

## E632 – PROFESSIONAL CONCERNS: TEACHING AND LEARNING IN A DIGITAL AGE

**Professor:** Dr. Cindy O'Donnell-Allen  
**Office:** Eddy Building 322A  
**Office hours:** Tues., 9:30-11:30am / Thurs., 7:00-8:00pm / or by app't  
**E-mail:** [cindyoa@mail.colostate.edu](mailto:cindyoa@mail.colostate.edu)  
**On Twitter:** Cindy\_OA  
**Class website:** <http://e632.weebly.com>

*Neither can the wave that has passed by be recalled nor the hour which has passed return again.*  
~ Ovid

### COURSE FOUNDATIONS AND OBJECTIVES

Today's digitally-savvy youth compose and connect effortlessly on Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, blogs, and fan fiction sites; 64% percent of them read on a mobile phone, 70% on a tablet, and 38% on a gaming console (Clark & Formby, 2013). Yet rhetoric in education continues to emphasize that students must be "prepared" for 21<sup>st</sup>-century learning when in fact, they already are. But how well? And to what end?

Rather than focusing primarily on skills and content or teaching students how to use a fixed set of technologies that are likely to be outdated in a few years, I am framing this course around the central premise that teachers must pursue (at least) three goals to improve teaching and learning in a digital age. They must:

1. participate in the digital age by developing *their own skills* as critical consumers and composers of digital and multimodal texts
2. develop and hone their *technological pedagogical content knowledge* (Mishra & Koehrer, 2008), that is, a conceptual framework to guide their integration of digital literacies in the classroom in order to deepen and amplify student learning in a particular content area
3. advocate for student access to digital tools and provide support in the development of *critical digital literacy*, that is, the capacity to navigate digital information successfully, to analyze it critically, and to use digital and participatory practices purposefully in academic contexts as seamlessly as they do in their everyday lives. Critical digital literacy skills and practices may not only increase students' life chances for success beyond secondary school, but can also equip them to fluidly engage as civically active human beings who challenge inequities in today's society.

In short, teachers must develop a *critical digital literacy pedagogy*, one that is responsive to constant change in a technology-saturated, hyper-networked world. This imperative raises pedagogical questions about how digital literacies get taught, ethical questions regarding how students acquire and apply critical digital literacy practices, and methodological concerns regarding how critical digital literacies get studied.

In light of these concerns, this course is designed to help you meet the following objectives:

- trace the impact and implications of the above shifts for students and teachers
- examine scholarship that situates digital literacy practices in theories of critical literacy, civic identity, and "connected learning" (Ito et al, 2013)
- develop your own critical digital literacy skills so that you can better understand yourself as a reader and express yourself as a writer in a digital age
- design instructional materials and connected learning opportunities for students that incorporate digital texts, tools for multimodal composing, and participatory networks for the purpose of amplifying student learning in your teaching context
- explore ideological and ethical aspects of students' engagement and learning in a digital age
- examine some of the methodological tools available for studying the production, reception, and use of digital and multimodal text

## RIGHTS, RESOURCES, AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Rights to Full Participation: If you have a physical challenge or special learning need that may prevent you from fully demonstrating your abilities, contact me as soon as possible so that we can discuss accommodations necessary to ensure full participation and to facilitate your educational opportunities. Also, please realize that every voice is important in this class. If at any time you feel harassed on the basis of race, ethnic or cultural background, gender, or sexual orientation, please notify me so that we can address the situation immediately and/or make the proper referrals to the appropriate campus personnel.

CSU's Student Sexual Harassment and Violence policy, following national guidance from the Office of Civil Rights, requires that faculty follow CSU policy as a "mandatory reporter" of any personal disclosure of sexual harassment, abuse, and/or violence related experiences or incidents shared with the faculty member in person, via email, and/or in classroom papers or homework exercises. These disclosures include but are not limited to reports of personal relational abuse, relational/domestic violence, and stalking. While faculty are often able to help students locate appropriate channels of assistance on campus (e.g., see the CSU Health Network link below), disclosure by the student to the faculty member requires that the faculty member inform appropriate CSU channels to help ensure that the student's safety and welfare is being addressed, even if the student requests that the disclosure not be shared.

Resources for Student Wellness: For counseling support and assistance, please see the CSU Health Network, which includes a variety of counseling services that can be accessed at: <http://www.health.colostate.edu/>. Also, the Sexual Assault Victim Assistance Team is a confidential student resource that does not have a reporting requirement and that can be of great help to students who have experienced sexual assault. The web address is <http://www.wgac.colostate.edu/need-help-support>.

