

NEW COURSE PROPOSAL
Spanish 367: The U.S. Experience:
Latinos, Literacy, and Language

Introduction

Advocates for adult literacy (Kogut 2004) stress the importance of literacy as a means of helping individuals function better in society, achieve personal goals, and develop their full knowledge and potential. According to the 1992 National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS), one in five adults in the United States lacks sufficient literacy skills to meet her/his family's needs. This situation is especially evident among U.S. Latinos and Spanish-speaking immigrants where literacy has strong correlations with age, schooling, and economic success. In the survey, 13,600 adult subjects, including 1,839 Hispanics, were interviewed in their homes. They provided personal and background information and completed a booklet of literacy tasks. The results, reported in three scales (a prose scale, a document scale, and a quantitative scale), ranged from 0-500. Each scale was then divided into five levels: Level 1 (0-225), Level 2 (226-275), Level 3 (276-325), Level 4 (326-375), and Level 5 (376-500). Results indicated the following literacy levels for these two groups: Average prose proficiency of the adult population born in Spanish language countries:

- Level 1 (141) for the population with less than a high school education
- Level 1 (211) for those with a high school education
- Level 2 (242) for those with any postsecondary education

Average prose proficiency of the U.S.-born Hispanic adult population:

- Level 1 (205) for the population with less than a high school education
- Level 2 (262) for those with a high school education
- Level 3 (296) for those with any postsecondary education.

(<http://www.nifl.gov/nifl/facts/NALS.html;04-23-05>).

These data indicate low literacy levels for most of the Hispanics surveyed. The ability to read and write enables individuals to master basic educational skills, obtain jobs, provide them and their families with financial security and, in the case of immigrants, prepare them for citizenship. Today, about 90 percent of all U.S. adult literacy programs are delivering English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction to immigrants and their families (Kogut 2004). In Columbus, Ohio, the Columbus Literacy Council (CLC), a volunteer organization, teaches English listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills to adults. CLC recruits and trains hundreds of volunteers as tutors for adults who need to increase their current reading levels,

including immigrants who need to learn English or improve their English language skills to live and work in the U.S. Tutoring is provided by volunteers in one-to-one sessions or in classes taught by certified instructors (<http://www.columbusliteracy.com>; 04-23-05).

In 2004, an interdisciplinary university/community service-learning team (African American and African Studies, CLC, English, Spanish and Portuguese) was awarded an \$8000 grant by the Service-Learning Initiative to develop and pilot new service-learning courses in which Ohio State University students would serve as tutor-mentors for adults participating in CLC programs (see <http://service-learning.osu.edu/projects.htm>). The interdisciplinary team is comprised of the following individuals:

Mindy Wright (co-investigator), Coordinator, Writing Workshop, Department of English and Consultant, OSU Outreach and Engagement

Donna Long (co-investigator), Associate Professor, Spanish

Nancy Pine (co-investigator), Graduate Student, Department of English

Nancy Hill McClary, Assistant Director, Center for the Study and Teaching of Writing

Leroy Boikai, Columbus Literacy Council

Jacqueline Jones Royster, Executive Dean, Colleges of the Arts and Sciences, Professor, Department of English

H. Lewis Ulman, Associate Professor of English, Director of Technology, College of Humanities

Scott DeWitt, Director, Digital Media Project, Department of English

NOTE: Georgina Dodge, Department of African American and African Studies (AAAS), was an original team member. However, she recently left that position and her successor has not yet been named.

During Spring Quarter 2005, Dr. Mindy Wright is piloting English 367C01, a service-learning version of that department's second writing course. Based on the outcomes of the pilot study, parallel courses are planned for AAAS and SPPO.

Course requirements and syllabus for English 367C01 may be found at:

<http://people.cohums.ohio-state.edu/wright7/SP05367C/home.html>. English 367 focuses on expository writing, drafting, and revising writing projects, as well as reading, listening, and speaking skills. The theme for English 367C01 is the diverse U.S. experience. The on-campus component of the class meets twice a week. Students read and discuss selections from the textbook *Literacy: A Critical Sourcebook* (2001) and complete four writing projects. In the service-learning

component, students serve as literacy partners/tutors at CLC one hour per week and keep a reflective journal of their experiences. The two components count equally (50% each) in the calculation of the final course grade. The attached proposal and sample syllabus for Spanish 367: The U.S. Experience: Hispanics, Language, and Literacy, follows the English 367 model. While ENG offers fourteen different versions of the course, it is proposed that SPPO begin with a service-learning version only. If student interest merits more options, they can be added at a later time. Like English 367, Spanish 367 will be designated as a GEC second writing and social diversity course. In the classroom, students will study essays in Spanish (12) and English (8) related to the theme of Hispanics, language, and literacy. Like the English 367C01 students, they will volunteer one hour per week as literacy partners at CLC. Although many of the CLC adult learners are Spanish-speaking, it is not guaranteed that Spanish 367 students will be partnered with a native Spanish speaker.

Bibliography

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- Kogut, Bethel House. Why Adult Literacy Matters. Phi Kappa Phi Forum 84, ii (2004): 26-28.
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- National Adult Literacy Survey (1992). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences.