ENGLISH 5901: Studies in Language, Linguistics, and Literacy

1. Catalogue Description:
   a. 5901 ENG
   b. Studies in Language, Linguistics, and Literacy
   c. (3-0-3)
   d. On demand
   e. Stu LangLingLit
   f. Seminar in varying topics concerning the fields of linguistics and literacy. May be repeated with the permission of the department chairperson.
   g. Prerequisites: Graduate standing. The course may also be taken by a senior whose grade point average is 2.75 or higher, with permission of the instructor and the Dean of the Graduate School.

This course will be offered on demand, but no sooner than Spring 2005.

2. Objectives and Evaluation of the Course:
   a. Objectives and evaluations will vary according to the selected field and topic. Possible general objectives for a course titled Issues in Literacy or another course titled Language and Power would be the following:
      • To be able to describe different linguistic or literacy systems and processes.
      • To be familiar with current research issues relevant to linguistics or literacy and its role in homes, in schools, and in the workplace.
      • To understand how language functions as a resource in the construction of knowledge.
      To identify problems in linguistic or literacy development with a focus on diversity issues, socio-economic dimensions, and demands of school and society.

   Course objectives for a possible course in Descriptive Grammars would be the following:
   • To be able to describe different language systems and processes.
   • To develop an understanding of the relation between language and cognition.
   • To describe how the language system offers constraints but also creativity in thought processes.
   • To define how the language mechanism provides conflict between these two systems.
   • The following is sample evaluation measurements for “Issues in Literacy”:
      
   b. Evaluation
      Journal response 200
      Position essay 100
      Panel presentation 100
      Persuasive collaborative essay 100
      Participation, Preparedness, Interaction 50
      Total points possible 550
3. Outline of the Course:
The class will meet weekly, for a total of fifteen three-hour classes. As a “studies” course, the specific topic will vary from semester to semester; the following outline presents one sample of a course, Issues in Literacy:

In this class students will:

a. Maintain a journal, wherein they will respond to the assigned readings and to self-selected readings (not reading more than 20 pages before responding). Students will be expected to cite the passages/sentences/ phrases to which they refer.

b. Respond to others’ responses to the assigned and self-selected readings, validating arguments with citations from the reading.

c. Write an essay analyzing their own literacy development and predict the literacy skills that will be required in their chosen profession.

d. Select an area of particular interest in literacy to research and read one book or a minimum of five substantial articles on the topic, responding in their journals as they read. Each student will write an essay on this issue.

e. In groups of 3-5 select areas of particular interest in literacy to research. Each group member will read one (a different) book or a minimum of five substantial articles on the topic and respond in his/her journal as s/he reads. The group will prepare a panel discussion grounded in this reading. A combined working bibliography for the group will be submitted.

f. In groups of 4-5 brainstorm possible measures which could be taken to improve the current status of literacy in our country. Using knowledge supported by assigned and self-selected readings, the group will propose a plan in an essay. A bibliography will be required.

Suggested Texts:

Weeks 1-3. The Broad Picture
Readings: Barton’s introduction to varied foci on literacy.

Discussion: The class will construct their own definition of literacy and will analyze the effects on the occupational, political, and emotional lives of Americans. Also students will examine the effects of limited literacy in the labor force and the challenges this poses.
Weeks 4-6. **Literacy Begins at Home**
Readings: Heath’s study of language and literacy at the time of forced school integration
Cushman, et al. “Power, Privilege, and Discourse”
Selected articles
Discussion: Students will take a look at early acquisition and the impact of a literate environment. Analysis of the way children assimilate language and translate signs into word forms will be integral. Also students will examine the evolution of their own literacy, defining the support factors.
Writing: Journal responses
Essay on personal literacy history

Weeks 7-10. **Challenges for Public Education**
Readings: Finder’s study of adolescent girls’ literacies
Allen’s study of at-risk students and the strategies that aid them.
Discussion: This unit includes an examination of the state of American schools in promoting/thwarting literacy. The class will take a closer look at testing processes, remedial programs, and inclusion as aids/deterrents. Factors such as school environments, teaching, and educational materials will be considered, including the disparity between urban and rural schools.
Writing: Journal responses
Position essay on literacy issue

Weeks 11-13. **Cultural Diversity as Literacy Factor**
Readings: Heath’s ethnographic study of the literacies of children of Trackton, NC.
Cushman, et al. “Culture and Community”
Discussion: Discourse will center on what constitutes literacy in America. Who sets the standards? Which constituents meet them? Conformity vs. cultural difference. Debate on efforts to establish a national language.
Writings: Journal responses
Panel discussion

Weeks 14-15. **A Political Perspective**
Discussion of the works of Kozol—*Savage Inequalities, Illiterate America, Rachel’s Children*—and of Kotlowitz’s *There Are No Children Here.*
Discussion: Students will examine the structure controlling the purse strings.
Economics and social class and their effects on the future of social freedom in America will be explored. Students will examine the power of those who set literacy standards to “maintain privilege and parcel disadvantage.”

Writing:
- Journal responses
- Collaborative persuasive essay proposing change

4. Rationale
   a. Purpose and need: The purpose of this variable topics course is to provide graduate students in English with advanced study in the fields of linguistics and literacy through extensive reading, discussion, writing, and research. The Department currently offers no graduate-level course dedicated to these areas of specialization. By providing an understanding of and experience with the theory and practice of language and literacy, the course will serve those students who elect concentrations in Composition/Rhetoric and Professional Writing or English Education or who seek advanced study in English. Students completing this class will be more competitive in their applications for jobs and PhD programs.
   b. The level of the readings, writing, and research in this course warrant graduate-level credit.
   c. This course is not similar to any existing graduate course. This course will be an elective for all graduate students in English; it will be strongly recommended for students selecting concentrations in Composition/Rhetoric and Professional Writing and for post-baccalaureates completing requirements in English Education.

5. Implementation
   a. 5901 ENG may be assigned initially to the following faculty members: Jerie Weasmer, Rosemary Buck, Daiva Markelis, or Ray Watkins.
   b. No additional costs are anticipated.
   c. Texts will vary with specific seminar topics.

6. Community College Transfer NA

7. Date approved by the department __February 24, 2003_____

8. Date approved by the College Curriculum Committee _____April 2, 2003_____

9. Date approved by CGS ________________________________ ___