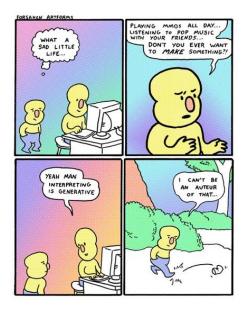
### Literacy and Literacies Reading and Writing the World

Fall 2025

Thompson Rivers University



## **Course Information**

Format: Hybrid - Synchronous in-person and online

Instructor: Dr. Ben Mitchell Pronouns: He/they Office: WL1150C and Online Office Phone: N/A Office Hours: By appointment Email: <u>bemitchell@tru.ca</u>



(Image credit: Life by Selena Photography)

Throughout the term Ben will be available to chat through email, Moodle, and Zoom. Except where we have arranged to meet beforehand, please expect at least a day response time. In the event of unforeseen class cancellations or changes, please refer to the course's Moodle page for updates. I encourage students to contact me for assistance as needed for course related questions and guidance.

Literacy and Literacies: Reading and Writing the World

#### **Course Description**

Literacy is more than reading and writing and memorizing facts. Where do those facts come from? How do those words get their meaning? What can you do with them? Literacy is about how you interact with, understand, and participate in interlocking (and sometimes competing) systems of knowledge production and communication. Whether you're reading the news, playing a video game, researching in the library, or binging one of your favorite albums or shows, you are always participating in claims about the world and the systems that spread or obscure these claims. To engage with these influences critically, to understand where they come from, and create something out of them is the active core of literacy.

This course will ask students to think about the nature of literacy itself and explore a range of literacies and paratexts that influence literacy practices, such as fandoms, memes, let's plays, reviews, awards, and commentaries.

Here you will be encouraged to engage critically with your interests and practices through a combination of lectures, readings, class discussions, and the choice in what hands-on deliverable assignment you find most meaningful. End of course deliverables can include co-teaching opportunities, zines, podcasts, comics, videos, blogs, games, let's plays, textile arts, and more conventional academic essays and reflections.

#### **Content Note**

This course draws from a wide range of literacy practices and traditions, some of which involve trauma and discussion of sensitive topics. Also, sometimes folks swear. We live in a world were "Enshittification" is now a technical term to describe the state of the digital platforms that have come to dominate our lives.

#### **Course Pre-requisites**

None.

#### **Course Learning Outcomes**

Upon successful completion of the course, the student will demonstrate the ability to:

- 1. Recognize the material realities and power relations underpinning literacy and illiteracy.
- 2. Identify, compare, and contrast the various forms of literacy.
- 3. Explore and navigate systems of knowledge production and communication.

- 4. Develop technical skills and an appreciation of the skills that go into producing various forms of scholarship and media, such as academic and scientific papers, zines, podcasts, and video essays.
- 5. Express themselves and their understanding of critical literacy through play and practice in their choice of learning methods and course deliverables.
- 6. Recognize and respect Indigenous literacies in communication and knowledge production.

## **Required Texts**

- All texts with the exception of some documentaries will be available digitally through the course's Moodle page or otherwise accessible online. See the bibliography of this syllabus for full article citations.
- Note: It's ok to not understand everything in these texts. You're students; the point is to learn and ask questions when you do not understand how a term is being used or what point is being made.
- Except when otherwise noted, students can choose any two readings (including podcasts and video essays) to read for each class.

## **Course Structure**

Generally, classes will be divided between an hour of lecture, an hour of discussion, and an hour of coworking time.

Week 10 readings and topic: Literacy is a "big tent" idea, containing many more experiences and skill than could fit into a single course. Time will be set aside to collectively discuss what topic students would like to learn about for the week 10 class and your instructor will find readings and material for discussion.

# **Course Schedule**

Week	Topics	Deadlines	Readings
			(Any two readings per class except where otherwise noted)
1	Literacy and Illiteracy	Sign up for discussion lead by the end of the week	Coppola, <i>Literacy for All: A</i> <i>Framework for Anti-Oppressive</i> <i>Teaching</i> , 23-72. (Textbook section) <u>The Adults Who Can't Read</u> by Zoe Bee (Video essay)
			you've been traumatized into hating reading (and it makes you easier to oppress) by Ismatu Gwendolyn (Self- published creative essay podcast)
			What is Literacy? – A critical overview of sociocultural perspectives by K. Perry (Academic essay)
			Gholdy Muhammad, <i>Cultivating</i> <i>Genius: An Equity Framework for</i> <i>Culturally and Historically Responsive</i> <i>Literacy</i> , selections (Textbook)
			The Cult of Pedagogy Podcast, <u>Episode</u> <u>151: Historically Responsive Literacy</u> (Podcast)
2	Information Literacy		The ACRL's <u>Framework for</u> <u>Information Literacy for Higher</u> <u>Education</u> pages 1-9 (Professional Guidelines) [REQUIRED]
			"Information as a Relation: Defining Indigenous Information Literacy," by Littletree, Andrews, and Loyer. (Academic paper)
			Data Cartels: The Companies That Control and Monopolize Our Information by Sarah Lamdan, Chapter 3, page 50-71. (Academic book)

