests through real world experiences. (NUCF 1.4)
- 6. Energy for incorporating innovations in teaching, including the use of new technologies. (NUCF 1.5)
- 7. Commitment to conducting one's self professionally and responsibly. (NUCF 3.2)

Illinois Professional Teaching Standards (2010)

#1 Content Knowledge

The competent teacher understands the central concepts, methods of inquiry, and structures of the disciplines and creates learning experiences that make the content meaningful to all students.

#2 Human Development and Learning

The competent teacher understands how individuals grow, develop, and learn and provides learning instructional opportunities that support the intellectual, social, and personal development of all students.

#3 Diversity

The competent teacher understands how students differ in their approaches to learning and creates instructional opportunities that are adapted to diverse learners.

#4 Planning for Instruction

The competent teacher understands instructional planning and designs instruction based upon knowledge of the discipline, students, the community and curriculum goals.

#5 Learning Environment

The competent teacher uses an understanding of individual and group motivation and behavior to create a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.

#6 Instructional Delivery

The competent teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage students' development of critical thinking, problem-solving, and performance skills.

#7 Communication

The competent teacher uses knowledge of effective written, verbal, non-verbal, and visual communication techniques to foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction.

#8 Assessment

The competent teacher understands various formal and informal assessment strategies and uses them to support the continuous development of all students.

#9 Collaborative Relationships

The competent teacher understands the role of the community in educational develops and maintains collaborative relationships with colleagues, parents/guardians, and the community to support student learning and well being.

#10 Reflection and Professional Growth

The competent teacher is a reflective practitioner who continually evaluates how choices and actions affect students, parents, and other professionals in the learning community and actively seeks opportunities to grow professionally.

#11 Professional Conduct

The competent teacher understands education as a profession, maintains standards of professional conduct, and provides leadership to improve students' learning and well-being.

Academic Integrity

Students in this course are expected to comply with the policies found in the booklet, "Academic Integrity at Northwestern University: A Basic Guide." All papers submitted for credit in this course must be sent as email attachments as well as delivered in printed form. Your written work may be electronically tested for plagiarized content. For details regarding academic integrity at Northwestern, visit: <http://www.northwestern.edu/uacc/>. If you need a copy of the brochure visit the SESP Student Affairs Office.

Accommodations for students with disabilities

In compliance with Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act, Northwestern University is committed to providing equal access to all programming. Students with disabilities seeking accommodations are encouraged to contact the office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 467-5530 or ssd@northwestern.edu. SSD is located in the basement of Scott Hall. SSD also has an excellent web-site which is viewable at: <http://www.stuaff.northwestern.edu/ssd/>.

Required Texts

Vacca, R. and Vacca, J. (2014). *Content area reading: Literacy and learning across the curriculum* (11th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Optional Texts

Beers, K., Probst, R., and Rief, L. (Eds.). (2007). *Adolescent literacy: Turning promise into practice*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Tovani, C. (2004). *Do I Really Have to Teach Reading?: Content Comprehension, Grades 6-12*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

Course Schedule and Topics

Session 1: Thursday January 9

- Getting to know each other
- Introduction to the course
- First reading experiences journal and activity (NUCF 2.1, Disp.1)
- Defining reading and literacy (NUCF 3.1)
- The Role of Textbooks (NUCF 1.2)
- How to read our textbook

For next class:

1. Read Chapters 1 and 2 of *Content Area Reading*
2. ASSIGNMENT – Discussion Post OR Journal: Post a short comment or reflection on the Canvas Discussion board (1 paragraph minimum) and a response/reply to at least two other posts OR write a reflective journal on the ideas and concepts you found most useful or interesting. You may want to comment on each chapter or choose a topic to explore based on the reading (1 page single spaced). 10 pts. (NUCF 1.2, Disp. 1, Disp. 2, IPTS 7, 9, 10, 11)

Session 2: Thursday January 16

- Literacy and New Literacy
- Everyone is responsible for literacy (NUCF 1.1, Disp. 7)
- The Politics of Literacy: Foundations, Philosophies, and Frameworks of Curriculum and the Teaching of Reading
- National Reading Panel research and the "Reading Wars" (NUCF 1.2)

For next class:

