

## COMMUNITY LITERACY SYLLABUS Carnegie Mellon 2004

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### Course Description

Community literacy is a way everyday people—marginalized teenagers and adults in urban schools, inner city neighborhoods, and jobs—can take literate action for themselves and their community. It is also a way everyday people from places of privilege—such as college students and faculty—can be partners in this process, supporting the learning, writing, and public voice of others.

This course is an introduction to the interdisciplinary study of literacy—its history, theory, and problems. These include the tensions between academic and workplace literacy, the power struggle between elite and community literacies, and the competing theories of how people learn, not just to read and write but to control new literate *practices* and operate within multiple *discourses*.

It is also an opportunity to turn your ideas into action in a hands-on, community literacy project. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the term, we focus on ways community literacy allows everyday people in urban schools and inner city neighborhoods to take literate action for themselves. Our partner is Start On Success (SOS), a creative program that helps urban teenagers negotiate hidden learning disabilities as they make the transition from school to work or college. We will mentor a group of 9<sup>th</sup> grade students (here on campus) as they work through *Decision Makers* (a computer-based Carnegie Mellon learning project on writing and decision making). As a mentor, you will help an SOS Scholar learn new strategies for writing, planning and decision making as he or she creates a personal Decision Maker's Journey Book. And you will develop your own skills in intercultural collaboration and inquiry. You can visit the Intercultural Inquiry website at < <http://english.cmu.edu/research/inquiry/two.html>> to see what other community literacy mentors learned in this collaborative inquiry with their teenag partners, and can preview Decision Makers at [www.cmu.e.du/thinktank..](http://www.cmu.e.du/thinktank..)

### Course Readings

Ellen Cushman, Eugene Kintgen, Barry Kroll, Mike Rose Eds. *Literacy: A Critical Sourcebook*. Bedford. 2001 [L]

Linda Flower. *Problem Solving Strategies for Writing in College and Community*. Harcourt. 1998 [PSSW]

Glenda Hull and Katherine Schultz. "Literacy and Learning Out of School." *Review of Educational Research* 71(4) 2001 [Out]

Mike Rose. *Lives on the Boundary*. Penguin. 1989 [Lives]

Learning and LD Readings Packet

### **Decision Makers Library**

Overview: Why Should Youth Engage in Self-Assessment?

Journey Book Multi-media Introduction (Director 8 Shockwave. 8.4 mg)

A Guide for Students & Mentors: Building the Journey Book

Asset Assessment : Starting & Check Point Profiles Word 97-98, 200K)

## **I. LITERACY IN ACTION**

### **At Home, at School, in the Community, in the Workplace**

Kitchen Table Literacies: Gere<sup>1</sup>

Welcome to Academic Discourse: Flower [*PSSW Ch 1*]

Community Literacy: Peck, Flower, Higgins

Workplace (II)literacy: Hull

*Write a Literacy Autobiography [PSSW Ch. 14]*

## **II. THE LITERACY DEBATES**

### **The Great Leap and Autonomous Text Theories**

Literacy and Thinking: Ong

The Invention of the List: Goody

The Autonomous Text: Olson

### **The Social Practice Counter Argument**

Social Practice(s): Scribner and Cole

Representing Thought: Flower [*PSSW Ch 4*]

### **What Researchers See**

The View from Ethnographic, Activity, Discourse, and Critical Theories: Hull and Schultz [Out]

*Post a Discovery Memo with Rival Readings : Select a vignette of out-of-school literate performance from the readings or your experience. Use 2 or 3 complex concepts from our readings as thinking tools to interpret and reveal different aspects of this performance. Then comment on the "explanatory power" of your chosen concepts (what did they reveal, miss, problematize?) [PSSW Ch. 17]*

## **III. LEARNING TO BE LITERATE**

### **From Fitting In to Transforming the World**

Naming the World: Freire  
Discourse & Identity Kits: Gee  
How Discourse Works: Heath  
Learning the Ropes: Bartholomae  
Learning to be Average: Rose  
Who Am I—As a Mentor? [PSSW, Ch 14]  
Learning to Support a Writer : Rose, [PSSW, Ch 5]

*Post a Discovery Memo : What Did Your Collaborative Planning Session Reveal?*  
*Write a Dialogue about a Literacy Vignette in Four Voices*

### III. CONDUCTING AN INTERCULTURAL INQUIRY

#### **Materials for the Project Phase**

Preview Decision Makers: [Overview and Guide ]  
Understand Learning Disabilities: How People Cope and Succeed [Packet]  
Do Your Own Asset Assessment [Starting Point Profile ]  
Learn about Decision Making Strategies: [Multi-media Introduction & Decision Makers Guide]  
Learn to Conduct a Intercultural Inquiry [PSSW Ch. 17; Carnegie Mellon Community Think Tank [www.cmu.edu/thinktank](http://www.cmu.edu/thinktank)] ]

*Post Observation/Reflection Journal Entries from each session*  
*Write an Inquiry on Decision Making*

### PAPERS and POSTS

#### **Discovery Memos**

These brief, to-the-point memos are designed to share insights, so elaboration based on close observation and specific, telling details is most useful.

