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Office Hours: Thursdays, 1:30-2:30 or by appointment.

Spring 2014
Tuesdays, 1-3:30
7105 Helen C. White Hall

English 702: What are the Consequences of Literacy?

Our question

What are the consequences of literacy? In their 1963 article, anthropologist Jack Goody and literary critic Ian Watt posed this bold question, touching off debates that would animate literacy studies for decades to come. Along with others, they argued that literacy caused wide cognitive and societal transformations. The New Literacy Studies group countered that literacy is best understood not as an autonomous technology of change, but instead as a context-dependent social practice. Subsequently, scholars have argued that context-dependent views of literacy are too small, limiting an understanding of literacy's role in larger, macro-social trends, such as globalization or economic inequality. But what, the question remains, are literacy's consequences? Our goal in this class is to tease out a nuanced, updated answer to this question. To do so, we will examine key arguments in the history of literacy studies from the perspective of scholars in fields as diverse as anthropology, archaeology, history, literary studies, education, linguistics, sociology, and psychology.

Our approach

Literacy is often thought of as the skills of reading and writing. This class takes a different approach. We will engage with literacy as a socio-historic phenomenon that has spread widely, through the circulation of people and texts. In this view, literacy is more a social trend than a set of skills, although skills play a part in how it is experienced. Understanding the contours of this social trend is essential for effective literacy instruction: Whether we are cognizant of it or not, when we intervene in people's literacy development as teachers or administrators, we are also intervening in history, aligning ourselves with particular ideologies of literacy and distancing ourselves from others. In other words, the social history of literacy profoundly matters for our work in the present.

Our work

This is a rapid reading overview of literacy studies. For that reason, we will devote ourselves primarily to reading, and the goal of our writing will not be to develop an independent project, but instead to synthesize and engage the assigned texts. The work is as follows:

Weekly free writes—30%

- 1) Free write reading response: What interesting lines of inquiry, issues, or problems does this week's readings raise for you? What do you find yourself responding to most strongly? Where are your skepticisms or concerns? What questions does this work pose in your mind? This writing can be informal; don't labor too long over it. (1.5 pg limit)
- 2) Make 3 copies and bring it to class to read aloud to your working group. One group member will write a synthesis of your discussion.
- 3) In the second half of the class meeting, groups will read out their syntheses to direct our discussion.

Three short papers—35%

- 1) Short paper one: Describe the autonomous/ideological debate. What are the fundamental disagreements and (perhaps hidden) agreements? And why might the debate matter for research and teaching? (no more than 3 pages) (10%)
- 2) Short paper two: Where do historical studies fit in the larger story of literacy studies that we have been tracking this semester? What perspectives do they enable or foreclose in relation to ethnographic or linguistic studies? (no more than 3 pages) (10%)
- 3) Short paper three: Develop a compelling account of the consequences of literacy, accounting for all the texts we have read this semester (no more than 6-7 pages) (15%)

Presentation—10%

Five-minute oral presentation answering this question: What about literacy studies, as presented in this class, can help you further your research interests? And how?

Individual conference—10%

Students will meet with Prof. Vieira once during the semester to discuss any of the papers, in any stage, or their presentation.

Participation in class—15%

Participation includes engaging in the weekly free write, thoughtful spoken (and listening) participation in full class discussions, engaging in peer review, attendance at all class sessions, and timely completion of all assignments.

Our materials

Books, available from the University Book Store:

Heath, Shirley Brice. *Ways with Words: Language, Life, and Work in Communities and Classrooms*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983.

Dyson, Anne Haas. *The Brothers and Sisters Learn to Write: Popular Literacies in Childhood and School Cultures*. Teachers College Press, 2003.

Fisher, Maisha. *Spoken Word Poetry in Urban Classrooms*. Teachers College Press, 2007.

Graff, Harvey. *The Literacy Myth: cultural Integration and social structure in the nineteenth century*. Transaction Publishers, 1991.

Cornelius, Janet Duitsman. *When I can Read My Title Clear: Literacy, Slavery, and Religion in the Antebellum South*. University of South Carolina Press, 1991.

Brandt, Deborah. *Literacy in American Lives*. Cambridge University press, 2001.

Cushman, Ellen. *The Cherokee Syllabary: Writing the People's Perserverance*. University of Oklahoma Press, 2011.

Blommaert, Jan. *Grassroots Literacy: Writing, Identity, and Voice in Central Africa*. Routledge 2008.

