ENG 5011-001: Studies in Composition and Rhetoric: Orality, Literacy, and Culture

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Purpose of the Course
The first part of the course presents an overview of the issues guiding the field of literacy studies. The focus here will be on the historical and theoretical aspects of literacy: we will examine the development of writing in specific societies, discuss how oral discourse has influenced writing, and analyze how literate cultures have differed from primarily oral ones. In the second half we will compare two communities in the United States with very different traditions of literacy. We will see how these traditions affect children once they are in school, and how writing teachers at all levels can use community-based knowledge to construct effective curricula, syllabi, and assignments.

Goals of the Course
By the end of the course, students will:
1. have increased awareness of writing as an invention of mankind as opposed to an intrinsic and inevitable form of language;
2. better understand the impact of cultural, economic, and social environments upon written and oral language use;
3. have a broader conception of the complicated and contested meanings of the term “literacy”;
4. know the competing arguments guiding the various models of literacy;
5. be aware of the effects of spoken communication on students facing academic writing for the first time;
6. be able to demonstrate how writing instructors can help students make the transition to academic writing;
7. display an understanding of the role of technology in written communication.

Books and Materials
The Book History Reader, edited by Finkelstein and McCleery
Orality and Literacy by Walter Ong
Ways with Words by Shirley Brice Heath
Course packet, available from Copy-X (Lincoln Avenue)

Requirements
1. Read the assigned material by the assigned date and participate in class discussions.
2. Submit five typed responses to questions about the readings.
3. Take the class midterm.
4. Write a literacy narrative of 4-5 pages based on personal experience.
5. Complete a major research project of between 15 and 20 pages and present your findings to the class in a 15 minute oral presentation.
Attendance
Attendance is mandatory. While emergencies do occur, missing more than one class session may seriously jeopardize your final grade.

Grade Breakdown
Five response papers 25% (5% each)
Midterm 15%
Literacy narrative 10%
Research essay 40%
Final exam/presentation 10%

Response Papers
Response papers will take the form of either answers to specific questions or the analysis of a passage from the readings, either a specific passage or one of your choosing. Response papers should not be longer than two typed, double-spaced pages, and are due on the assigned dates at the beginning of class. No late response papers.

Midterm
The midterm will cover material from the very first day of class up to and including the Thursday of the seventh week of class. Questions will take the form of essays, short answers, and fill-in-the-blanks.

Literacy Narrative
This is a personal essay in which you explore your early experiences with spoken and written language and how they have shaped you as a writer. Be as creative as you like!

Research Paper
Historical analyses, theoretical arguments, and empirically-based approaches are all welcome. Students are most familiar with the first two approaches; empirically-based papers are founded primarily on observation and include case studies and ethnographies. We will talk more about the different approaches and how they overlap in class.

Plagiarism
Here is the English Department policy on plagiarism:
Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism--"The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one's original work" (Random House Dictionary of the English Language)--has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including a grade of F for the assigned essay and a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office.

PLEASE TURN OFF ALL CELL PHONES BEFORE COMING TO CLASS

NOTE: I may make minor changes to this syllabus in order to suit the needs of the class. Changes will always be announced in advance.
SCHEDULE

#1 08/23  Overview of course; introductions

#2 08/30  Ong, Chapters 1, 2, and 3

#3 09/06  Ong, Chapter 4
          "The New Literacy Studies," Street, Course Packet
          "Unpackaging Literacy," Scribner and Cole, Course Packet
          Response Paper #1 due

#4 09/13  "The Practical Impact of Writing," Chartier, 118, Book History
          "From Pencils to Pixels," Baron, Course Packet

#5 09/20  Response Paper #2 on an article of your choosing (bring in article as well)

#6 09/27  "The Web of Literacy," Keller-Cohen (course-packet)
          "Literacy Instruction and Gender," Monaghan, 207, Book History
          Speaker: Talk on literacy in the 18th and 19th centuries in the U.S.
          Response Paper #3

#7 10/04  "The Sociology of a Text," D.F. McKenzie, 189, Book History
          "Religious Reading and Readers," Nord, Course Packet
          "Canonization in Oral and Literate Traditions," Goody, Course Packet

#8 10/11  Midterm examination
          Literacy Narratives; Read Green/Malcolm X/Markelis in Course Packet

#9 10/18  Ways with Words, 1-148

#10 10/25  Ways with Words, 149-264
          Bring 3 copies of Literacy Narratives to exchange with peers

#11 11/01  Ways with Words, 264-end of book
          Literacy Narrative Due

#12 11/08  "Inventing the University," Bartholomae, Course Packet
          "The Idea of Community in the Study of Writing," Harris, Course Packet
          "The Academic Language Gap," Graff, Course Packet
          Response Paper #4 due

#13 11/15  "What Constitutes Literacy...," Dorr, Course Packet
          "Into the Electronic Millennium," Birkerts, Course Packet
          Response Paper #5 due

THANKSGIVING BREAK  11/17 to 11/25

#14 11/29  Paper presentations

#15 12/06  Paper presentations