LIS 580: Contemporary Theories and Practices of Reading

Course Outline

Spring/Summer 2017

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Calendar Description:
A study of different theories of reading (e.g. social, psychological, literary) and of sites and practices of literacy in an era of rapid cultural and technological change.

Course Objectives:
Reading is a fundamental human activity: one of the oldest and most common pastimes, a foundation of learning, scholarship, and knowledge, and an important attribute of the social milieu. Reading work is also one of the core missions of the library. This course will allow students to appreciate the complexity of reading as a social phenomenon and become conversant in the fundamental theory and practice of reading; it will also enhance their ability to develop a holistic vision of the human condition through the medium and study of reading. These professional and personal qualities will secure students’ potential to assume positions of leadership in cultural and informational organizations upon graduation and commitment to life-long learning. The theoretical and practical foundations taught in this course are of particular relevance in contemporary multicultural society regardless of a specific work environment, social setting, or community.

Some of the questions that this course answers are: What social, cultural, historical, political, and personal factors shape our reading practices? How does reading affect our social interactions and personalities? How does reading transform us and why? How does reading vary across cultures and continents? How do we talk about books that we read – and those we did not? How do librarians practice reading in different types of libraries? and How can LIS graduates engage in reading work outside of libraries?

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. acquire the foundational knowledge of a few major selected theories underlying the study of reading and readership and critically evaluate qualitative and quantitative studies of reading produced in various disciplines;
2. acquire the foundational knowledge of reading behaviours and improve an understanding of real-life readers;
3. appreciate the diversity of readers in multicultural societies and increase their sensitivity to reading pluralism;
4. understand how reading practices and the systems of production and distribution of reading materials are shaped by socio-political, historical, ideological, and cultural contexts;
5. understand the role of ICT in shaping reading practices and acquire the knowledge of online reading behaviour;
6. acquire foundational skills and knowledge of RA in libraries and other institutions and learn to distinguish between RA and bibliotherapy;
7. acquire basic knowledge of major reading genres and types of materials;
8. acquire basic practical skills in working with readers in professional situations;
9. improve their self-awareness as readers and enhance their ability to communicate about reading matters in professional settings;

The course builds a great deal on the principles of interactive and participatory learning, hands-on exercises, discussions, and in-class activities.

**Measurable Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs):**

- By engaging in reflexive practices and group projects and creating learning/informational objects students will learn collaboration, planning, and project management skills, develop the ability to act and solve problems creatively, think critically, initiate learning, and take responsibility for learning outcomes.
  - Measures: performing in a group project; creating a book trailer; producing a reading map; the quality of reflections in class assignments and in responses to the instructor’s grades and evaluations (Assignments 2, 3, 4)
- Students will become fluent in the terminology of reading scholarship and everyday reading conversations and experienced in decoding reading behaviours, motivations, choices, and social forces that shape them; they will become comfortable and adept at discussing, explaining, and planning reading practices.
  - Measures: knowing how to apply appropriate theories of reading (sociological, psychological, cultural, LIS-generated) for developing professional reading practices; understanding the progressive and oppressive social institution of reading and socio-cultural, political, and ideological structures supporting it; practicing how to incorporate this knowledge into workplace policies related to reading (Assignment 1, 2 & 3)
- Students will acquire concrete knowledge and specific applied and technology skills required for professional reading practices.
  - Measures: writing a book review; writing a book review intended for the practice of bibliotherapy; creating a book trailer and a reading map using technology applications; developing a learning object on a specific subject (e.g., reading in a selected country); working with a real life reader (“reading” the reader); developing professional practices and policies; demonstrating the knowledge of basic conventions of popular fiction and nonfiction genres (Assignment 1, 2, 3, & 4).
- Students will improve their cultural and intercultural sensitivity and appreciation of diversity issues.
  - Measures: learning about reading practices and social conditions shaping reading and the production/dissemination of reading matters outside of North
America; learning about readers whose reading contexts and preferences are different from their own (Assignment 2 & 4)

Content:
1. Histories of reading
2. Reading as a social phenomenon and reading trends. Sociological and psychological factors shaping reading practices
3. Reader response criticism (RRC)
4. Reading preferences; reading – high, low, and omnivorous.
5. Selected models of reading.
6. Reading in childhood and adolescence as a foundation of life-long reading.
7. The reading experience; Psychological approaches to reading; Typologies of readers.
8. Bibliotherapy.
11. Readers’ Advisory.
12. Fiction and nonfiction genres.
13. Reading and readerships around the world: comparative perspectives and case studies.

Methods:
Including but not limited to lectures, readings, student-led discussions, group projects, and guest speakers.

Course Relationships:
Pre-requisite: LIS 501

Required Texts:
No required texts. Readings assigned on a weekly basis.

Assignments and Weighting:
1. Assignment 1: A book review of “fiction about fiction” OR a bibliotherapeutic review of a fiction book of choice (in lieu of class participation) – 10%
2. Assignment 2: The Reader Assignment (intended to help students understand real-life readers) – 25%
3. Assignment 3: RA – 30%
4. Assignment 4: Reading outside of North America (a selected country or region) – 35%

Students can see some examples of the work they will be doing for this class at:
https://sites.google.com/site/fictionaboutfiction/ (reviews of ‘fiction about fiction’);
http://reading.ischool.utoronto.ca/ (reading maps; reading in academic libraries; sample topics for research – see the Reading Connections Conference);
https://bibliotherapyforlibrarians.wordpress.com/ (bibliotherapy and bibliotherapeutic reviews of books).
"Exploring the health benefits of fiction therapy" available online from the Toronto Star:

School of Library and Information Studies Grading Statement:
Grades reflect professional judgments of student achievement made by instructors. These judgements are based on a combination of absolute achievement and relative performance in class. The instructor should mark in terms of raw scores, rank the assignments in order of merit, and with due attention to the verbal descriptions of the various grades, assign an appropriate final letter grade.

Academic Integrity:
The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Code of Student Behaviour (online at www.governance.ualberta.ca) and avoid any behaviour which could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University. Students should also be mindful of the SLIS Copyright Policy (https://www.ualberta.ca/education/-/media/education/slis/documents/forms/sliscopyrightpolicy.pdf).

Inclusive Language and Equity:
The Faculty of Education is committed to providing an environment of respect for all people within the university community and to educating faculty, staff, and students in developing teaching and learning contexts that are welcoming to all. The Faculty recommends that students and staff use inclusive language to create a classroom atmosphere in which students’ experiences and views are treated with equal respect and value in relation to their gender, racial background, sexual orientation and ethnic background. Students who require accommodations in this course due to a disability affecting mobility, vision, hearing, learning, or mental or physical health are advised to discuss their needs with Student Accessibility Services.

Recording of Lectures:
Audio or video recording, digital or otherwise, of lectures, labs, seminars or any other teaching environment by students is allowed only with the prior written consent of the instructor or as a part of an approved accommodation plan. Student or instructor content, digital or otherwise, created and/or used within the context of the course is to be used solely for personal study, and is not to be used or distributed for any other purpose without prior written consent from the content author(s).

Policy about course outlines can be found in Course Requirements, Evaluation Procedures and Grading of the University Calendar (http://calendar.ualberta.ca/content.php?catoid=6&navoid=806#course-requirements,-evaluation-procedures-and-grading).