

Multiliteracies Unit

Introduction

In C&I 309, we tackled the question of **how to define literacy**. Implicit in our struggle to agree on a definition were also questions of what this definition meant for literacy instruction, political power and control, implications for identity construction, and important concerns over access and opportunities for learners from diverse backgrounds. **Essentially, we came to see literacy less as a basic process of writing and reading words on a page, and more as a dynamic, socially-situated and contextualized practice we engage in as we communicate and make meaning in our lives.** In this course, we will push our definition of literacy once again as we explore the theory of multiliteracies, an approach to understanding literacy coined in the 1980's by the New London Group. Throughout this course, we will **explore this sociocultural approach to literacy and instruction** through readings and discussions, as well as through this Unit that will emphasize meaning making through digital tools and multimodalities to explore how literacy is relevant and purposeful to our lives, expression, and learning in more than just the dominant and traditional conceptions of linear, print-based text.

Basic Vocabulary

In order to understand this project prior to our readings and discussions, it may be helpful to look at some of the vocabulary that you will encounter. Keep in mind that just as “literacy” is defined in many different ways, so are these terms. However, these are the definitions we will be using as they are utilized by Frank Serafini and Troy Hicks in our required readings.

Term	Some ways to define the term...
Multiliteracies	“reconceptualization of literacy as a multidimensional set of competencies and social practices in response to the increasing complexity and multimodal nature of texts” (Serafini, 2014, p. 26) --Umbrella term (media literacy, critical literacy, visual literacy, computer literacy)
Mode	“system of visual and verbal entities created within or across various cultures to represent and express meanings” (Serafini, 2014, p. 12) --Examples include music, photography, written language --“Genre of a text” (Hicks, 2013, p. 21)
Multimodal ensemble	“text composed of more than one mode” (Serafini, 2014, p. 12)
Media	• “technology used” (Serafini, 2014, p. 13) --“Form in which a text is created” (Hicks, 2013, p. 21)

Purpose and Goal

The ultimate goal of this unit is for you to better **understand meaning making through multimodality** and how **design and creation with digital tools provides opportunities and challenges**. Your experience and findings can help to shape your expectations, values, and possibilities for your own curricular design in the classroom. Through readings, discussions, and

workshops **we will work to reconceptualize learning and assessment** even in the age of standards and standardized testing.

As this Unit spans the entirety of the course, **there are multiple pieces and deadlines to follow closely**. Extensive workshop time has been built into class sessions to allow you time to brainstorm, work through technical challenges, and receive feedback as you work through each project part. Coming prepared and using the provided time effectively will help to ensure you are not overwhelmed at the end.

Once you have worked through the stages to complete all four response projects, **you will share your work at a Digital Salon** where peers will contemplate and analyze how meaning has been shaped differently through the integration and emphasis of different modalities. Ultimately, you will walk away with a stronger sense of what it means to produce and consume in the 21st century—and how definitions of ELA curriculum can be revised and expanded to meet these needs.

Your Role

For this project, you will select one YA/Children's Book to read and respond to by constructing four different reader response projects—each project focusing on a different technology tool and modality of meaning-making. The **situation and audience for each part will remain the same**, as you are creating sample (or mentor) projects to help guide your own (future) students in designing and producing their own work. For example, when you make your podcast imagine you will share this as an example for what your own students might create as you guide them through a future podcast project. Therefore, this project **both introduces you to using these tools and allows you to create models you can actually use in your classroom**. This is important to remember in thinking about grade level you are addressing. Keep in mind that Children's books may still be appropriate as mentor texts/models for older students.

Each part of the unit focuses on a **different mode and media of representation** (clearly explained on each page). However, **you must determine the purpose for each part**--the specific aim the writer is attempting to accomplish in their piece. There are endless possibilities to choose from in constructing a reader-response purpose for each project. Keeping in mind your audience, as well as the limitations or opportunities of the given mode/media can help you to design a purpose that is engaging and meaningful for both you and prospective students to explore! (There are also sample ideas to jumpstart your brainstorming on the website.)

Timeline

In addition to the dates listed below, class time has been set aside to work on your projects during the week of November 14, November 28, and December 5.

	Overview	Deadline
YA/Children's Book	In order to compare how different modalities and technologies construct meaning in different ways, you will select one YA/Children's book to read for the Unit . Each project will then be designed as a response activity for this book. You can use provided book lists, peer recommendations, or other resources to determine which book you would like to read. It may be helpful to select a book you have access to throughout the semester (either by purchasing or through the library) as you will want to return to it often as you work through the different projects.	Select by: Sept. 26 Read by: Oct. 10 Draft purpose statements by: Oct. 13
Part 1: Written Reflection	The first project will focus on constructing a print-based document. The main mode of communication will be linear written text, with a standard visual format. This project will mirror traditional classroom assignments in terms of the modalities through which meaning is constructed.	Due Nov. 3
Part 2: Podcasting	The second project will focus on constructing a response through podcasting, using software such as Audacity or GarageBand. You will integrate narration, music, and sound effects as your construct meaning through modalities that emphasize the auditory rather than the visual.	Introduction: Oct. 10 (Online Module) Due: Dec. 12
Part 3: Digital Storytelling	The third project will focus on constructing a response through digital storytelling, using moviemaking software, such as iMovie or Windows MovieMaker. You will integrate images, narration, text, movement, sounds, and music during the design process as you consider the different affordances and limitations for making meaning through this medium.	Introduction: Oct. 17 (In Class) Due: Dec. 12
Part 4: Infographic	The final project will focus on constructing a response in the form of an infographic, using technology tools or software to fit your needs. This representation will communicate the relationships between ideas, things, numbers, etc. through graphic and visual arrangement.	Introduction: Nov. 7 (In Class) Due: Dec. 12
Digital Salon	For the Digital Salon, you will be asked to share your projects on our class Weebly site. You will each be asked to carefully review the work of one other peer, analyzing the differences in how meaning is constructed across the projects. A final discussion will explore affordances and limitations based on modality and medium, as well as implications for designing classroom curriculum. You will also be asked to provide final assessments for each of your projects using the provided assessment tool.	In class: Dec. 12