1. Read Chapter 4 and 11 of *Content Area Reading*
2. ASSIGNMENT – Discussion Post OR Journal: Post a short comment or reflection on the Canvas Discussion board (1 paragraph minimum) and a response/reply to at least two other posts OR write a reflective journal on the ideas and concepts you found most useful or interesting. You may want to comment on each chapter or choose a topic to explore based on the reading (1 page single spaced). 10 pts. (NUCF 1.2, Disp. 1, Disp. 2, IPTS 7, 9, 10, 11)

Session 3: Thursday January 23

- Finding a trade book for your discipline area
- Assessing Students and Texts
- 21st Century Skills
- Common Core Curriculum

For next class:

1. Read Chapter 3 of *Content Area Reading*
2. ASSIGNMENT – Discussion Post OR Journal: Post a short comment or reflection on the Canvas Discussion board (1 paragraph minimum) and a response/reply to at least two other posts OR write a reflective journal on the ideas and concepts you found most useful or interesting. You may want to comment on each chapter or choose a topic to explore based on the reading (1 page single spaced). 10 pts. (NUCF 1.2, Disp. 1, Disp. 2, IPTS 7, 9, 10, 11)
3. Readability Analysis due next week!

Session 4: Thursday January 30

- Readability Analysis due!
- Discuss Readability Analyses (NUCF 1.3)
- Struggling Readers (NUCF 1.2, 2.2)
- Response to Intervention
- Culturally Responsive Teaching in Diverse Classrooms
- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Learners (NUCF 1.2, 2.2)
 1. Guest Speaker: Dr. David Barker

For next class:

1. Read Chapters 5 and 6 of *Content Area Reading*
2. ASSIGNMENT – Discussion Post OR Journal: Post a short comment or reflection on the Canvas Discussion board (1 paragraph minimum) and a response/reply to at least two other posts OR write a reflective journal on the ideas and concepts you found most useful or interesting. You may want to comment on each chapter or choose a topic to explore based on the reading (1 page single spaced). 10 pts. (NUCF 1.2, Disp. 1, Disp. 2, IPTS 7, 9, 10, 11)

Session 5: Thursday February 6

- Before, During, and After Reading (NUCF 3.1)
- Pre-Reading strategies (NUCF 3.1)
- Graphic organizers (NUCF 3.1)
- Activating Prior Knowledge (NUCF 3.1)

For next class:

1. Read Chapters 7 and 8 of *Content Area Reading*
2. ASSIGNMENT – Discussion Post OR Journal: Post a short comment or reflection on the Canvas Discussion board (1 paragraph minimum) and a response/reply to at least two other posts OR write a reflective journal on the ideas and concepts you found most useful or interesting. You may want to comment on each chapter or choose a topic to explore based on the reading (1 page single spaced). 10 pts. (NUCF 1.2, Disp. 1, Disp. 2, IPTS 7, 9, 10, 11)

Session 6: Thursday February 13

- Reading Comprehension
- Vocabulary Development
- During reading strategies (NUCF 3.1)
- Text marking (NUCF 3.1)

For next class:

1. Read Chapters 9 and 10 of *Content Area Reading*
2. ASSIGNMENT – Discussion Post OR Journal: Post a short comment or reflection on the Canvas Discussion board (1 paragraph minimum) and a response/reply to at least two other posts OR write a reflective journal on the ideas and concepts you found most useful or interesting. You may want to comment on each chapter or choose a topic to explore based on the reading (1 page single spaced). 10 pts. (NUCF 1.2, Disp. 1, Disp. 2, IPTS 7, 9, 10, 11)

Session 7: Thursday February 20

- Text Structure
- After reading activities (NUCF 3.1)
- Assessing reading comprehension (NUCF 3.1)
- Review of B-D-A (NUCF 1.4)
- The reading/writing connection (NUCF 3.1)
- Pre-Writing
- Journals, Essays, and Portfolios

For next class:

1. Read Chapter 11 of *Content Area Reading*
2. ASSIGNMENT – Discussion Post OR Journal: Post a short comment or reflection on the Canvas Discussion board (1 paragraph minimum) and a response/reply to at least two other posts OR write a reflective journal on the ideas and concepts you found most useful or interesting. You may want to comment on each chapter or choose a topic to explore based on the reading (1 page single spaced). 10 pts. (NUCF 1.2, Disp. 1, Disp. 2, IPTS 7, 9, 10, 11)
3. Be ready to share your trade book assignment with the class!

