

Teaching English in the Junior High/Middle School
EDCI 434/ Spring 2009 Dr. Christian P. Knoeller

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Course Description

This course parallels EDCI 422, Teaching English in the Secondary School, but focuses instead on developing and presenting language arts instruction specifically in a *middle school* context. Course readings, augmented by field experiences, address practical instructional strategies as well as related theoretical, curricular, pedagogical, and institutional issues.

A note on due dates: Since Teaching English in the Junior High/Middle School is completed in just six weeks – and is followed *immediately* by student teaching – all assignments should be submitted on the dates specified on the syllabus. (Extensions would ultimately be a disservice to you, since outstanding 434 assignments would distract from student teaching responsibilities that deserve your full attention.)

Required Texts

Finders, Margaret and Susan Hynds (2007). *Language Arts and Literacy in the Middle Grades: Planning, Teaching, and Assessing Learning* (2nd edition). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Note: The required textbook, *Language Arts and Literacy in the Middle Grades* (2nd edition), is available exclusively at Von's bookstore. Unless you have a copy already, please pick one up without delay. Additional readings listed below can be found on reserve at the Hicks Undergraduate Library.

Additional Recommended Readings Books on Reserve at Hicks Library

Blasingame, J. & J. Bushman (2005). *Teaching Writing in Middle and Secondary Schools*. Boston: Pearson/ Prentice Hall.

Brown, D. & Trudy Knowles (2007). *What Every Middle School Teacher Should Know* (2nd edition). Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann.

Erickson, Lawrence (2003). *Applied Literacy in the Middle Grades: Introducing Children to Authentic Inquiry*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Monseau, Virginia and G. Salvner (2000). *Reading Their World: The Young Adult Novel in the Classroom*. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, Boynton/Cook.

Tomlinson, Carl and Carol Lynch-Brown (2007). *Essentials of Young Adult Literature*. Boston: Pearson/ Allyn & Bacon.

Additional resources of middle school teaching can be readily accessed via the Internet: *Essential Web sites* (for various professional resources and curricular standards)

<http://www.indianastandards.org/standardSummary.asp?Subject=eng&Grade=6&Standard=> (see also Indiana State Standards for grades 7 & 8)

<http://www.ncte.org/middle> (for NCTE's "Middle Level" teaching resources)

<http://www.coe.uga.edu/~smago/VirtualLibrary/index.html> (for sample units)

Course Requirements & Major Assignments

1. IN-CLASS JOURNALS & DISCUSSION OF READINGS

(Entries combined for 15% of overall course grade)

In order to add focus and rigor to our discussion of middle school English instruction, we will be examining and responding in class to chapters in our primary course textbook, *Language Arts and Literacy in the Middle Grades: Planning, Teaching, and Assessing Learning*, following the calendar of readings specified on the syllabus. I expect everyone to come prepared by reading chapters with care in advance. Prompts for journals will be distributed during class.

II. INSTRUCTIONAL UNIT & REFLECTIVE ESSAY *(3-4 weeks duration; 30% of overall course grade).*

In preparation for your student teaching later this semester, you will be developing a full-fledged instructional unit at grade level – corresponding to your actual student teaching placement. Since the aim of this assignment is to give each of you further experience at curriculum design and sustained instructional planning at the *middle school* level, *for those who prepare units for high school student teaching placements, the project must be accompanied by a separate 3-4 page essay (in addition to the reflective introduction described below). This essay should detail how the unit could be adapted for use in middle school – including both the specific modifications entailed and rationale for making them (with reference to course readings).*

Unit goals and lesson objectives should include state curricular standards at grade level: generally, mapped from the Indiana English Language Arts Competencies. For those of you who anticipate seeking teaching positions *outside* of Indiana, however, feel free to substitute the curricular standards of *another* state. The completed unit, specifying the State Instructional Standards to be met, as well as any additional, original lesson objectives, should be at least three to four weeks in duration.

