THE USES OF LITERACY

EngComp 1552, Fall 2012
University of Pittsburgh
Prof. Annette Vee

Meeting time: M W 4:30–5:45pm
Meeting place: 219 Cathedral of Learning
Course website: http://www.annettevee.com/2012fall_usesofliteracy

Prof. Vee's contact information:
Office: 628 C Cathedral of Learning
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Office Hours: Mondays, 2–4pm and gladly by appointment

Course Description

In this class, we will explore what literacy is beyond simply reading and writing. We'll visit literacy enacted in different contexts and historical periods to explore deceptively simple questions: What is literacy? How is it used in the world?

As we consider *what literacy is,* we will encounter theories of how literacy is learned, how it is distributed across various populations, and how it has changed throughout history. We will be in theoretical as well as practical dialogue with others as we read literacy scholarship and talk with people about their literacy development and practices.

The goal is for all of us to leave this class with an enhanced understanding of how we and others use literacy in the world so that we might better teach it and practice it in the future.

Course Requirements

This is a course on literacy, so together we will be doing a lot of reading and writing: 2-5 pages of writing and 30-50 pages of reading each week. To succeed in this course, you will need to stay on top of assignments, participate actively in online and in-class discussions, and respect your peers in conversation and reviews of their work. Specifically, you will need to:

• complete all course readings;
• arrive on time and prepared for class meetings and conferences;
• participate in discussions online and in-class;
• draft, revise and submit all course projects;
• review your peers' work regularly and have your own work reviewed;

- submit a Midterm and Final Portfolio including the work you've done for the class;
- submit all drafts, projects and work **on time** (day/hour that it is due; no credit is given for late drafts; late papers will normally be docked one letter grade per day, unless you get my approval for an extension before the due date).

If, at any time, you have questions or concerns about your ability to fulfill the expectations for this course, please contact me. I aim to help you succeed in the course, and together we can resolve any issue that may come up.

Course Readings

Readings for each week are listed on the course calendar (see below) by the day they are due to be read. You are not required to purchase texts for this course; all readings will be available online through CourseWeb unless otherwise noted. Throughout the semester, you will also be reading your peers' work and your own. You should be interacting with all of these texts as you read them, so you may print them out to highlight and annotate them, take notes in a digital or physical notebook, or digitally annotate the texts using a program like Adobe Acrobat. We will regularly discuss your reading and writing strategies in class and in one-on-one conferences.

Grading

Your grade will be based on your portfolio of work for the class (reviewed by me up to 4 times and graded twice), your participation in the class, and your final presentation to the class.

Midterm graded review of portfolio:	35%
Midterm blog portfolio:	10%
Final graded review of portfolio:	30%
Final blog portfolio:	10%
Participation (in-class):	10%
Final presentation:	5%

Late work will be docked one letter grade per day it is late, unless prior arrangements are made with me for extensions, etc. I offer extensions only in extreme circumstances. Individual assignments are not graded until the portfolio; however, your portfolio grades will be adjusted proportionally for any individual late work or late drafts that your portfolio contains.

Participation

In-class: Participation in the class consists of short writings in class and on the course blog, peer review, discussion, and your general contribution to the work we do together. Participation grades are by their nature subjective, which does not mean they are arbitrary.

Someone with an excellent participation grade:
- will have attended class and appeared engaged without fail;
- will have offered timely, insightful comments to his peers;
- will have always brought her readings or other materials to class;
- will have contributed regularly and thoughtfully to class discussions both online and offline.

Some people are more likely to speak up than others and some are more comfortable sharing ideas after they have had more time to process them; for these reasons, I offer both online (that is, written and not time-sensitive) and offline (that is, vocal and real-time) venues in which to participate in the class. It's normal to be more comfortable in one space than another, but I strongly believe that you will need to be proficient in sharing your

ideas in real-time, asynchronous, written and face-to-face contexts to be a successful teacher, entrepreneur, employee, or anything else you may want to be in the future. Therefore, I will consider your participation across all of these venues and may call on you both in class and online to give you an opportunity to share your ideas. Please see me if you have questions about how to participate more actively in any area of the class.