A course packet to be distributed electronically

Access to a printer and photocopier for weekly free writes

Our course calendar

1. Autonomous theorists

Jan 21: Autonomous theorists, the critique, the call

Goody, Jack, and Ian Watt. "The Consequences of Literacy." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 5.3 (1963): 304-45. Print.

Olson, David. "Writing and the Mind." *Literacy: A Critical Sourcebook*. Eds. Cushman, Ellen, et al. Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2001. 107-122. (Originally published in *Sociocultural Studies of Mind*. Ed James V. Wertsche, Pablo Del Rio, and Amelia Alvarez. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995. 95-123).

Ong, Walter J. "Writing Restructures Consciousness" and "Print, Space, and Closure." In *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*. Routledge, 1982. 77-133.

Street, Brian. "The New Literacy Studies." *Literacy: A Critical Sourcebook*. Eds. Cushman, Ellen, et al. Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2001. 430-442.

2. Contextualized views of literacy: New Literacy Studies

Jan 28: Experimental psychology/ethnography

Scribner, Sylvia and Michael Cole. *The Psychology of Literacy*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1981.

Optional: Purcell Gates, Victoria, Erik Jacobson, and Sophie Degener. "Print Literacy Development Through a Widened Lens." *Print Literacy Development: Uniting Cognitive and Social Practice Theories*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004.

Feb 4: Linguistic ethnography

Heath, Shirley Brice. *Ways with Words: Language, Life, and Work in Communities and Classrooms*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983. (Parts 1 and 2)

Prendergast, Catherine. "The Water in the Fishbowl: Historicizing Ways with Words." *Written Communication*. 17.4 (2000): 452-49 .

Feb 11: Sociolinguistics and CHAT (cultural historical activity theory)

Gee, James. "Meaning," "Discourse Analysis," "Discourses and Literacies." *Social Linguistics and Literacies: Ideology in Discourses*. Routledge, 1996. 66-122.

Gee, James. "What is Literacy?" in *Literacy: A Critical Sourcebook*. Eds. Cushman, Ellen, et al. Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2001.

Delpit, Lisa. "The Politics of Teaching Literate Discourse" in *Freedman's Plow: Teaching in the Multicultural Classroom*. Eds. Jim Fraser and Theresa Perry. Routledge. 1993.

Prior, Paul and Jody Shipka. "Chronotopic Lamination: Tracing the Contours of Literate Activity." *Writing Selves/Writing Societies: Research from the Activity Perspectives*. Ed. Charles Bazerman and David Russell. Fort Collins: WAC Clearinghouse, 2003. 180-238.

Available at: http://wac.colostate.edu/books/selves_societies/prior/

Feb 18: *Vieira at Writing Research Across Borders, No Class.*
Short paper one due to drop box Tuesday, February 18

Feb. 25: Educational Ethnographies

Gutiérrez, Kris. "Developing a Sociocritical Literacy in the Third Space." *Reading Research Quarterly* 43.2 (2008): 148-164.

Dyson, Anne Haas. The Brothers and Sisters Learn to Write: Popular Literacies in Childhood and School Cultures. Teachers College Press, 2003.

or

Fisher, Maisha. Spoken Word Poetry in Urban Classrooms. Teachers College Press, 2007.

3. Histories of literacy

March 4: Historical Demographic Studies

Graff, Harvey. *The Literacy Myth: Cultural Integration and Social Structure in the Nineteenth century*. Transaction Publishers, 1991.

March 11: Historical Studies, U.S. and the Americas

Cornelius, Janet Duitsman. *When I Can Read My Title Clear: Literacy, Slavery, and Religion in the Antebellum South*. University of South Carolina Press, 1991.

Candelaria Greene. "Misperspectives on Literacy: A Critique of Anglocentric Bias in Histories of American Literacy." *Written Communication* 11.2 (1994): 251-269.

March 18: Spring Break, No class

March 25: Techno-historical Studies, mid east and Europe

Schmandt-Besserat, Denise. "Envelopes that Bear the First Writing," *Technology and Culture* 21.3 (1980): 357-385.

Clanchy, T.M. "The Proliferation of Documents" (46-80) and "Hearing and Seeing". *From Memory to Written Record: Europe 1066-1307*. Wiley Blackwell, 2013. 255-285.