In addition, prepare a *reflective introduction* addressing the following points:

- (1) Explain how instruction has been shaped to specifically to serve *middle school* students (or *secondary*, corresponding to your actual *student-teaching* placement) with reference to specific materials, activities, & methods;
- (2) Discuss your theoretical rationale; that is, *why* you have shaped the unit in particular ways (here, it is essential to draw on readings for this class, as well as those from previous English teaching methods courses if you wish);
- (3) Acknowledge sources of instructional materials that you have adapted from elsewhere; and

- (4) Cite sources consulted, such as course textbooks and supplementary readings. We will discuss these projects during the final class meeting.

TO REITERATE: For those who prepare units for high school student teaching placements, the project must be accompanied by an additional essay (at least 3-4 pages) describing in detail how the unit could be adapted for use at the middle school level – including both the specific modifications entailed and rationale (with reference to course readings) for making them. This alternative is meant to allow you to develop lesson plans and instructional materials that can actually be used when student teaching – while also fulfilling the intent of this course by focusing on middle school.

III. FIELD EXPERIENCE & JOURNAL

(10 or more hours, 20% of course grade; three 2-3 page journal entries; 15% of course grade).

Note: Satisfactory completion of this field experience is **required** to pass the course.

Central to the conception and design of this course is the opportunity to observe and participate in the classrooms of neighboring school corporations. You will select a mentor and sign up for placements during our first class session on January 13. It is then your responsibility to contact your mentors immediately; they expect to hear from you this week to schedule your initial visit to their classrooms. You are required to make at least five visits totaling ten or more hours of observation and orientation on an ongoing, weekly basis to be fulfilled prior to when student teaching commences. Coordinate the timing of your visits directly with your middle school mentor teacher well in advance. Remember that scheduling visits on different days of the week can increase the variety of lessons and activities that you are able to observe.

Among the primary aims of this placement is serving as a springboard to student teaching itself: For those of you who will actually be teaching in a middle school, your 434 field experience should ideally be completed in the same classroom. For those of you with high school student teaching placements, however, this brief, six-week field experience is meant to provide initial exposure to middle school teaching in the case that you ultimately elect to seek a position at this level.

If you share a placement with a classmate, consider visiting your mentor's classroom *together* for the following reasons. In addition to streamlining the process for your mentor, working in pairs allows you to carpool, offer each other moral support and, most importantly, discuss what you are learning together in the placement. This arrangement has proven quite beneficial to students in this course in the past.

Field experience journal entries (due dates indicated on the syllabus) should correspond to any three of the four topics listed below: that is, those that seem most important and interesting to you. Be sure to discuss all of these topics with your mentor teacher over the course of the placement whenever it seems most appropriate to do so.

Write entries about three of these topics in any order, when it seems most meaningful.

- 1) Classroom management strategies; official school rules and policies.
- 2) "Structure" of lessons (e.g. direct instruction, giving directions, forming groups, collaborative activities, making transitions, connecting to previous and future lessons, etc.)
- 3) Assessment: approaches to grading and response.
- 4) Instructional Planning & Differentiation: adjusting instruction to individual students as well as multiple sections of the same class.

In addition, the culminating, reflective essay (detailed separately below) links your observations and insights from your field experience to themes from course readings.

IV. CULMINATING REFLECTIVE ESSAY

(20% of final grade; 5-8 pages).

In a thoroughly developed, culminating, reflective essay, connect observations and insights from your field experience to themes addressed in course readings. While you have the latitude to focus on curricular and pedagogical issues of your choice, be sure to discuss them in relation to readings by citing specific texts. Feel free, of course, to compare or contrast how middle school approaches advocated by various authors (see recommended readings available on reserve) – as well as how they might be adapted for *secondary* classrooms, if you wish.

ATTENDANCE

In order to participate fully and as a matter of professionalism, excellent attendance is expected. Given the format (and brevity) of this course, your ongoing participation in a variety of in-class activities is essential, and repeated absence is strongly discouraged. Accordingly, students who miss *more than two* class sessions (*including excused absences*)

during the semester will not be eligible to earn an A. For excessive unexcused absence, the instructor reserves the right to further lower final grades.