Week	Topics	Deadlines	Readings
			(Any two readings per class except where otherwise noted)
			Trust Issues: Peer Review, Intellectual Authority, and Ghosts by Ben Mitchell (Video lecture)
			Secret Feminist Agenda and Peer Reviewing Podcasts at Mount Royal University by Dr. Hannah McGreggor (Podcast)
			Episode 3.30 Brilliant and Disgusting with Brenna Clarke Gray, Lucia Lorenzi, and Erin Wunker by Dr. Hannah McGreggor (Podcast)
			Paywall: The Business of Scholarship by Jason Schmitt (Documentary)
3	Narrative Literacies	Have met with instructor for your	Guest Lecture, Rebecca Fredrickson
		brainstorming session by the end of week	Translingual Poetics: Writing Personhood Under Settler Colonialism. "Introduction: Translingual Poetics, Settler Monolingualism," by Sarah Dowling.
			As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance, by Chapter 9, "Land as Pedagogy," Leanne Betasamosake Simpson.
			<i>Emma Talks</i> . Vancouver, April 18 2015. "Decolonial Love: Building Resurgent Communities of Connection," by Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (Video / Conference Presentation)
			<i>The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative</i> by Thomas King (Sound recording).
			"You'll Never Believe What Happened': Is Always a Great Way to Start," in <i>The Truth about Stories : A</i>

Week	Topics	Deadlines	Readings
			(Any two readings per class except where otherwise noted)
			<i>Native Narrative</i> by Thomas King (Print)
4	Media and News Literacy		Zoe Bee, <u>YouTube and the Death of</u> <u>Media Literacy</u> (Video essay) [REQUIRED]
			Game Assist, <u>"Decolonization is not a</u> <u>metaphor": Settler Colonialism and</u> <u>Indigeneity in Video Games</u> (Video essay)
			The Shattered Mirror: News, Democracy and Trust in the Digital Age by The Public Policy Forum, selections (Think tank policy paper)
			<u>A Thorough Look at Fallout</u> <u>[Revised/Expanded/HD]</u> By Noah Caldwell-Gervais (Video essay)
			<u>Plagiarism and You(Tube)</u> by hbomberguy (Video essay)
			Any one <u>Detail Diatribes</u> or <u>Trope</u> <u>Talks</u> by Overly Sarcastic Productions (Video essays)
			<u>Taking Back Harry Potter</u> by Verilybitchie (Video essay)
			Sue Ellen Christian, Everyday Media Literacy: An Analog Guide for Your Digital Life, Chapter 1, pg 5-30 (Textbook)
			Sue Ellen Christian, Everyday Media Literacy: An Analog Guide for Your Digital Life, Chapter 2, pg 31-49 (Textbook)

Week	Topics	Deadlines	Readings
			(Any two readings per class except where otherwise noted)
5	Historical Literacy	Model Analysis Due	<i>Building Students' Historical Literacies</i> by Jeffery D. Nokes, pages 42-58 (Textbook)
			Overly Sarcastic Productions, <u>History-</u> <u>Makers: Herodotus</u> (Video essay)
			"The Past Still Lives, but the History's Going: Fallen Empires After 30 Years" by Ben Mitchell (Video essay)
			Interview with Ellen Cushman on "Letters and Characters," by Hidden Literacies (Podcast)
6	Food Literacy		"Eating Our Culture": Intersections of Culturally Grounded Values-Based Frameworks and Indigenous Food Systems Restoration in Secwepemcúlecw by Libby Jay Chisholm, selections (Masters thesis)
			Food Sovereignty: A Growing Movement by All My Relations Podcast (Podcast)
			Charlotte Coté, A Drum in One Hand, a Sockeye in the Other: Stories of Indigenous Food Sovereignty from the Northwest Coast, Chapter 1, 23-55 (Academic book, own voices)
			How food became a weapon of colonization by the CBC (Video)
7	Cultural Literacy		"The Genealogy of 'Cultural Literacy" by John Hodgson and Ann Harris. (Academic paper)
			"Neurodivergent literacies" by C. Bailey (Academic paper)