#### **A Dialogue in Different Voices**

Write or find a vignette of literate performance that gets at something you care about. Invite three of our authors to the table to hold a conversation on the significant issue this vignette raises or on what it reveals from their particular theoretical or political point of view. And, in your own voice, respond *and interpret* what you think is going on. *Give us your final understanding of what these different perspectives can teach us.* (You may want to use a dialogue, an essay or a mixed format.) When you have a plan for this paper, meet with your collaborative planning partner. Tape the session to reflect on your planning.

#### Criteria for Evaluating Your Text

- Did you maintain a real dialogue between people on a significant issue? Did you let them go into any depth with each other?
- Were you able to use the language and claims of your participants in precise ways that did justice to the complexity of their thought (rather than just expressing their “drift”)?
- Did you bravely entertain real rivals to a position (not just throwaway lines, but ones the first person would have given serious thought to)?
- Did the dialogue “add” up to a new level of understanding of that issue?

### **Decision Making Inquiry**

The Scholars’ job is to create a Journey Book. Our job is to conduct an intercultural inquiry into decisions and choices of an SOS Scholar. Possible topics to investigate: how do teens cope with, work around, or find accommodations for learning disabilities; or, more specifically, how do teens with LD handle problems that come up in transitions to work; or, more generally, how do teens deal with difficult decisions in their lives (in school, neighborhoods, home).

Write a Decision Making Inquiry (a vignette plus an interpretation) that could be published on the Intercultural Inquiry or other websites, in a campus journal, in a training packet for future teachers or SOS employers.

It needs to do two things:

- 1) To analyze a decision making event using the conceptual tools you’ve learned in the course to uncover and interpret the meaning of decision making, in action, in this situation. At the same time be inventive in your writing in order
  - 2) To dramatize or give presence to the (sometimes hidden) agency of these Scholars.
- Write the vignette in a way that will both engage your readers and draw them into serious thinking (using those powerful concepts).

### Criteria for Evaluating Your Text

Review PSSW p 418-21 & 429-30 and look for:

- A clear focus on the problem of agency, decision making and literacy
- A strong rival hypothesis stance—a spirit of inquiry into an open question
- A strong rivaling stance that strategically seeks out multiple perspectives and uses difference to develop a new understanding
- A substantive use of the conceptual tools from literacy research & theory
- A rhetorically effective presentation that speaks to the readers’ intellect and imagination.

### **Proposal for Inquiry Project**

Draft a preliminary sketch of 1) the situation or problem (possible vignette) you want to learn about *with the help of your Scholar*, and 2) overview two of the key concepts or ideas connected to our readings you will develop in the paper. (2pages)

**Observation/Reflection Journal:** Post an entry for every session with the Scholars. See PSSW p 338 for tips.

## PROJECT SCHEDULE for DECISION MAKERS<sup>2</sup>

**Seminar** sessions (only Mentors unless noted) held in campus classroom

**LAB** sessions are with Scholars & will be in the Computer Lab<sup>3</sup>

**Steps** are described in the *Decision Makers GUIDE*

**Post** Observation/Reflection journal entries the day after the session

**Joint Sessions** (shaded) include 1 session to meet; 7 to complete Journey Book; 2 for joint presentation and dialogue supporting Mentors' inquiry

	<p><b>Seminar</b> Mentors Preview to Decision Makers Read Overview and Guide View Multimedia Intro Due: Starting Point Profile</p>
<p><b>Seminar</b> Discuss LD packet readings E-Mail autobio/self-introduction to Scholars</p>	<p><b>Seminar</b> View video; discuss LD readings</p>
<p><b>Seminar: Scholars &amp; Mentors Meet</b> “Something About Me” Introduction Game. Take group photo on campus</p>	<p><b>LAB Step 1.</b> Do the Starting Point Profile Post: Observation/Reflection Entry #1 after session</p>
<p><b>Seminar</b> Discuss readings Bring Post #1 to discuss</p>	<p><b>LAB Step 2</b> (Finish Profile if needed) Design &amp; print cover Post O/R #2.</p>
<p><b>Seminar</b> Read: PSSW Ch 17 on Inquiry and DM Guide, Chap One. Due: Mentor’s own Decision Story</p>	<p><b>LAB Step 3.</b> Do the Multimedia Intro. Rough out a story to tell at the Seminar Post O/R #3</p>

<p><b>Seminar: Scholars &amp; Mentors</b>  <b>Step 4</b> Scholars tell stories; Group supports &amp; rivals  Post O/R # 4</p>	<p><b>LAB Step 4</b>  Write Good &amp; Bad Decision Stories: rivals, whose problem, what learned  Post O/R #5</p>
<p><b>Seminar</b>  Due: A two page proposal for your inquiry project.</p>	<p><b>Lab Step 5</b>  Do Portrait of a Decision Looking Forward  Post O/R # 6</p>
<p><b>Seminar</b>  Discuss Inquiry</p>	<p><b>LAB Step 6</b>  Write A Letter to Yourself (or a timeline etc)  Plan your Joint Presentation with your Scholar.  Post O/R #7</p>
<p><b>Seminar: Scholars &amp; Mentors</b>  Joint Presentation</p>	<p><b>Seminar: Scholars &amp; Mentors</b>  Joint Presentation</p>

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<sup>1</sup> Readings are from *Literacy* volume unless otherwise noted

<sup>2</sup> Schedule is based on 2 sessions/1.5 hours each/week.

<sup>3</sup> Lab needs to have computer for each Scholar plus extra chair by for each Mentor