Entangled Phenomena: Literac(ies), Technolog(ies) and Societ(ies)

A Course Revision in Light of Globalization of WRIT 1506, Literacy, Technology and Society, UM-Duluth

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The Problem of Literac(ies)

The standard narrative of the history of literacy presumes that the sociocognitive effects of literacy seen in Europe happen everywhere. In WRIT 1506, Literacy, Technology and Society, this narrative governed the course as designed by my retired senior colleague. The recent revision of the liberal education program is an occasion to rethink the narrative and to rethink the course. Following the Internationalizing the Curriculum (ItC) workshop of January 2011, I did the following:

- Pluralize the narrative by studying texts on African, Hmong & Laotian literacies, including their transformation as African-land, Laosian, and Hmong-American literacies.
- Pluralize the narrative by studying Appalachian & Rural Literacies.
- Raise the question of the possibility of transnational” literacies in an era of new media. Rethinking course content was a first step.

In the revised syllabus I replaced and/or supplemented the standard texts in the history of literacy with alternative histories of literacy. In so doing, I replace a monolithic, global narrative of literacy with pluralizing narratives. In the new texts, we explore literacy from global (Afrocentric & Asian) perspectives; within the U.S., we explore a diversity of economic, class and gender perspectives.

With new, richer course materials, I was ready to begin what will be a two-semester revision of the course (trial and error over Summer and Fall 2012). To harness this content as a coherent experience, I sought course objectives in light of materials from the Internationalizing the Curriculum cohort experience and materials. The metaphor governing my thinking has become one of entanglement. We do not move from orality to literacy. Rather, these forces become entangled with race, class, colonialism, migration, gender, and so many more cultural, economic and social factors.

Three Steps toward an Internationalized Course

The Global Programs and Strategies (GPS) Frame: The (GPS) Alliance suggests three components of internationalizing a curriculum:

1. Development of faculty’s personal and academic internationalized identities.
2. Development of student learning objectives.
3. Assessing the adaptability of internationalization from my academic discipline.

Step one began in the cohort program of the Internationalizing the Curriculum (ItC) workshop. There are multiple resources for step two; many were shared at the ItC workshop, listed below. Step three began as I returned to Duluth and could reflect on the new materials.

Leask’s Internationalisation Outcomes:

Students will:... demonstrate an awareness of his or her own culture and perspectives and other cultures and their perspectives.

...recognise intercultural issues relevant to their professional practice.

...appreciate the complex and interacting factors that contribute to notions of culture and cultural relationships.

Seven Revolutions Course Objectives

- Explain why historical forces affect current events.
- Describe cultures from around the world, including religions, languages, customs, and traditions.
- Describe relationships between/among global issues.

AACC Course Objectives:

- Develop a nuanced understanding of culture... and the deep/complex dynamic nature of culture.
- Understand various/different cultures and how culture is created.
- Understand the relationship of power and language [and...] culture.
- Understand how language frames thinking and perspective.

Course Objectives for WRIT 1506

Standard Departmental Course Objectives

- Within the major, students will articulate foundational concepts in Writing Studies.

Liberal Education Objectives

- Students... explain how the products/processes of human thought and culture relate to their context(s)
- Analyze products/processes of human thought and culture
- Apply humanistic methods of inquiry and interpretation to the products/processes of human thought and culture

New, Internationalized Course Objectives for WRIT 1506

A Student Completing WRIT 1506 will be able to:

1. Describe African, Hmong, Laotian, and North American cultures (including religions, customs, and traditions) in terms of orality, literacy and the traditions of orality.

A Student Completing WRIT 1506 will be able to:

1. Explain how the oral, literate and hybrid processes of human thought and culture relate to African, Laotian, Hmong & American contexts.


A Student Completing WRIT 1506 will be able to:

1. Explain how historical forces (colonialism, migration) affect current events by affecting the dissemination, control and transformation of literacy.

2. Recognize differences between the place of orality & literacy in his or her own culture and the place of orality & literacy in other cultures and their perspectives.

3. Appreciate the complex and interacting factors that contribute to notions of culture, including the interplay of literacy, orality, and the institutions and practices that sustain them both, like vines entangled in each other.

A Question I have to investigate in the first iteration of the course:

Scholarship speaks of the possibility of transnational, global media literacies and a transnational, global youth culture. I’d like to ask students to reflect on whether it is possible to speak of a transnational youth culture give the diversity of literacy practices in the world.

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Application, Dissemination

TEACHING AS DISSEMINATION

WRIT 1506, Literacy, Technology, and Society will again be taught:

- SUMMER 2012
- FALL 2012

CONFERENCE PRESENTATION

I will re-present this poster, refined with post-classroom reflection, at the following conferences:

- MNCUEW Minnesota Colleges and Universities English Writing Conference, Spring 2013

RESEARCH

This new focus on redesigning not just the content but the educational objectives of the class will inflect another essay I am co-authoring:

- “Getting Graphic: Pedagogy in Geography of Asia and Oceania” classrooms, recently delivered at the Association of American Geographers.

Traditional Western Narratives of Orality and Literacy

- Plato, Phaedrus
- E. Havelock, Preface to Plato
- M. McLuhan, The Gutenberg Galaxy
- W. Ong, Orality & Literacy
- Kintgen, Kroll, & Rose, Perspectives on Literacy. (Ebook)

Global Understandings of Orality and Literacy

- Asante, Afrocentric Idea
- American roots
- Fu, My Trouble Is My English: Asian Students and the American Dream
- Daniel, Mortensen. Women & Literacy: Local & Global Inquiries for a New Century (excerpt)

Rural American Understandings of Orality and Literacy

- Donehower, Hogg, & Schell. Rural Literacies
- Sann, Whistling & Crowing Women of Appalachia

The Possibilities of Global, Transnational Literacies

- Thomas, Youth Online: Identity & Literacy in the Digital Age