EDCI 860: Seminar in Reading Education (3 credits)

Researching Informational Texts: Going Beyond the Texts and Tasks Traditionally Thought of as “Reading”

Course Overview
This seminar focuses on theory and research related to reading, writing, and using informational texts. Researching informational texts requires going beyond the texts and tasks traditionally thought of as “reading.” Therefore, we will attend to broad range of issues including (a) the diverse types of informational texts; (b) the challenges and potential information texts entail as reflected in descriptive and instructional research; (c) national and international assessment demands and achievement data relevant to information texts; (d) research on developing sophisticated skills in locating, evaluating, and synthesizing information from multiple sources in both traditional print and information and communications technologies.

By the end of the course, students will have demonstrated:

- their knowledge of the range of theoretical concerns as well as research topics and methods relevant to informational texts.
- their ability to read, understand, and evaluate a variety of research reports relevant to informational texts.
- their in-depth understanding of a focused area of research relevant to reading, writing, and using informational texts.
- their insight into important research questions relating to informational texts and tasks.

Required Book

Recommended Books

Required Reading
See citations listed by date below, and summarized in alphabetical order at the end of this syllabus. In addition, other resources will be distributed or announced in class.

Expectations and Grades
Please turn cell phone ringers off during class.

There are three general requirements for the course: (1) active participation in each class session and leadership responsibility for class discussions on specific readings, (2) a critical review of the literature on a course-relevant topic selected in consultation with the instructor, (3) and an integrative final essay.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership/ participation</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical review paper</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrative final essay</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please note: "Incomplete" grades are rare, given only in extenuating circumstances such as major illness. They require a written contract signed by both the student and the professor. The form are available online at the Student Services web site at http://www.education.umd.edu/studentinfo/graduate_info/FormsExplanGrad.html. This form specifies what is to be completed if a graduate student is to be awarded an incomplete grade in courses numbered 600 level and above (excluding 799 thesis credit, and 899 dissertation credit).

Leadership/Participation
Class discussion and other activities. Because EDCI 860 is a seminar, active and timely involvement in class activities is expected. This involvement should include comments, questions, and observations pertinent to the topic. Your involvement should reflect your careful consideration of class topics and assigned readings. An "A" student will make substantive contributions to each class discussion.

I recommend keeping a reading log in preparation for class. You should come to each class session with written notes, questions, insights and critiques about the assigned readings. It should be clear throughout this course that you are actively relating content, themes, and issues across the various assigned readings, as well as linking the assigned material to other sources.

Leadership/participation also includes active, timely involvement in reading and critiquing other students' outlines and drafts. Your comments should be constructive and show evidence of careful consideration of your classmates' ideas. Your leadership/participation
also includes bringing your own drafts to class on time, and presenting your findings at the end of the semester (see below).

**Student-led discussions:** All class members are expected to read all assigned material. However, individuals will have discussion leader responsibilities for specific readings twice during the semester. Each time you are a leader, you will prepare a discussion on the assigned reading lasting about 30 minutes. It should be evident that you are well prepared and organized.

Your purpose is to extend your classmates’ thinking about the topics in the chapter or article. You should encourage such processes as elaboration, synthesis, and integration across readings. As discussion leader, you will address two or three critical and significant issues from the readings. Depending on the readings, it may be appropriate to introduce the class to the issues that you are focusing on by engaging us in some kind of “activity” that is interactive. Craft approximately 3 questions related to these significant issues for us to consider as part of your discussion.

Prepare a typed handout for your classmates:
- Include your name, date, and full citation for the assigned material.
- Provide a synopsis of the major points in the assigned material. [The purpose of this synopsis is to serve as a resource for your colleagues to use in reviewing course materials. Do NOT read this synopsis to the class.]
- Provide discussion questions. [The purpose of these questions is to involve your colleagues in carefully considering course material. See specifics above.]
- Edit and proofread your work to ensure correct spelling and grammar. [You must use APA format, except that this paper may be single-spaced.]

**Critical Review of Literature**
You will engage in a literature search in order to locate, read, critique, and write about research on a focused topic related to informational text. Your paper will be approximately 20 pages long (typed double-spaced), plus references.