Session 8: Thursday February 27

- Trade book assignment due!
- Speaking and Listening
- Leading Discussions
 - Guest Speaker: Dr. Sophie Haroutunian-Gordon
- Group Projects
- Trade Books in Your Classroom

For next class:

1. Read Chapter 12 of *Content Area Reading*
2. ASSIGNMENT – Discussion Post OR Journal: Post a short comment or reflection on the Canvas Discussion board (1 paragraph minimum) and a response/reply to at least two other posts OR write a reflective journal on the ideas and concepts you found most useful or interesting. You may want to comment on each chapter or choose a topic to explore based on the reading (1 page single spaced). 10 pts. (NUCF 1.2, Disp. 1, Disp. 2, IPTS 7, 9, 10, 11)
3. Be ready to share your literacy article with the class!

Session 9: Thursday March 6

- Literacy article assignment due!
- Support structures in schools for students, teachers, and parents
- Literacy Coach, Reading Specialist
- Sharing of Literacy Article

For next class:

1. Prepare your Literacy Reflection. Due Monday March 17th.
2. Be ready to share your BDA Reading Plan with the class next week!

Session 10: Thursday March 13

- Questions about Teaching
- Promoting literacy across the curriculum (NUCF 3.2)
- Submit and Share your Reading Plan (NUCF 1.2)
- Literacy Reflection paper due Monday March 17th
- Final thoughts
- Course evaluations

MS ED 422: Content Area Reading Graded Assignments

Class Participation (50 pts.)

Your attendance and participation in each class session will be part of your final grade.

Discussion Posts (10 pts. each)

Each week, you are responsible for posting a short comment or reflection on the Canvas Discussion board (1 paragraph minimum) and a response/reply to at least two other posts. Consider posing 1-2 questions at the end of your post.

Response Journals (10 pts. each)

Throughout the course you will be asked to write a reflective journal on course concepts and ideas. Sometimes you will be given a specific topic to write about. Journals can be submitted in lieu of a Discussion Post. Journals are usually one page single-spaced but can be longer.

Textbook Readability Analysis (50 pts) Deadline: Session 4

Locate a textbook in your content area. Do a readability analysis of one chapter from the textbook. This should include:

- the name, author, publisher, year, ISBN, and cost of the book
- a “readability score” based on one of the readability formulas presented in Vacca and Vacca. You can also type or scan in a 100-word passage into Microsoft Word and use the Tools: Spelling and Grammar function to get readability data on the passage, specifically the Flesch-Kincaid score for grade level. You may need to open “Word Options” and make sure that Proofing: Show Readability Statistics is checked on.
- a readability checklist
- a SHORT rationale regarding the adoption (or not!) of this text into the curriculum.

Trade Book Summary and Rationale (50 pts) Deadline: Session 8

Locate a trade book or text that could be used in your subject area. Write a one-paragraph summary of the book or text and a one-paragraph rationale for how you could incorporate this into a lesson, unit, course, or subject area.

Literacy Article Summary (50 pts) Deadline: Session 9

Locate a literacy-related article and write a summary of it. Post the article PDF or link and summary on Canvas. The summary should be one paragraph and include the APA bibliographic citation for the article.

Content Area Readability Analysis and Reading Plan (100 pts) Deadline: Session 10

Locate a chapter or section from a textbook in your content area or a possible reading assignment (article, essay, literary text, etc.). Do a readability analysis of it. Then, create three lesson plans or activities you would use with the reading that employ a pre-reading, during reading, and post-reading activity. For each, explain your rationale for the lesson or activity based on our course material.

Literacy Reflection (100 pts.) Deadline: Monday March 17th

Your final assignment in this course is to write an extensive reflection (5-6 pages) on your understanding of literacy and what you learned from this course. Cite specific examples whenever possible. Make sure to edit and revise this paper before submitting it via Canvas. Your reflection should at least address the following areas:

- My Literacy Biography: Reader, Writer, Speaker, and Listener. Discuss your experience in these areas as a learner, including your strengths and weaknesses.
- What did you know about literacy or literacy instruction before the class?
- What aspects of the class (readings, discussions, activities) had the biggest impact on you? The least?
- What are your goals regarding literacy in your classroom and in your school? How will you implement literacy strategies in your own classroom?