Online: Writing and interacting online is an essential part of this class. Every week you will post to our class blog on some subject related to literacy or respond to two of your peers' posts. This will be done on a regular schedule.
Group 1: If your last name begins with A-H
Group 2: If your last name begins with I-Z

Everyone posts by Tues, Aug 28 (11:59pm).
by midnight, Sun, Sept. 2: Group 1 posts
by midnight, Tues, Sept 4: Group 2 responds to two posts
by midnight, Sun, Sept. 9: Group 2 posts
by midnight, Sun, Sept. 11: Group 1 responds to two posts…. Etc….
Week 8: all blog posts are optional. Blogging ends Nov. 30.

Policies and Procedures

Attendance

Regular attendance in this course is required. Because this is a low enrollment course, your presence and contributions affect everyone. Regular attendance also means that you are writing and responding to writing regularly, and it means that your peers and I can give your writing the attention it deserves. For these reasons, you need to be in class, on time, prepared, every meeting. If you miss more than **one** week total of this course (2 class meetings), your final grade will be lowered: half a letter grade for each absence over two. If you miss more than two weeks total of this course (4 class meetings), you will not pass the course.

It is your responsibility to get the assignments, class notes, and course changes from a classmate if you do miss a class. It is also your responsibility to keep track of and complete the missing work. In-class work cannot be made up. If you miss class on the day a written assignment is due, make arrangements to turn it in on time. As mentioned above, every day the paper is late the grade drops by one letter grade.

I understand that things happen and occasionally you may need to miss a class because you're sick, you've missed your flight back to campus, or you have pressing personal or family issues. The policy above allows for such absences without penalty. If you need to be absent for some extraordinary reason—because of a severe accident or illness, a family emergency or death, a religious holiday or jury duty—please let me know, and we will work something out. For such absences, either prior notification or subsequent documentation will be required.

Guidelines for Written Work

I have specified word limits for assignments rather than page limits so that you do not need to use wide margins or tiny, strange fonts to display your work. Please use reader-friendly fonts such as Times New Roman, Arial, Calibri, Garamond, or Helvetica and sizes that are humane for your readers (10-12 point). Please use 1.5 to 2 line spacing. All work, including drafts, should be printed out and turned in at the beginning of class the day it is due, unless otherwise noted or arranged with me. For work that you bring into class in hard copy for peer review, please double spacing. For work you turn in online, please use single spacing. Work due in class is due physically in class, when class begins. Work due online is always due at 11:59pm of the due date.

Academic Integrity

The University asks us to include in our course descriptions this quotation from Pitt's Senate Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom (February 1974):

> The integrity of the academic process requires fair and impartial evaluation on the part of faculty and honest academic conduct on the part of students. To this end, students are expected to conduct themselves at a high level of responsibility in the fulfillment of the course of their study. It is the corresponding responsibility of faculty to make clear to students those standards by which students will be evaluated, and the resources permissible for use by students during the course of their study and evaluation. The educational process is perceived as a joint faculty-student enterprise which will perforce involve professional judgment by faculty and may involve—without penalty—reasoned exception by students to the data or views offered by faculty.

Plagiarism hurts the relationships and scholarship we construct during this class. Assignments for this course are designed to be relevant to your specific contexts—your personal literacy narrative, your future work as a teacher or learner, etc.—and are therefore rarely plagiarized in full. More commonly, students plagiarize by improperly quoting and documenting their sources. We will review how to properly document sources in class and I am happy to answer questions about how you can ensure that work you do for the class is your own. Additionally, please visit the English Department's site defining plagiarism and explaining how to properly document sources: http://www.englishlit.pitt.edu/lit_plagiarism.html.

Should you plagiarize, consequences are severe: students suspected of violating the University of Pittsburgh Policy on Academic Integrity, noted above, will be required to participate in the outlined procedural process that I initiate. A minimum sanction of a failing grade for the paper or project will be imposed.

Disability Resources

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, please inform me and the Office of Disability Resources and Services as early as possible in the term. You can reach DRS at (412) 648-7890 or (412) 383-7355 (TTY) and you can visit their office at 216 William Pitt Union. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

The Writing Center

The Writing Center is a free tutorial service for Pitt students. Writing Center consultants can help you learn how to generate ideas, organize your writing, and understand assignments. They can help you understand and deal with any sentence-level problems that you have, too. It's a great place to go in order to have a reader respond to your work so that you can do some intensive work on your writing. You can call for an appointment at (412) 624-6556 or make an appointment online: http://www.rich36.com/pitt/ .

The writing center is located in 317B of O'Hara Street Student Center. Visit the Writing Center website at http://www.english.pitt.edu/writingcenter/ for more information.

Technology etiquette

Please turn off your cell phone **before** class begins and keep it inside your book bag, purse, etc—do *not* keep it on your desk during class. I allow and encourage the use of computers, netbooks, tablets, etc. in class for those who want to take notes digitally during class. These devices are *not* for socializing during class, however—during class you must log out of Facebook, Twitter, IM and the message boards you follow. Studies show that these activities are distracting to your ability to learn and participate. You may visit our blog, Wikipedia or dictionary sites, etc. to help you understand a concept we're discussing in class, but be prepared to explain any of your in-class Internet use to the entire class. If you are socializing online or on your phone (including texting)

during class, then you will be considered absent for that class period. Please contact me if you have specific questions about this policy.

Course Schedule

Life is complicated; consequently, this schedule is subject to change.

Week 1 (Aug 27 & Aug 29): *What is literacy?*

Mon: Intro to Course

Wed: Discuss Literacy Log assignment and definitions of literacy
        Reading
        Barton, David. Excerpts from *Literacy: An Introduction [...]*: 1-7; 19-28; 33-52.
        Heath, Shirley Brice. Excerpt from "Protean Shapes in Literacy Events." 1982. *Literacy: A Critical Sourcebook*. 443-466. (required reading only up until 451).

        Writing
        Find the course blog and register yourself using a pseudonym and the invitation code I gave you in class:
        http://www.annettevee.com/2012fall_usesofliteracy/login/?action=register
        Then write a blog post responding to this prompt:
                Tell us one of your earliest memories of literacy—learning to read, being frustrated by not reading, etc. How has this experience shaped your literacy life today? How does this experience connect with your definition of literacy that you provided in class?

                Then post a response to **two** of your peers connecting to their story and their definition of literacy.

Week 2 (Sep 3 & 5): *Theories of literacy*

        Blogs: Group 1 posts Sun night; Group 2 responds Tues night.
Mon: No class (Labor Day)

Weds: *Reading*
        Gee, James Paul. "Literacy and the Literacy Myth," *Social Linguistics and Literacies*. 22-45.
        Brandt, Deborah. "Sponsors of Literacy" *CCC* 49.2, 165-185.

        Writing
        Literacy Log (with reflection letter) due to Prof. Vee in class.

Week 3 (Sep 10 & 12): *Literacy and identity*

        Blogs: Group 2 posts Sun night; Group 1 responds Tues night.
Mon: *Reading*
        Delpit, Lisa. "Language Diversity and Learning," *Other People's Children*, 48-69.
        Rose, Mike. "I Just Wanna Be Average," *Lives on the Boundary*, 11-37.

Weds: *Writing*
        Literacy Narrative draft #1 due; workshop them in class.

Week 4 (Sep 17 & 19): *Literacy interviews*

        Blogs: Group 1 posts Sun night; Group 2 responds Tues night.

Mon: *Reading*
        Brandt, Deborah. "Remembering Reading, Remembering Writing."
        Vieira, Kate. "American by Paper."

        Writing
        Set up your Literacy Interview.

Weds: *Writing*
        Literacy Narrative, draft #2 due to Prof. Vee.

Week 5 (Sep 24 & 26): *Literacy interview workshop*

        Blogs: Group 2 posts Sun night; Group 1 responds Tues night.
Mon: *Writing*
        Draft 1 of Literacy Interview due; workshop in class.

Weds: Class canceled (Prof. Vee is out of town)

Week 6 (Oct 1 & 3): *Uses of literacy*

        Blogs: Group 1 posts Sun night; Group 2 responds Tues night.
Mon: *Reading*
        Royster, Jacqueline Jones. "Toward an Analytical Model for Literacy and Sociopolitical Action." *Traces of a Stream,* 42-73.
        Brandt, Deborah. "Accumulating Literacy," Chapter 3, *Literacy in American Lives,* 73-104 [Available as e-text through PittCat].

Weds: *Writing*
        Draft 2 of Literacy Interview due to Prof. Vee.

