



University of Aruba

## Module description

# [Critical Literacy and Interaction]



### 1. General data

Academic year	2010 -2011
Courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Bachelor of Arts 'Social Work and Development (year 1)</li><li>- Bachelor of Arts 'Organization, Governance and Management (year 1)</li></ul>
Title	Critical Literacy and Interaction
Lecturer	Nadia Dresscher-Lambertus, MSc.
Period	Semester 1, Block 1
Code	GE 4C
ECTS	3 (this is equivalent to 84 hours)
Contact hours	36 hours
Self-study hours	48 hours

## 2. Course description

### 2.1. Framework

The first part of the module (unit 1 – 6) is intended to serve as an introduction to various theoretical formulations and concepts which are central to an analysis and understanding of the human communication process in multi-social symbolic contexts. The course explores the nature of human interaction from different perspectives (from a communicational, a developmental and a critical perspective). Starting with the basic concepts of communication: sender and receiver interaction, message coding and decoding, channels of communication, different communication media and the importance of feedback and noise. Communication (unit 1) is approached here in its different properties: “as a process, which is dynamic, implying interactive and transactive characteristics, its symbolic nature, as an intentional action, contextual, omnipresent and cultural” <sup>1</sup>. We then move the focus on to the symbolic nature of communication (unit 2); we make sense of the world we live in by negotiating meaning, interpretation and identity through its ‘codes’. This helps us in our quest in becoming ‘literate’.

*Literacy* (unit 3) is not merely approached as a basic cognitive skill implying reading, writing, speaking and listening (performance) but as a broader concept in which “literacy practices are situated in broader social relations; that literacy is a symbolic system used both for communicating with others and for representing the world to ourselves; that attitudes and awareness are important aspects of literacy; that issues of power are important; and that current literacy events and practices are created out of the past” <sup>2</sup>. We will explore the different literacies (such as print, cultural, visual, media, information technology, numeracy and political literacy) and pay attention to their *changing definitions over time*. Our quest in becoming ‘literate’ involves entering the realm of *critical literacy* (unit 4). By this we mean taking an active challenging approach to reading, textual and media practices. “Critical literacy involves the analysis and critique of the relationships among texts, language, power, social groups and social practices” <sup>3</sup>. It entails the ability to interpret the intentions (of the sender), contents and effects that messages and texts have on readers (receivers) and the way ‘subjects’ are represented in discourse. The concept of literacy will also be addressed in a developmental framework, focusing among others things on the relationship between being ‘literate’ and social equality, preservation of cultural diversities, empowerment, democracy and political participation.

When addressing the *verbal code* in this course, we start with *language* as a system of *symbols* used solely to communicate. We will focus on more closely on the process of meaning making, and how it is that we come to understand- or misunderstand- each other from a *semiological perspective*. In the process of using language effectively we need to be aware of contextual factors (social, psychological, historical, verbal/non-verbal, environmental, cultural, identity etc.) which can influence meaning both in sender and receiver.

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<sup>1</sup> Neuliep, 2009

<sup>2</sup> Barton, 2007

<sup>3</sup> Gregory & Cahill, 2009

The focus will be on language as means for constructing and sustaining realities through persuasive strategies. This brings us to the unit of analysis of *discourse* (unit 5); discourse as actual instances of communication in the medium of language (text and talk), as “socially constructed knowledges of some aspect of reality”<sup>4</sup>. Discourse is approached here as a form of *social action*. Being aware of this, we then *take a critical stance* by recognizing and analyzing the process in which this transformation (construction) of reality takes place. We will give special attention to how *ideologies* (unit 6), defined here as “shared systems of beliefs by a social group or movement”<sup>5</sup> influence both the production of text and talk (discourse as social practice), the way we interpret this and the social identities we apply in our everyday life.