Week	Topics	Deadlines	Readings
			(Any two readings per class except where otherwise noted)
			<ul> <li>"Introduction: Reframing Deaf People's Literacy," by Brenda Jo Brueggemann in <i>Literacy and Deaf People</i>, 1-28 (Academic book)</li> <li>Judaism and Whiteness in Wolfenstein by Jacob Gellar (Video essay) [TW: antisemitism, eugenics, violence, nazis]</li> <li><u>A Very Normal Look at Tarkir by</u> Spice8Rack (Video essay)</li> </ul>
8	Indigenous Cultural Literacy	Preliminary Work 1 Due	Guest Lecturer, TBA. Marianne Ignace and Ronald Eric Ignace Secwépemc People, Land, and Laws, Chapter 4, 121-144. (Academic book, own-voice authors) Learn Secwepemctsín Online (Online lessons) Never Alone by Upper One Games. (Video game) Plains Sign & the Myth of Indigenous Illiteracy by TwinRabbit (Video essay) "Paulo Freire, Critical Literacy, and Indigenous Resistance" by J. Célèste Kee and Davin J. Carr-Chellman. (Academic article) How We Made Indigenous Books by All My Relations Podcast (Podcast) Project 562: Changing the Way We See Native America by Matika Wilbur (Photography book)
9	Ludic Literacy		<u>The Future of Writing About Games</u> by Jacob Geller (Video essay)

Week	Topics	Deadlines	Readings
			(Any two readings per class except where otherwise noted)
			Any video game available in the Gaming and Multimedia Lab (Williams Lake)
			Ludoliteracy: Defining, Understanding, and Supporting Games Education by José P. Zagal, selections (Academic book)
			"The Meaning and Relevance of Video Game Literacy," by Jeroen Bourgonjon (Academic article)
			Horror Boardgames   The Anatomy of <u>Terror's Least Likely Home</u> by Spice8Rack (Video essay)
10	Open to discussion	Preliminary Work 2 Due	The topic for this day will be determined in collaboration with the class.
11	Scientific Literacy		Sociology of Scientific Knowledge by H.M. Collins (Encyclopedia article)
			A Mathematician's Lament by Paul Lockhart, selections (Book) (as read by <u>Angela Harders</u> )
			"The Evolving Concept of Health Literacy," by Don Nutbeam (Academic article)
			Merchants of Doubt by Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway, selections (Academic book, or Netflix documentary)
			astronomy has a colonialism problem by Dr. Fatima (Video essay) [lots of trigger warnings on this one. See start of video]

Week	Topics	Deadlines	Readings
			(Any two readings per class except where otherwise noted)
			Episode 4.10 Our Categories of Knowledge Suck with Tina Sikka by Dr. Hannah McGreggor (Podcast)
12	Digital and Technological Literacy	Final Project Due	<i>Indigenous Data Sovereignty</i> by Stephanie Russo Carroll, Marisa Duarte, and Max Liboiron (Policy paper)
			Voices of Sovereignty Podcast Series: Episode 1 (Podcast)
			<u>The Digital Literacy Universe</u> by Learning for Justice (Podcast)
			<u>The Shattered Mirror: News,</u> <u>Democracy and Trust in the Digital Age</u> by The Public Policy Forum, selections (Think tank report)
			"Gaming the System': Platform Paternalism and the Politics of Algorithmic Visibility." By Caitlin Petre, Brooke Erin Duffy, and Emily Hund. (Academic article)
			Janek Bevendorff, et al. "Is Google Getting Worse? A Longitudinal Investigation of SEO Spam in Search Engines." (Conference paper)
			Safiya Noble, Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism, selections (Academic book)
			<u>111 - Seizing the Means of Library</u> <u>Interoperability feat. Cory Doctorow</u> by Librarypunk (Podcast)

#### **Course Assessments**

Assessment	Due	Weight (%)
Participation	End of term	10
Learning Lead	Sign up for week	10
Brainstorming	Week 3	5
Model Analysis	Week 5	20
Preliminary Work 1	Week 8	10
Preliminary Work 2	Week 10	15
Final Project	Week 12	30

(Note: Please submit all assignments with a cover page as .doc or .docx files)

#### Participation

Participation will be broadly interpreted as consistent, thoughtful interaction with the course through the Moodle page, in class discussion, or through emails and conversations with the instructor. Each week the instructor will post a few questions for consideration to the course Moodle. Students are encouraged to interact with the question or each other's responses to the question, or bring up their own thoughts and questions. Find some interesting reflection or representation of literacy in your daily life? Why not share it with the group? As long as it is respectful and relevant to course themes your contributions are very much welcome here.