You will critique 8-10 research reports on your topic. These reports must be new research reports that you have not previously reviewed in other course papers. In addition to the 8-10 research reports, you will include at least 4 other citations (e.g., secondary sources such as reviews and course readings, and/or additional research reports) to provide background and clarify your discussion.

Your paper’s overall structure will consist of an **introduction, a review of literature, and a conclusion.** Note the following points:

- Your paper must be subdivided with headings.
- You should include a table of contents that lists all your paper’s headings and corresponding page numbers.
- Your purpose should be explicitly and clearly stated.
- Your plan of organization should be explicitly and clearly stated. This plan should
match what you actually do in the body of the paper.

- Your **review of the literature** section should include not just summaries of studies but analysis and critique.
- Your **discussion** section should begin with a *summary* of your findings, followed by your *conclusions* about your topic and your *recommendations* for further research. (Don't forget to acknowledge the limitations of your review.)
- You should include the **honor pledge** on your cover sheet.

You will receive feedback from me and your classmates as you draft your paper. Note that you must carefully edit and proofread your paper. Your writing should be clear and well-organized. Your paper should reflect professionalism and attention to detail. You should review the chapter in the APA manual on writing style. You may also want to refer to the Becker (1986) book for help.

You are required to follow APA conventions. (But no abstract is needed). Your reference list, your citations, your subheads, and your writing should all reflect APA format. Among other things, please note that everything in APA format is double-spaced and all sources used for your paper must be listed in a reference section and credited in the text of the paper. You should also note University regulations related to plagiarism and the honor pledge.

In addition, you will present an **overview of your research** paper to the class. Because your overview will be limited to **10 minutes**, you will need to be concise, well organized, and clear. It is your responsibility to adhere to this time limit. Pick a few key ideas to present rather than attempting to present your entire paper. You will provide each class member with:

- a **1-page summary** of your findings (include your **name** and the **title of your paper** on your summary sheet)
- your **complete list of references**.

Your presentation and handout will count as part of your leadership/participation grade. Note that correct spelling and grammar are mandatory on handouts.

**Integrative Final Essay**

For this assignment, you will write an essay in which you identify themes, trends, or issues that are important in researching informational texts based on your integration of ideas reflected in this semester’s readings. As noted above, I recommend that you keep a reading log in preparation for class. Doing so will help you identify themes, trends, or issues to facilitate this assignment as well as your participation in class discussions. It should be clear throughout this course that you are actively relating content, themes, and issues across the various assigned readings, as well as linking the assigned material to other sources.

To help focus your ideas, give your essay a title that captures your message. It may also help you to think about what you would say and how you would structure your essay if you were submitting for consideration to a journal.

The length of your essay will depend on how you approach it, but most essays will be somewhere between 8-10 pages, plus references. Be sure that it is apparent that you have
integrated information from multiple sources in this semester’s readings (at least 6), as well as other supporting research and expert opinion.

Careful editing and proofreading are expected. Your writing should be clear and well-organized. You should use subheadings to structure your response. Your paper should reflect professionalism and attention to detail. You should review the chapter in the APA manual on writing style. You may also want to refer to the Becker book for help.

You are required to follow APA conventions. (But no abstract is needed). Your reference list, your citations in your essay, your subheads, and your writing should all reflect APA format. Among other things, please note that everything in APA format is double-spaced and all sources used for your paper must be listed in a reference section and credited in the text of the paper. You should also note University regulations related to plagiarism.

Questions or Problems
If you have any questions or problems regarding the assignments, please see me about them. By working together, we can resolve most difficulties. Do not hesitate to stop by during my office hours or to make an appointment for some other convenient time.