The second part of the module (unit 7 -12) will have a more ‘hands on’ approach. In this part we will give critical literacy a more practical application. We will start this by introducing two particular meaning-generating devices that construct realities and shape *identities* in everyday life. These are *metaphors* (unit 7) and *storytelling (narratives)* (unit 8). By expanding our understanding on the form, workings and effects metaphors and storytelling have on the construction and grasping of realities, students learn to identify their presence as persuasive strategies that constitute discourses. We will explore the relationship between these meaning-generating devices and the ongoing construction (shaping and re-shaping) of identities

It will become evident that new times call for new kind of literacies. The module will explore the theme ‘Critical Literacies for the 21st century’ in the form of a class lab. All above presented concepts, theories and ‘critical’ questioning abilities and analyzing techniques will be put to the test when approaching two particular literacy practices: *media literacy* (unit 9) and *political literacy* (unit 10). Taking a critical stance is important considering the high rate of media consumption and production, the saturation of society by media, the influence the media has on our democratic processes and on the legitimating of power, the increasingly important role information, communication strategies, persuasive techniques and visual communication play in our everyday lives and societies; Realities and identities are being constructed, represented and *mediated*. It will become evident that a sustainable way for one to stay ‘up to date’ and to truly understand the world through its continuous changing ‘codes’, is the realization that communication and literacy abilities go hand in hand with the ability to learn and re-learn.

To be critical is “to take up a notion of human *agency* that is both introspective and action-oriented and that social transformation requires critical self-reflection”<sup>6</sup>. We will explore this reflexive and action-oriented agency of the individual by means of the concept of *voicing*. Voicing as “the process and capability of giving an account of one’s life and its conditions: to provide a narrative”<sup>7</sup> and thus to make sense (meaning) of one’s experiences in a broader social context that can be best characterized as a social tapestry of *multi-voices*. Students will become aware that they have a *voice* that is *unique* and that the exploration and manifestation of this voice is at the essence of their own ongoing identity

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<sup>4</sup> Foucault, 1990

<sup>5</sup> Van Dijk, 2004

<sup>6</sup> Luke, 2004

<sup>7</sup> Couldry, 2010

forming process. This requires the acknowledgement of the existence of *multi-voicedness*. Entering into *dialogue* (dialogue of voices) with these multi-voices makes it possible to *position the self* in terms of ideas, experiences and values. In order “to read the word and the world”<sup>8</sup> we must also be able to “read ourselves” in relation to others and their beliefs. By doing so, students not only become aware of their own identity and of the existence of diversity, but most important take an active role in the articulation of their own voices.

## 2.2. Objectives of the module

- To gain understanding of the meaning of the concept ‘literacy’; the meaning of literacy (as means for development) in everyday life and its constantly changing meaning in modern times.
- To foster knowledge and understanding with respect to the foundations of the realm of ‘critical literacy’ (on the interrelation between the word and the world).
- To become aware and recognize language as an important means for communication and social action, with its developmental, ideological and political implications for the construction (framing) of reality and the shaping (and re-shaping) of (social) identity (ies).
- To gain understanding of the concept of ‘voice’ and ‘voicing’ and how this is manifested and reproduced in artistic forms such as narratives (storytelling) and metaphors.
- To gain awareness about the fact that the individual constructs its own identity through narratives and the use of metaphors;
- To train competencies in artistic voicing by experimenting with creative storytelling, metaphors and the (re)framing of reality.

## 2.3. Contents of the course

The course ‘Critical Literacy and Interaction (GE 4C) consists of 12 interrelated units. The realm of critical literacy will be explored through the following themes.