Week 7 (Oct 9* & 10): *Struggles for literacy*

        Blogs: Group 2 posts Sun night; Group 1 responds Tues night.
Tues: *Reading*
        Lu, Min-Zhan. "From Silence to Words: Writing as Struggle." *College English* 49.4 (1987): 437-448.
        Cornelious, Janet. "Slave Testimony: We slipped and learned to read," *When I can read my title clear*
Sign up for Midterm Portfolio conferences with Prof. Vee, to be held Oct 10-12.

Weds: *Writing*
        Draft 1 of "What is Literacy?" essay; workshop in class.

Week 8 (Oct 15 & 17): *Literacy learning, or not*

        Blog posts and responses are optional this week.
Mon: *Reading*
        Purcell-Gates, Victoria. "A World Without Print," *Literacy: A Critical Sourcebook* 402-417 (Reprint from *Other People's Words*).
        Wolf, Maryanne. "The Beginnings of Reading Development, or Not." *Proust and the Squid,* 81-107.

Weds: Class canceled (Prof Vee is out of town)
        Oct 17, midnight: MIDTERM BLOG PORTFOLIO due via CourseWeb.

Week 9 (Oct 22 & 24): *Literacy in communities*

Blogs: Group 1 posts Sun night; Group 2 responds Tues night.

Mon: *Reading*

Heath, Shirley Brice. "Literate Traditions," *Literacies: Reading, Writing, Interpretation*, 297-311 (Reprinted from *Ways With Words*).

Gere, Anne Ruggles. "Kitchen Tables and Rented Rooms: The Extracurriculum of Literacy."

Fishman, Andrea. "Becoming Literate: A Lesson from the Amish"

Writing

Choose a community to observe the literacy practices in for your Literacy in Context essay.

Weds: **Becky Carpenter from GLPC visits.**
MIDTERM PORTFOLIO DUE IN CLASS.

Week 10 (Oct 29 & Oct 31): *Literacy crises*

Blogs: Group 2 posts Sun night; Group 1 responds Tues night.

Mon: Resnick, Daniel P. and Lauren Resnick. "The Nature of Literacy: An Historical Exploration," 370-385.

Sheils, M. "Why Johnny Can't Write." (1975). *Newsweek.*

Weds: *Writing*

Literacy in Context essay, Draft #1, workshop in class

Week 11 (Nov 5 & 7): *Writing technologies in history*

Blogs: Group 1 posts Sun night; Group 2 responds Tues night.

Mon: *Reading*

Graff, Harvey. "Print, Protest, and the People." *The Legacies of Literacy*. (1991): 108-120.

Baron, Denis. "From Pencils to Pixels: The Stages of Literacy Technologies," *Passions, Pedagogies, and 21st Century Technologies*, 15-33.

Weds: Digital workshop

Writing

Literacy in Context essay, Draft #2, due to Prof. Vee.

Bring brainstorm ideas and in-class workshop ideas for the final, Future of Literacy project.

Week 12 (Nov 12 & 14): *Writing in digital environments*

Blogs: Group 2 posts Sun night; Group 1 responds Tues night.

Mon: *Reading*

Carr, Nicholas. "Is Google making us Stupid?" (2008). *Atlantic Monthly*. [Available online: http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2008/07/is-google-making-us-stupid/6868/]

Miller, Richard. "Reading in Slow Motion." (2010). Available as a download on his blog: http://text2cloud.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/Reading_in_Slow_Motion_Final-4.pdf

Weds: *Writing*

Workshop digital version of essay in class

Annotated bibliography of 5+ sources for Future of Literacy project.

Week 13 (Nov 19 & 21): *What is the future of literacy?*

Blogs: Group 1 posts Sun night; Group 2 responds Tues night.

Mon: *Reading*

Hayles, NK. "Hyper and Deep Attention: The Generational Divide in Cognitive Modes." *Profession 2007*: 187-199.

Brandt, D. "How Writing is Remaking Reading." *Literacy and Learning.* (2009): 161-176.

Weds: Class canceled (Thanksgiving)

Writing

Digital version of essay due to Prof. Vee on CourseWeb

Week 14 (Nov 26 & Nov 28): *What is the future of literacy?*

Blogs: Group 2 posts Sun night; Group 1 responds Tues night.

Mon: Workshop Future of Literacy projects in class.

Weds: Wrap-up discussion

Week 15 (Dec 3 & 5): *Final Presentations*

Blog posts and responses are optional this week.

Mon: Final Presentations!

Writing

Dec 7, midnight: FINAL BLOG PORTFOLIO due via CourseWeb.