### Tentative Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 28</td>
<td>Course overview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 4</td>
<td>Contexts for considering informational texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 11</td>
<td>Contexts for considering informational texts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

### Decide on student-led discussion assignments

---
Feb. 18  Assessment expectations


Pick one of these PIRLS reports:

See also websites
Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) www.pisa.oecd.org

Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) timss.bc.edu/pirls2006/index.html

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard

**Deadline to decide on critical review topic**
Feb. 25  Searching informational texts


Mar. 4  Primary-grade children and informational texts


**Paper draft due to group**

Mar. 11  Looking beyond traditional print


**Return drafts you responded to**

Mar. 18  Spring Break—No Class Meeting
Mar. 25  Text in the classroom


Apr. 1  Text in the classroom


**Paper draft due to group**

Apr. 8  Text in the classroom


**Return drafts you responded to**
Apr. 15  ELLs and Informational Text


Apr. 22  Text structure


Apr. 29  Text structure


May 6  Bringing It All Together

**Present critical review findings** (provide handout—see above)

**Critical review due** (provide stamped, self-addressed envelope large enough to mail your paper and final essay back to you)

May 13  **NO CLASS: Final essay due** by noon (classes end May 12th)
Alphabetical List of References Listed by Date Above


**Other Resources**


**University Policies**

**Individual Needs Accommodation.** The University is legally obligated to provide appropriate accommodations for students with documented disabilities. In order to ascertain what accommodations may need to be provided, students with disabilities should inform the instructors of their needs at the beginning of the semester. The instructor will then consult with *Disability Support Services* (301-314-7682). DSS will make arrangements with the student to
determine and implement appropriate academic accommodations. In addition, sometimes students will encounter psychological problems that hamper their life on campus; should that condition pertain you, you are encouraged to consult with the Counseling Center (301-314-7651) for expert help. If you are experiencing difficulties in keeping up with the academic demands of this course, contact the Learning Assistance Service, 2201 Shoemaker Building, 301-314-7693. Their educational counselors can help with time management, reading, note-taking, and exam preparation skills.

Disability Support Services. If you have a documented disability and wish to discuss academic accommodations, please see the instructor immediately.

Code of Academic Integrity. The University of Maryland, College Park has a nationally recognized Code of Academic Integrity, administered by the Student Honor Council. This Code sets standards for academic integrity at Maryland for all undergraduate and graduate students. As a student you are responsible for upholding these standards for this course. The Code prohibits students from cheating on exams, plagiarizing papers, submitting the same paper for credit in two courses without authorization, buying papers, submitting fraudulent documents, and forging signatures. It is very important for you to be aware of the consequences of cheating, fabrication, facilitation, and plagiarism. For more information on the Code of Academic Integrity or the Student Honor Council, please visit http://www.studenthonorcouncil.umd.edu/whatis.html.”

The University of Maryland Honor Pledge, proposed by the Student Honor Council and approved by the University Senate, reads:

“I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this assignment/examination.”

Unless you are specifically advised to the contrary, the Pledge statement should be handwritten and signed on the front cover of all major papers, projects, or other academic assignments submitted for evaluation in this course. Students who fail to write and sign the Pledge will be asked to confer with the instructor. Failure to adhere to the code may result in the grade of XF – failure due to academic dishonesty.

Religious Observance. The University System of Maryland policy “Assignments and Attendance on Dates of Religious Observance” provides that students should not be penalized because of observances of their religious beliefs: students shall be given an opportunity, whenever feasible, to make up within a reasonable time, any academic assignment that is missed due to individual participation in religious observances. It is the student’s responsibility to inform the instructor of any intended absences for religious observances in advance. Notice should be provided as soon as possible but no later than the end of the schedule adjustment period. Acknowledged religious observances include, but are not limited to: Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Good Friday, Passover.

Course Evaluation. As a member of our academic community, you as a student have a number of important responsibilities. One of these responsibilities is to submit your course evaluations each
term though CourseEvalUM in order to help faculty and administrators improve teaching and learning at Maryland. Please make a note now of the dates for *Spring 2009 (Tuesday, April 28 through Wednesday, May 13)* and the link at which you can access the submission system (www.courseevalum.umd.edu). If you submitted all of your evaluations in the fall or are a new student, you can also access all posted results from Fall 2007 forward via Testudo under CourseEvalUM Reporting. To retain this access, you must submit all of your evaluations each semester. If you do not have access right now, you can gain it by submitting all of your Spring 2009 evaluations. More information is at: https://www.irpa.umd.edu/Assessment/CourseEval/stdt_faq.shtml.