*Concepts: Learning about Critical literacy:*

- Unit 1: The departing
  - Framework module
  - Communication as departing point: humans as social beings, sharing and negotiation of meaning and identity
- Unit 2: Spinning webs of meaning, language and social reality
- Unit 3: Making sense of the world and its codes: the meaning of literacy
- Unit 4: The blooming of the inquisitive mind: taking a critical stance
- Unit 5: Constructing reality through discourse
- Unit 6: Ideologies, social identities & the reproduction of these in society

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<sup>8</sup> c.q. Freire

*Praxis: Critical literacy in every-day life:*

- Unit 7: Devices that generate meaning, construct reality and shape identities 1: Metaphors
- Unit 8: Devices that generate meaning, construct reality and shape identities 2: Storytelling
- Unit 9: Critical literacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century 1: Media literacy and Framing
- Unit 10: Critical literacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century 2: Political literacy: how to see through the political rhetoric
- Unit 11: Expression of the self and diversity: Voicing and dialogue of voices
- Unit 12: Reflection on the course

#### 2.4. Course schedule: the date, themes and assigned readings for each unit

The following is the schedule of the units to be elaborated during the twelve sessions with the assigned literature for each unit.

Unit and date	Contents
<b>UNIT 1</b>  <b>Monday,</b> <b>August the 23<sup>rd</sup> , 2010</b> <b>1.00 – 3.30 pm</b>	<b>-Framework module</b>  <b>-Communication as departing point: humans as social beings, sharing and negotiation of meaning and identity</b>  <i>Readings:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Neuliep, J.W. (2009). Intercultural Communication. A Contextual approach. SAGE Publications <i>Human Communication (pages: 8 -13)</i></li> <li>- Fiske, J. (1990). Introduction to Communication Studies. Routledge: London and New York: <i>Chapter 1. Communication Theory (pages 6-23)</i></li> </ul>
<b>UNIT 2</b>  <b>Thursday,</b> <b>August the 26<sup>th</sup>, 2010</b> <b>1.00 – 3.30 pm</b>	<b>Spinning webs of meaning, language and social reality</b>  <i>Readings:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The meaning of meaning of I.A. Richards (extract from a previous edition of A first look at Communication Theory) (pages 57 – 67)</li> <li>- Tietze. S., Cohen. L ., &amp; Musson. G. (2003). Understanding organizations through language. SAGE Publications: <i>Chapter 1: Spinning webs of meaning: Language and social reality (pages 7-16) &amp; Chapter 2: A semiological Approach to meaning making (pages 17 – 31)</i></li> </ul>
<b>UNIT 3</b>  <b>Monday,</b>	<b>Making sense of the world and its codes: the meaning of literacy</b>  <i>Readings:</i>

<p><b>August the 30<sup>th</sup>, 2010</b>  <b>1.00 – 3.30 pm</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Barton. D. (2007). Literacy, an introduction to the ecology of written language. Blackwell Publishing: <i>Chapter 3. The social basis of literacy (pages 33 -50)</i></li>   <li>- 'Literacy for life'. EFA Global monitoring report (2006) UNESCO: <i>Chapter 5. Why Literacy matters (pages 136-145) &amp; Chapter 6. Understandings of Literacy (pages 148 – 159)</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>UNIT 4</b></p> <p><b>Thursday,</b>  <b>September the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2010</b>  <b>1.00 – 3.30 pm</b></p>	<p><b>The blooming of the inquisitive mind: taking a critical stance</b></p> <p><i>Readings:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gregory. A. E. &amp; Cahill. A. C. (2009). Constructing critical literacy: self-reflective ways for curriculum and Pedagogy. In: <i>Critical Literacy: Theories and practices. Vol. 3: 2 (pages 6-13)</i></li>   <li>- Freire, P. (1970). <i>Pedagogy of the oppressed: Chapter 2 (pages: 71- 86)</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>UNIT 5</b></p> <p><b>Monday,</b>  <b>September the 6<sup>th</sup>, 2010</b>  <b>1.00 – 3.30 pm</b></p>	<p><b>Constructing reality through discourse</b></p> <p><i>Readings:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Leeuwen, van T. (2005). <i>Introducing social semiotics. Routledge: Chapter 5 Discourse (pages 93 -116)</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>UNIT 6</b></p> <p><b>Thursday,</b>  <b>September the 9<sup>th</sup>, 2010</b>  <b>1.00 – 3.30 pm</b></p>	<p><b>Ideologies, social identities &amp; the reproduction of these in society</b></p> <p><i>Readings:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fiske, J. (1990). <i>Introduction to Communication Studies. Routledge: London and New York: Chapter 9. Ideology and meanings (pages 164-190)</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>UNIT 7</b></p> <p><b>Monday,</b>  <b>September the 13<sup>th</sup>, 2010</b>  <b>1.00 – 3.30 pm</b></p>	<p><b>Devices that generate meaning, construct reality and shape identities 1: Metaphors</b></p> <p><i>Readings:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Kövecses. Z. (2002). <i>Metaphor. A practical introduction. Oxford University Press: Chapter 1. What is Metaphor? (pages 3 -12)</i></li>   <li>- Zhang, J. (2007). <i>Beyond anti-terrorism: Metaphors as message strategy of post-September- 11 U.S. public diplomacy. In: Public Relations Review. (pages.31-39): Beyond Anti-terrorism metaphors</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>UNIT 8</b></p> <p><b>Thursday</b>  <b>September the 16<sup>th</sup>, 2010</b>  <b>1.00 – 3.30 pm</b></p>	<p><b>Devices that generate meaning, construct reality and shape identities 2: Storytelling</b></p> <p><i>Readings:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tietze. S., Cohen. L ., &amp; Musson. G. (2003). <i>Understanding organizations through language. SAGE Publications: Chapter 4:</i></li> </ul>

	<p><i>Understanding organizations through stories and narratives (pages 49 - 70)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lawler. S. (2008). Identity: sociological perspectives : <i>Chapter 1 Introduction: Identity as a question (pages 1-9) &amp; Chapter 2 Stories, memories, identities (pages 10-30)</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>UNIT 9</b></p> <p><b>Monday</b> <b>September the 20<sup>th</sup>, 2010</b> <b>1.00 – 3.30 pm</b></p>	<p><b>Critical literacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century 1: Media literacy and Framing</b></p> <p><i>Readings:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Walkosz. B.J., Jolls. T. &amp; Sund. M. (2008). Global/Local: Media Literacy for the global village (2 -20)</li> <li>- Kitzinger. J. (2008) Frame and Frame analysis (pages: 385 – 412)</li> </ul>
<p><b>UNIT 10</b></p> <p><b>Monday</b> <b>September the 27<sup>th</sup>, 2010</b> <b>1.00 – 3.30 pm</b></p>	<p><b>Critical literacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century 2: Political literacy: how to see through the political rhetoric</b></p> <p><i>Readings:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Charters-Black. J (2005). Politicians and Rhetoric. The persuasive power of metaphor. Palgrave Macmillian : <i>Chapter 1: Persuasion, Legitimacy and Leadership ( pages 1-31)</i></li> <li>- Plus readings assigned for Units 5, 6, 7 and 8</li> </ul>
<p><b>UNIT 11</b></p> <p><b>Monday</b> <b>October the 4<sup>th</sup>,2010</b> <b>1.00 – 3.30 pm</b></p>	<p><b>Expression of the self and diversity: Voicing and dialogue of voices</b></p> <p><i>Readings:</i> Integration of all the above assigned literature</p>
<p><b>UNIT 12</b></p> <p><b>Monday</b> <b>October the 11<sup>th</sup>, 2010</b> <b>1.00 – 3.30 pm</b></p>	<p><b>Reflection on the course</b></p> <p><i>Readings:</i> Integration of all the above assigned literature</p>

### 3. Entry requirements

The module is reserved for students who are admitted to the BA program SW&D or OGM. No previous course requirements of the BA studies are needed.

#### 4. Key Competencies

This course will help students develop the following key competencies:

- The ability to think critically about the symbolic nature of communication (messages are constructed)
- The ability to analyze and critique the relationships among texts, language, power, social groups and social practices.
- The ability to formulate questions that explore the sometimes hidden (implicit and discursive) intentions, creative strategies, representation of social groups, ideologies (ideas and beliefs) that are at the core of subjects mediated through discourse.
- The ability to recognize the existence of diverse voices in terms of ideas, beliefs and experiences.
- The ability to think critically about the self in terms of ideas, beliefs and experiences.
- The ability to articulate the own unique voice in creative ways by using narratives and metaphors.

#### 5. Attention to transversal lines

This module deals with all four transversal lines of *sustainability*, *diversity*, *civic participation* and *identity*.

Sustainability is understood as the capacity of a society to regenerate itself in a responsible way. This course deals with the concept of sustainability in the social-cultural sphere; The themes of communication and critical literacy will be dealt with in the light of development: literacy on all levels contributes to the overall development of society. Furthermore, By exploring the concept of voicing, multi-voicedness and dialogue of voices, students learn to give an account of themselves and their place in the world, they learn how important it is to narrate their unique ideas, beliefs and experiences. In this way, the course contributes to the exploration of the transversal lines of *identity* (critical literacy and voicing as means to conceptualize the individual's own identity), *diversity* (the awareness arises that we live in a broader social tapestry composed of multi-voices) and *civic participation* (the reflective and action-oriented agency of the individual will be explored: students learn how to take an active role in the articulation of their voice).

#### 6. Learning methods and rules of engagement:

- Students will learn through active participation, concept exploration, critical questioning, interactive discussions, dialogue, individual reflection and team collaboration.
- Active participation of the student is required in order to reach his/her full learning potential. The learning process not only reflects the students, but also applies to me. In this regard feedback is an important aspect in our student/teacher relationship. You can always approach me with your questions and concerns.

- In order to experience and understand the core concepts of the course in practice, students will be stimulated to actively collect (multi)media resources relevant to the contents of the course so we can discuss their relevancy during classes.
- Students are expected to read the assigned literature for each unit in the form of self-study. *This literature is mandatory*. Students are advised to keep track of the schedule of the course by reading the assigned literature for each unit before each class.
- *Student attendance to all classes is mandatory*. Attending class -both your physical presence and participation in the discussion- is essential to your mastering the course material and contributes to an overall climate of learning. Students need to have a minimum of 80% class attendance in order to write the final exam and/or obtain a final grade. If for any particular reason you are not able to attend, you are expected to contact me (by e-mail) and inform me about the circumstances.
- You are expected to be on time for classes (5 minutes prior to the start of a session).

## 7. Evaluation devices

Assessments	% weight of final grade	Date/deadline
<b>(a) Written exam</b>	60%	Scheduled in the exam week
<b>(b) Essay</b>	40%	Scheduled in the exam week
<b>(c) Bonus assignment</b>	If the bonus assignment complies with the requirement criteria and is considered <i>sufficient</i> you get an additional 0.5 grade on your final grade	Scheduled before the exam
<b>Final Grade:</b>	Written exam and Essay (and optional: bonus assignment)	At the end of the block

## 8. Literature

The assigned literature for each unit stipulated in the table in paragraph 2.4 is mandatory. You can find all articles compiled in the reader for this course.

## 9. Wikispace

This course has its own wikispace. This is an on-line learning environment meant as an 'outside the classroom' virtual space where we can elaborate further on the themes and subjects presented in the

classroom. This wiki makes virtual collaboration possible. Here, I will post the presentation slides of each unit, post assignments and conversation starters. The wiki makes it possible to discuss online on the themes presented in the units. Students can help each other by answering questions, by elaborating more on the subjects and I will moderate and see where my help is needed.

[www.critical-literacies.wikispaces.com](http://www.critical-literacies.wikispaces.com)

**10. Contact teacher**

e-mail : [nadiadresscher@gmail.com](mailto:nadiadresscher@gmail.com)