## Learning Lead

At the start of term students will pick a date to help facilitate learning in the classroom. For this assignment, students will:

- 1. Read at least one (1) extra reading for that week beyond the usual two (2)
- 2. Help facilitate the online discussion on the course's Brightspace page by posting questions and/or responding to other student's comments
- 3. Start and help facilitate that week's class discussion, sharing their thoughts and helping to encourage their classmates to do the same
- 4. (Optional): During co-working period, help other **consenting** (!) students with their assignments
- 5. At the end of class, discuss with the instructor how they would assess student learning for that topic. What do you think some of the most important take away lessons from the day were? How would you define meaningful engagement with the material? Did students engage meaningfully with the material? Why or why not?

In the even that there is more than one student per discussion topic, students are to coordinate with each other to effectively share responsibilities for the day.

If a student does not feel comfortable with public speaking, they can coordinate with the instructor beforehand to find alternative ways to contribute to the discussion.

## **Brainstorming**

By the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of classes students are expected to have scheduled to met with the instructor to discuss their ideas and goals for their course deliverables.

Student should come to the meeting being able to talk about:

- 1. What is your desired deliverable (academic essay, personal essay, video essay, let's play, podcast, zines, textile project, etc.)
- 2. How do you intend to demonstrate your learning?
- 3. What forms of literacy are you particularly interested in exploring with your deliverable?
- 4. Be able to talk about some potential models for your Model Analysis Assignment.

- 5. Be able to say what state of development you intend your deliverable to be for the Preliminary Work 1 and 2 Assignments (for example an outline or a draft if it is a written assignment). This will not be a contract, but will inform how these two assignments are graded.
- 6. Contingency planning: What could you do if things go wrong? Other projects to pivot to in order to salvage your work? What to do in the face of time and energy constraints? Backup plans? Sources of support and help?

If students prefer, this meeting can also be an email exchange.

### **Model Analysis**

For this assignment, students will find two (2) to three (3) examples of work that is in the same genre as their selected deliverable that you think are of particularly good quality and hope to use as helpful models for the kind of work you would like to do. For example: If you are writing an academic article, find academic articles. If you are making a video essay, find video essays. And so on. Reflect on these examples and write a 1500-2000 word analysis of them.

In your analysis try to answer these questions:

- 1. Why did you select each example?
- 2. What do you personally like about each example?
- 3. Why do you think each is a good example?
- 4. What technical skills does this example demonstrate?
- 5. How does this example fit into the genre as a whole, given the larger landscape of what is out there?
- 6. How will this example inform your own project?
- 7. Finally, are there any common structures or themes among your examples? Why might these exist?

Please also provide access to your examples for the instructor to review (i.e. your model articles if you are writing an article, links to websites, video essays, or podcasts, if you are making one of those, etc.).

## Preliminary Work Assignment 1 & 2

Each Preliminary Work Assignment will be approximately 1000 words long and answer the following questions:

- 1. How has your thinking developed since the brainstorming meeting with your instructor?
- 2. What steps have you taken towards the completion of your project?
- 3. For Preliminary Work Assignment 1: have a tentative outline and timeline prepared for your work
- 4. How have you demonstrated the development of your chosen skills? Have there been any complications?
- 5. What do you need to do going forward to complete the project on time?
- 6. For Preliminary Work Assignment 2: how did you take into account comments on your Preliminary Work Assignment 1?

Preliminary Work Assignments will also be graded on the degree to which they demonstrate substantial development from previous stages of the project.

If things are not going according to plan, you are welcome to schedule another meeting with the instructor to revise your deliverables for the Preliminary Work 1 & 2 Assignments.

#### **Final Assignment**

For students wishing to write an academic paper for their final deliverable the final assignment will be a 3000 to 4500-word research paper that will present a novel argument relevant to some theme or topic related to the course. It will be based on textual analysis and reflection, and will be graded based on structure, style, the effective use of evidence, how well it shows an active engagement with its sources, and the quality of the thought being expressed within it. It will also be evaluated based on proof reading and consistent citation. Students doing a research assignment are required to use at least ten (10) sources to support their thesis drawn from the primary and secondary literature.

For other deliverables the final assignment will vary in discussion with the instructor, but will generally also involve a less formal written assignment explaining the thought, research, and understanding that went into the project.

## **Course-specific policies**

- When possible, the deadline for late assignments can be re-negotiated as agreed upon by both instructor and student within reasonable parameters.
- Plagiarism detection software is not being used in this course.

## **Selected Bibliography**

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