Grading Formula

Instructional Unit	30%
Field Experience (5 visits/10+ hours)	20%
Culminating Reflective Essay	20%
Journal Responses to Field Experience	15%
In-Class Journal & Discussion	15%

Additional Professional Development Resources / Middle School Teaching

In addition to the five books placed on reserve, the following books are also recommended.

Atwell, Nancie (2003). *In the Middle: New Understandings about Writing, Reading, and Learning* (2nd edition). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Baines, L. and Kunkel, A. (2003). *Teaching Adolescents to Write: The Unsubtle Art of Naked Teaching*. Boston: Pearson/ Allyn & Bacon.

Blasingame, Jim and John Bushman (2005). *Teaching Writing in Middle and Secondary Schools*. Boston: Pearson/ Allyn & Bacon.

Burke, J. (2003). *The English Teachers Companion: A Complete Guide to Classroom, Curriculum, and the Profession, 2nd Edition*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Publishers.

Daniels, Harvey (1994/2002). *Literature Circles: Voice and Choice in the Student-Centered Classroom (2nd Edition)*. York, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers.

Donelson, Kenneth and Alleen Nilsen (2005). *Literature for Today's Young Adults (7th Edition)*. Boston: Pearson/ Allyn & Bacon.

Henderson, Darwin and Jill May (2005). *Exploring Culturally Diverse Literature for Children and Adolescents: Learning to Listen in New Ways*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Hill, Bonnie, Katherine Noe, and Janine King (2003). *Literature Circles in Middle School: One Teachers Journey*. Norwood, MA: Christopher Gordon Publishers.

Knowles, Trudy and Dave Brown (2000). *What Every Middle School Teacher Should Know*. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, Boynton/Cook.

Noguchi, R. (1991). *Grammar and the teaching of writing: Limits and possibilities*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Reid, Louann (1999). *Rationales for Teaching Young Adult Literature*. Portland, Maine: Calendar Island Publishers.

Stott, Jon (1995). *Native Americans in Children's Literature*. Phoenix, AZ: Oryx.

Trimmer, Joseph and Tilly Warnock (1992). *Cultural and Cross-Cultural Studies and the Teaching of Literature*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Ward, Cynthia (2006). *How Writers Grow: A Guide for Middle School Teachers*. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, Boynton/Cook.

Course Syllabus

Readings & Assignments

All assignments should be submitted promptly on the dates specified on the following syllabus. Extensions would ultimately be a disservice to you since this course is followed immediately by student teaching. Guest speakers will be scheduled on dates dictated by their availability.

Week One 1/13 - 15

Tuesday Distribute and discuss Course Description
Making Field Experience Placements (if possible)

ASSIGNMENTS:

Read Chapter 1 in *Language Arts & Literacy*
Contact Field Experience Mentor / Arrange first visit

Thursday ***In-Class Journal & Discussion***
Language Arts & Literacy, Chapter 1
Field Experience Status Report (written in class)

Week Two 1/20 - 22

Tuesday Finalize Field Experience Placements (if necessary)

Thursday *Language Arts & Literacy* Chapter 2

Week Three 1/27 - 29

Tuesday ***Field Experience Journal #1 Due***

Thursday *Language Arts & Literacy* *Chapter 4*

Week Four *2/3 - 5*

Tuesday *Field Experience Journal #2 Due*

Thursday *Language Arts & Literacy* *Chapter 7*

Notes:

Week Five *2/10 - 12*

Tuesday *Field Experience Journal #3 Due*
Language Arts & Literacy *Chapter 8*

Thursday *Instructional Unit Projects Due*

Notes:

Week Six *2/17 - 19*

Tuesday *Field Experience Reflective Essay Due*
(including a final entry to be completed during class)
Language Arts & Literacy *Chapter 10*

Thursday

Instructional Unit Projects Returned and Discussed

Notes: