The field of literacy studies has roots in anthropology, education, history, sociology, political policy, and cultural studies. In the last two decades, it has influenced the field of composition. It is a more encompassing field than composition studies because it examines the work of literacy in all levels of education, in curricular and extracurricular sites, and it is interested in both public and private uses of literacy. It extends into public policy in developing and developed countries, into workplace literacy, and into civic as well as personal life.

The field of literacy studies took a turn in the mid 1980s, one that paid far more attention to the situatedness of literacies and the politics and ideologies that inform literacy practices. The “old literacy studies” assumes that a mainstream “standard” literacy is good for people, especially poor marginalized people, that it’ll make them smarter, nicer, and richer people regardless of social, political, or cultural contexts that created the poverty and marginalization. The New Literacy Studies rejects the idea of literacy as a neutral individual skill and conceptualizes literacy as a social practice, caught up in politics, culture, and ideology. What we study this term is considered the New Literacy Studies.

We begin the term with a discussion of globalization because the rapid changes caused by globalization extend into all sites of literacy practice and create opportunities for change. As “designers of social futures,” you will be making decisions regarding these changes and will have opportunities to further social justice or maintain the status quo. I hope the course readings and discussions will contribute to your ability to recognize those opportunities.

Course Requirements
This is a reading-intensive course thus the requirements focus on developing careful reading and reflective practices.

You are required to

- Attend and participate in every class
- Prepare Reading Notes. These are due each class period; late notes accepted only when there are extenuating circumstances
- Function as surrogate reader for two chapters
- Lead discussion of one day’s readings
- Write and share a final 5-page reflection
Seminar Tone

Grad seminars can become competitive, attention-seeking, posturing arenas. To further both a deep engagement in the readings and a thoughtful consideration of differing perspectives, please help me keep a communal tone in this group. Please help me find ways to use our differences to broaden our perspective and deepen our learning. Being prepared to share your notes and staying focused on the material will be crucial to our success.

Assignment Details

Reading Notes

For each of the readings, prepare typed reading notes. Notes should be headed with bibliographic information. Then, for each reading, include observations on the following:

Required:
1. What issues drive the article or book? What ideas does it explore? What lines of inquiry does it open up? What questions does it raise for you?
2. What quotes are important to you? (minimum of three; maximum of five) Be sure to include page numbers.
3. What applications does the argument have for your work as a teacher, scholar, or program administrator? Does it suggest a way to situate your work? Does it complicate your work? Does it raise issues you are interested in exploring?
4. How does this text resonate with other work we have read?

Optional
5. How is the author’s argument structured? What is the argument? What critical terms/theoretical concepts are engaged or introduced?
6. What scholarly context does the author create for his/her argument? What does the works cited suggest about this context? What historical context does the work respond to?

Surrogate Reader Presentation/Notes

To lighten the reading load, I will distribute some of the middle chapters to individuals who will read them, take notes, and then provide copies of the notes to the class with an oral explanation. The notes should follow the requirements for reading notes. Your job as the “reader” is to “teach” the chapter to the class.

On the day you are the surrogate reader, you are also responsible for framing some issues for discussion based on the reading. Discussion Leader

As discussion leader, you should plan a discussion that will elicit responses to issues from the reading that you are interested in. In other words, the discussion should not be a way to fill time but rather a way to create and share knowledge and perspectives. The discussion should address the day’s reading and connect back to other topic/issues we have discussed.

Within those parameters, you can be creative in structuring the discussion in a useful way. You can bring in film, literary text, a guest, or an activity, or you can follow a more
traditional format. The aim should be to deepen understanding of the text we read for that day or to bring together a series of texts or issues that we have studied.

Discussion will begin at approximately 3:40, after a ten-minute break, and will end at 4:35.

**Final Reflections**

To conclude the course, you will write an informal 5-page reflection paper that sums up the ideas, theoretical understandings, research questions, pedagogical principles you are taking from the course. If it suits you, this can be in the form of excerpts you plan to add to comprehensive exams or conference papers or theses or dissertations. On the final day of the course, you’ll share highlights of this reflection paper with seminar members.

**Grading**

Graduate students should earn As. If you attend all class sessions and are fully engaged in the work of the class as outlined here, you will earn an A. If your engagement is weak, spotty, tardy, missing, inconsistent, lacking in substance, indifferent, domineering, or silencing of others, you will earn less than an A.

You demonstrate engagement in the quality and timeliness of your work as an individual as well as the quality and timeliness of your social interaction with the group. Thoughtful listening, helpful observations and comments, genuine questions, honesty and openness, cooperative teamwork, self-monitoring, and other behaviors that contribute to learning for all are valued. If I observe a problem with your engagement, I’ll let you know in writing, and I will ask you to clarify and help me understand the context for your work.

I encourage everyone to make use of my office hours in ways that allow you to engage more deeply in the course—to sort out details about assignments or dynamics, to pursue an issue of interest that is not adequately addressed in our limited class time, to discuss ways you might be thinking about situating your own work, or to explore directions for your own work.

I ask that you let me know early in the course if there is something I need to change or address or clarify in order to foster your engagement.

**Accommodations**

MTU complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination, including the Americans with Disability Act of 1990 (ADA). If you have a disability and need a reasonable accommodation for equal access to education or services at MTU, please call Dr. Gloria Melton, Dean of Students (487-2212). For other concerns about discrimination, you may contact your advisor, department head, or the Affirmative Action Office (487-3310). Please communicate with me about circumstances that I can accommodate.