Academic Integrity: This course will adhere to the CSU Academic Integrity Policy, which can be found in the CSU Policy Library (<http://policylibrary.colostate.edu/policy.aspx?id=442>). Here are the specifics of how this code will play out in E322:

- *What constitutes "academic integrity" in this class and why does it matter?* Good ideas reflect hard work, and academic integrity requires that when you've drawn on others' intellectual property, you must give credit where credit is due. In this class that means three things: 1) you may not present the work of others as your own. When you draw on other sources to support your own ideas, including Internet sources, you must cite them properly; 2) you may not submit identical work in this course that you created for prior courses or for the courses you are currently enrolled in; doing so is considered "self plagiarism"; and 3) you must truthfully state the *degree* of your contribution to any collaborative projects I ask you to complete in this class. To foster academic integrity, I'll ask you to accompany course projects with a bibliography, to include a signed honor pledge with major assignments, and to complete group and individual participation statements for collaborative projects.
- *What specifically constitutes plagiarism and cheating?* See the definitions included in the Student Conduct Code at <http://www.conflictresolution.colostate.edu/conduct-code>.
- *What happens if I suspect you of academic misconduct?* Depending on the severity of the violation, instructors are within their rights to impose consequences that range from giving you a zero on an assignment, to recommending the loss of the repeat/delete privilege and a notation of "AM" (for academic misconduct) on your transcript, to failing you for the course. The exact wording regarding academic integrity, the consequences of violating it, and the procedures for addressing it can be found in section I.5 of the CSU Faculty and Professional Manual on the CSU website (<http://www.facultycouncil.colostate.edu/files/manual/sectioni.htm>).

Attendance and Late Work Policies: Come to class for the entire period each day. You'll be missed and you'll be missing something if you don't. Because the class is so interactive, much of what goes on simply isn't reproducible outside of class. It almost goes without saying that grades inevitably correlate with attendance and participation, but to be crystal clear, *excessive absences will override all percentages for class assignments noted in the "Course Projects and Activities" section.* See details in the description of "flex days."

If you must miss class for an established religious holiday or to participate in university-sanctioned extracurricular/co-curricular activities (e.g., competitions, events and professional meetings in which you are officially representing CSU), please let me know in advance so that I can tell you what you'll miss and we can make accommodations for turning in any work due that day. I also understand that illness or other extenuating circumstances sometimes cause you to miss class or prevent you from submitting your work on time. In these cases, you can use *flex days*.

**Flex Days:** You are allowed **two** flex days to be used for absences and/or extending the One Thing Well Project, described below. (You may not use flex days on smaller assignments like forum participation, booknotes, etc.) You may use your flex days as you wish as long as the combined number of absences and due date extension for the One Thing Well

Project does not exceed two. Furthermore, your **course** grade drops by one letter for **each** additional absence. “Days” count in the following ways:

- 1) Attendance and Participation: Each absence is a “day,” and attendance counts if you are present for, and participating in, the *entire* class period. If you miss a class OR you arrive late or need to leave early for part of the period, you are using a flex day. (Note: Absences are absences, regardless of cause. This means that the two flex days you’re allotted *include any absences related to illness.*)
- 2) Due Date Extension for the One Thing Well Project: If you need extra time, you can apply flex days toward this project. Because this class only meets once a week, a “day” actually refers to **seven** calendar days. That is, if the project was due on September 3<sup>rd</sup>, you could use one of your flex days to turn it on September 10<sup>th</sup>. (Don’t worry, the project isn’t due on September 10). *Again, because all smaller assignments are for use in a particular class period, you must submit them on time or receive no credit.*

Reading, Discussion, and Professional Collaboration:

If you want to have a good experience in this course, read the assigned texts *actively*. Because this is a graduate course, I will expect you to arrive at class having *prepared an engaged reading* of the assigned texts, not simply having read them. I’ll also expect you to be able to share your thoughts in substantive ways. Our in-class and online discussions and activities are *highly dependent* on your responses to and questions about your reading. Finally, I ask that you be a good colleague by practicing professional behaviors that will facilitate the collaborative construction of knowledge. Read critically, share your responses generously but judiciously, and be kind and accountable to one another.

## COURSE MATERIALS

- Avila, J., & Pandya, J.Z. (Eds.) (2013). *Critical digital literacies as social praxis: Intersections and challenges*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Gee, J.P. (2013). *The anti-education era: Creating smarter students through digital learning*. New York: Palgrave-MacMillan Trade.
- Jenkins, H., & Kelley W. (2013). *Reading in a participatory culture: Remixing Moby Dick in the English classroom*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Miller, S. E., & McVee, M.B. (2012). *Multimodal composing in classrooms: Learning and teaching for the digital world*. New York: Routledge.
- A book club book on digital literacies that you will read in a book club with other colleagues in the class. I’ll provide a short list from which you can choose.
- Various texts and online materials accessible from library reserve and our class website (e632.weebly.com), including *Connected Learning: An Agenda for Research and Design* (Ito et al, 2013) and *Teaching in the Connected Learning Classroom* (Garcia, 2014). Both of these are free e-books.
- A blog and a website that regularly posts new content related to digital literacies. (The website should offer webinars.)

