

TEACHING FOR CHANGE: TRANSFORMATIVE PEDAGOGIES

SYLLABUS AND COURSE REQUIREMENTS

DR. NANCY MACK

1. DESCRIPTION OF THE COURSE:

This seminar will study teaching practices that enact a transformative theory of literacy. This theory believes that there are no neutral, apolitical ways of teaching anything. Even language itself is viewed as a social construct, created through dialogue, that carries with it the reigning ideologies. Like other postmodern theories, a transformative theory is critical of the status quo in American society, particularly the unequal distribution of wealth and power. However, transformative theory moves beyond a mere critique of society and proposes that society can be changed or transformed through a dialectic of action and reflection. Literacy is important because language gives us the ability to see ourselves as historical beings in the continual process of becoming. This notion of literacy as a means to reconstruct society is very different from other theories that define literacy as simple mastery of the usage rules for the prestige dialect or the codes of conduct for writing in a particular discipline(s).

Our readings will center on three scholars whose work has defined this radical theory of literacy. Paulo Freire is a literacy organizer from Brazil who has started adult literacy programs throughout the world and is a respected scholar whose writings continue to influence educational change in America. Ira Shor is a composition teacher who developed his teaching methodologies at City College in New York during the heyday of open admissions. We will include a relatively new teacher and scholar in composition, Amy Lee, as she considers how theory and interpretation can help her to revise her own classroom practices in a first year college composition course. Additionally, writings by myself; my colleague and coauthor, James Zebroski; and critical essays by other scholars will be given out in class to supplement the dialogue with the other authors.

Since any theory of literacy instruction is only as good as its praxis in everyday teaching practice, we will focus on classroom procedures, writing assignments, course design, and critical reflection. From Freire and Shor, we will consider the classroom activities of: dialogue, co-investigation, problem posing, decoding, and knowledge production. As an alternative to the traditional research paper, we will explore having students write cultural critiques, ethnographic studies, folklore collections, and advocacy letters. Then we will look at course design which is coherent and springs from a central, cultural theme that is responsive to their material conditions of the students' lives. Teachers taking this course will be encouraged to develop a course proposal that will be useful in their own teaching context. For example, Wright State University teaching assistants can write a course proposal for English 102.

Students participating in this seminar will engage in outside reading and journal writing; whole class and small group discussion; informal and formal writing; and individual, group and teacher presentations. One academic essay will be developed through prewriting, drafting, conferencing, revising, and sharing in writing groups.

2. REQUIRED TEXTS:

Composing Critical Pedagogies: Teaching Writing as Revision by Amy Lee, NCTE.

Empowering Education: Critical Teaching for Social Change by Ira Shor, Univ. of Chicago Press.

Pedagogy of the Oppressed Revised or First Edition by Paulo Freire, Seabury.

Other readings given out in class.

OPTIONAL TEXTS:

Teaching Composition as a Social Process by Bruce McComiskey, Utah State Univ Press.

Critical Teaching and Everyday Life by Ira Shor, Univ. of Chicago Press.

Thinking Through Theory by James Thomas Zebroski., Heinemann.

3. MAJOR ASSIGNMENTS:

A. An Academic Essay This essay will be based on course readings, class discussion, and your analysis of your own teaching experiences. Ideas for your essay topic will come from your reading journal entries. If your reading journals are under-developed, coming up with a topic will be much more difficult. This essay can be in response to a particular scholar, a particular teaching practice, or an issue related to transformative pedagogy. This essay will be five to seven pages in length.

B. A Writing Assignment and an Example Essay You will design a writing assignment that will lead students to critique cultural assumptions, affirm home communities, or advocate change. You will write a one to two page assignment sheet and a two to three page example essay.

C. Thematic Course Proposal This will be a course proposal for a thematic approach to teaching writing using transformative pedagogy. Your course proposal may include several of the following: a personal rationale, a theme analysis, handouts for three major writing assignments, handouts for routine pedagogical practices, and a syllabus listing major course activities.

4. GRADES:

A. Percentages

Reading Journal Entries	20%	Due Weekly
A Writing Assignment and An Example Essay		Due Week Five
A Course Proposal	40%	Due Week Seven
An Academic Essay	40%	Due Finals Week

5. BASIC POLICIES

A. Attendance Regular attendance is expected. Participating in classroom activities is essential to this course. You cannot miss class and fax your work into me: this is not a correspondence course. Missing one class will be equal to missing a half a week's worth of work. Poor attendance will dramatically lower your final grade. If you cannot attend class weekly or need to leave class early or need to come to class late every day, you should drop this course and take something else.

B. Class Cancellation Since Wright State rarely closes, we need a system for deciding when the weather is too bad for you to come to class. Rather than trying to call each one of you, I will follow the

closing announcement for Sinclair University. So if the weather is bad, watch TV channels 2 or 7 or listen to the radio for an announcement.

C. Future Use of Your Work I like to use real student papers as good examples in class and in teacher workshops. Also, I write articles about some of my teaching strategies. If I would use your writing, you would be given full credit and would retain copyright of your piece of writing. If you do not want your writing published or shared in a future class, please notify me in writing on the cover sheet of your essay. You will not be paid for your writing, but such a publication could be listed on your resume'.

D. Incompletes Incompletes are rarely given for this class. If you feel that there are compelling circumstances to warrant an incomplete, contact me before the end of the quarter to make arrangements.

E. Recommendations If you need a recommendation for a scholarship, further graduate work, or employment, please request a letter several weeks in advance. You must have taken at least two courses with me in order for me to write an accurate recommendation.