Eisenstein, Elizabeth. "Defining the Initial Shift" and "Some Features of Print Culture." *The Printing Revolution in Early modern Europe*. Cambridge University press, 1983. 13-105.

Vincent, David. "The Rise of Mass Literacy" and "Reading and Writing". *The Rise of Mass Literacy: Reading and Writing in Modern Europe*. 1-26 and 89-123.
Short paper 2 due Friday, March 28 to drop box by 5 pm.

4. Limits of the local: New approaches moving forwards

April 1: Materialist critiques of NLS and sociological responses

Besnier, Nico. "Literacy and the Notion of Person on Nukulaelae Atoll." *American Anthropologist* 93.3 (1991): 570-587.

Besnier, Nico. "The Domains of Reading and Writing" and "Literacy, Truth, and Authority." *Literacy, Emotion, and Authority: Reading and Writing on a Polynesian Atoll*. Cambridge University Press, 1995. 52-71 and 140-168.

Brandt, Deborah and Katie Clinton. "Limits of the Local: Expanding Perspectives on Literacy as a Social Practice." *Journal of Literacy Research* 34.3 (2002): 337-56.

Purcell-Gates, Victoria, Kristen H. Perry, and Adriana Briseño. "Analyzing Literacy Practice: Grounded Theory to Model." *Research in the Teaching of English* 45.4 (2011): 439-58.

Optional: Latour, Bruno. "Introduction" (1-20) and "First Move: Localizing the Global." And "Second Move: "Redistributing the Local" (173-218). In *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory*. Oxford University Press, Sep 2005. 1-20 and 173-218.

April 8: Economic materialism: Consequences for economic inequality

Brandt, Deborah. *Literacy in American Lives*. Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Marx, Karl. "Commodities." *Das Kapital*. Aristeus Books. 13-51.

April 15: Textual materialism: Consequences for peoplehood

Cushman, Ellen. *The Cherokee Syllabary: Writing the People's Perserverance*. University of Oklahoma Press, 2011. Intro and Chapters 1-6

Levi Strauss, Claude. "A Writing Lesson." *Tristes Tropiques*. Penguin, 1955, 1973. 294-304.

Optional:

Derrida, Jacques. "The Violence of the Letter: From Levi-Strauss to Rousseau." *Of Grammatology*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998. 101-140.

Vieira, K. "Undocumented in a Documentary Society: Textual Borders and Transnational Religious Literacies." *Written Communication* 28.4 (October 2011): 436-461.

April 22: Textual materialism: Consequences for global inequality

Blommaert, Jan. *Grassroots Literacy: Writing, Identity, and Voice in Central Africa*. Routledge 2008. All except chapters 6 and 7

Mignolo, Walter. "Record Keeping Without Letters and Writing Histories of People without History." *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, and Colonization*. University of Michigan Press, 1995, 2003. 125-169.

Optional: Prendergast, Catherine, and Roman Ličko. "The Ethos of Paper: Here and There." *JAC* 29.1-2 (2009): 199-228.

April 29: Digital Materialism: Consequences for writing, knowledge, culture

Kress, G. "Gains and Losses: New Forms of Texts, Knowledge, and Learning." *Computers and Composition* (2005): 5-22. <http://williamwolff.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/01/kress-cc-2004.pdf>

P. Prior. "Moving multimodality beyond the binaries: A response to Gunther Kress' "Gains and Losses"/ *Computers and Composition* 22 (2005) 23-30. <http://techstyle.lmc.gatech.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Prior-2005.pdf>

Vee, Annette. "Understanding Computer Programming as a Literacy." *Literacy in Composition Studies*[Online], 1.2 (2013): 42-64. Available: <http://licsjournal.org/OJS/index.php/LiCS/article/view/24>

Baron, Dennis. "From Pencils to Pixels: The Stages of Literacy Technology." In Cynthia Selfe and Gale Hawisher (Eds.) *Passions, Pedagogies, and 21st Century Technologies*. Utah State University Press, 1999. 15-33. Available: <http://www.english.illinois.edu/-people-/faculty/debaron/essays/pencils.htm>

Haas, Christina, and Takayoshi, Pamela. "Young People's Everyday Literacies: The Language Features of Instant Messaging." *Research in the Teaching of English*. 45.4: 2011. 378-404.

Draft of short paper three due to working group, Friday May 2, by 5pm.

May 6: Wrapping up and directions forward

Presentations and peer review

Short paper three due: Tuesday, May 13 by 5pm to drop box