## COURSE PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES

### 1. In-Class Participation - 20%

My own experiences of talking with my colleagues about compelling texts have proved invaluable to my professional development, and I’m hoping that you’ll discover the same in the class. Part of professionalism is your accountability to your colleagues, so I’ll expect you to participate substantively in class each day. My analysis of your substantive participation will depend on evidence of your commitment toward constructing understanding together in **class discussion**, namely by having read and pondered assigned readings in advance, willingly sharing your ideas, and remaining open to others’ responses and questions as well. This grade also includes occasional **small-group presentations and other in-class activities** (e.g., quickwrites), **leadership of one classroom discussion**, and participation in **book clubs**.

For **book club sessions**, you'll need to prepare **booknotes** in response to your book club text. Booknotes aren't meant to be busy work. In fact, your group will get to decide on the format they will take. Rather, they will help you be accountable to one another for your reading and will serve as stimuli for your book club discussions and your book club presentation at the end of the semester. You'll turn these notes into me *after each book club session* so that I can keep track of them for you and simply give you credit for completion. Your group will prepare **an interactive presentation** for the class after you've finished your book. If at any time you have questions about your in-class participation grade, I'm happy to give you a sense of how you're doing at that point of the semester.

## 2. Online Participation - 30%

Our online interactions are an important means of constructing knowledge together, so the definition of "substantive participation" in the section above applies to this forum as well. This grade will include the following:

### ***Forum Participation***

- On the same week that you are leading our in-class discussion, you'll make the **lead post** online guiding our consideration of the week's assigned reading. Write no more than 250 words in your post, and submit it by *Sunday at noon* prior to the date the reading is due. You're also in charge of reading others' responses and culling themes and questions that emerge in order to guide our in-class discussion the following Thursday. You'll do this once during the semester.
- On the weeks that you aren't making the lead post, you'll write **at least one substantive response** to it, no fewer than 100 words. Post it by *Tuesday at noon* each week. Also feel free to respond to one another's posts as the discussion unfolds.

If you have responded thoughtfully to readings and to one another, you'll get full credit for your post. If I see a pattern that you haven't, I'll e-mail to let you know.

### ***The Round-Up***

This is a low-barrier blog on our weebly site (e632.weebly.com) where we'll compile a collection of digital resources. Once a week, you'll individually post a tweet to Twitter that features a blog or website related to digital literacies. Once during the semester, you'll act as the curator by "rounding up" all the individual tweets and posting them to the round-up blog on our class website.

- On the week that you aren't curating, post your individual tweet by noon on Wednesday. You'll do this every week and provide a brief oral description of the tool and its potential uses in class.
- On the week that you're the curator, you'll post your own tweet as usual *and* round up your classmates' tweets and post them to the blog by noon on Thursday of that night's class. You'll do this once during the semester.

## One Thing Well Project (30%)

For this mid-term project, you will learn one digital tool well that you have never used before and explore it from the perspectives of a learner, teacher, and literacy scholar. The project will have four components:

- **reflective** – What is the digital tool? What is it designed to do? What were your experiences in using it? How has using the tool influenced, for good and/or for ill, the acquisition of your own critical digital literacy skills, especially in comparison to the traditional literacy skills that you already employ (i.e., engagement with print-based texts)?
- **theoretical** – How do theory and research on digital teaching and learning help you understand, critique, and/or justify the use of this tool?
- **pedagogical** – How might this tool be useful in a classroom setting? (You'll develop instructional materials relevant to a teaching context of your choice for this component of the project.)
- **speculative** – What are some future questions for research and some implications for teaching and learning that you can identify regarding this tool?

#### 4. Final Course Project and Presentation (20%)

This project is one you will design yourself. You can do it as an individual or collaborate on it with others in the class. It should address the primary questions and objectives of the course (see p. 1 of syllabus). Sample projects might include a small-scale case study of a student's in-school or out-of-school literacy practices; a compendium of digital tools with potential to engage students' civic participation in a digital age; a set of instructional materials that will help students' develop critical digital literacy; an analytical comparison of a range of print and non-print texts on a similar theme or subject; or something else that's wonderful that I haven't thought of yet. In addition to submitting this project to me, you will make a *brief* presentation of your work to the class on the last week of classes. You'll turn in a proposal midway through the semester so that I can see where you're headed and provide feedback and guidance.

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#### CONFIRMATION OF E632 SYLLABUS REVIEW

My signature below confirms that I have read the syllabus and have had the opportunity to ask any questions I have about how the course will be conducted and my work will be evaluated. I also understand that I can meet with Dr. O'Donnell-Allen at any point in the semester if additional questions arise.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_