Weds: Final Presentations!

Monday, Dec 10, 4:30pm: Final Portfolio due.

Class Projects and Portfolios

You will draft, workshop and submit individual projects throughout the term. I will comment on these projects individually, but I will not until they are submitted in your portfolio. You will submit two portfolios for the course: the first at midterm (Oct 17) and the second will be submitted at the end of the term (Dec 10).

The **<u>Midterm Portfolio</u>** will be introduced with a **750 word cover letter** describing its contents and how they reflect your concepts of literacy and your own literate development over the semester. Following the cover letter, it will also include:

1. Literacy Log and reflection letter
2. Literacy Narrative
3. Literacy Interview
4. "What is Literacy?" essay

The **<u>Final Portfolio</u>** will be introduced with a **750 word cover letter** describing its contents and how they reflect your concepts of literacy and your own literate development over the semester. Following the cover letter, it will also include:

1. Literacy in Context essay
2. Digital version of one of your essays
3. Future of Literacy project (essay or digital composition)
4. "What is Literacy?" essay, substantially revised
5. Final presentation reflection

Your **<u>Blog Portfolios</u>** will contain unrevised blog posts and responses, plus your reflection on your blogging. They will be introduced with a **250-500 word cover letter** in which you reflect on your blogging in addition to analyzing a blogger you admire. The portfolio will consist of FOUR items:

1. One post
2. One response
3. Two posts or responses (your choice)

Portfolio assignments

Detailed assignment sheets will be handed out when each of the assignments are introduced in class. To give you a sense of the course and scope of work you will do, however, a brief explanation for each assignment follows below.

Literacy Log

> We swim in a world of print and symbols, often unaware of the literacy skills we must muster for everyday activities. For one day, you will log all of the literacy events you participate in. You may record using an audio recorder, Twitter, a paper notebook, your smartphone or anything that's convenient for you. You will turn in an edited, typewritten printout of your literacy log, along with a 250-500 word reflection on your log.

Literacy Narrative

> Are you literate? What does that mean? How did you get there? Who are the people who helped you become literate? What particular literacy events stand out to you from your life? Taking cues from our readings by Rose and Akinnaso, write a 750-1250 word narrative detailing several moments in your literacy history.

Literacy Interview

Now that you've thought more about your own literacy history, how does it compare with the literacy history of others? Following the examples of Brandt and Heath, interview (and audio-record) one person who has a background significantly different from yours—they must be 10 years older or younger than you, have grown up in a different country or speaking a language different from your native language, etc. Weave your own reflections with the words of your interviewee into a 750-1500 word essay.

What is Literacy?

Literacy is a contested term, notoriously difficult to pin down and with huge political consequences resting on its definition. Using your own literate experience as well as the work from at least *two* literacy scholars discussed in class, you will answer the challenging question "What is literacy?" in a 500-750 word essay.

Literacy in Context essay

Most of the scholars you've read argue that literacy is always enacted in certain contexts and is best studied in context. This essay gives you the chance to do just that. Find a community that interests you— your favorite coffee shop, online forum, church group, Greek organization, etc.—and spend at least 2 hours intentionally observing the literacy practices and events of that group. How do they create and interpret texts? How do they work together or communicate as they do so? What kind of literacies are called upon by the physical environment in which they meet? Write a 1000-1500 word essay connecting your observations to the ideas of at least *two* scholars discussed in class.

Digital version of an essay

Update one of your essays by making it into an audio, video, web-based or multimedia piece.

Future of Literacy project

In this project, imagine yourself a *futurist*, or someone who predicts the future based on analyses of the past and present. What will literacy look like in the future? If you plan to be a teacher, what literacies will you be teaching your students 20 years from now? If you plan to have children, or already have children, what will your children or their children be reading or writing? For this final project—either a paper or a digital project—you are required to incorporate the ideas of at least *two* scholars you've encountered in the class, plus at least *three* more sources—these sources can be interviews, pop culture, media, etc., but must be cited.

Final presentation

During the last week of class, you will present something to the class—either your digital version of your essay, or your Future of Literacy project, or something else related to literacy. Make it interesting and interactive! You may choose to create a website, teach a mini literacy lesson, create a movie, script and perform a short play, design a game, develop a small piece of software, or countless other things to demonstrate your answer to one of the critical questions we've asked in class.