

LE 3 - What Genres are Taught and Why

Possible readings for this assignment:

College Students”

Andrea Fishman, “Becoming Literate: A Lesson from the Amish”

Darcy Frey, “The Last Shot”

Gary Orfield and Johanna Wald, “Testing, Testing”

Earl Shorris, “On the Uses of a Liberal Education II: As a Weapon in the Hands of the Restless Poor”

A number of the readings included here indirectly address the question, “**What genres are being taught in school, and why?**” In this assignment, your job is to choose a site in your own institution and find out answers to that question in the site that you choose.

When you do, you should include evidence from several sources:

- A classroom site study. Spend at least 1-2 hours a week observing another class. In your observations, focus on what genres are being taught in that class, and why they is being taught-what kinds of genres are valued, and how do you know? (For these observations, pay close attention to things that you might normally take for granted-the physical arrangement of the room, the location of instructor and students, the ways that class members communicate, the kind of language that is used, in addition to things like “correct” and “incorrect” responses)
- An interview with either a student in the class, or the class instructor. What do they believe is being taught in this class, and why do they think the class is focusing on the subjects that it is?
- An artifact from the class (perhaps a syllabus, an assignment, or something else that you think represents what’s being taught in the class and why). What does this represent about what genres are being taught and why?

When you write the analysis of “what genres are being taught and why” that comes from these various sources, you should be sure to draw on the your observations, interview, and at least one of the readings from this assignment. Remember that how you use these readings depends on which reading you choose, how you interpret it, and how your analysis is proceeding. Use one (or more) of the readings to help you develop a frame for your analysis.

Short essay 1: After the first week of your classroom site study, use this SE assignment to write about what you’ve seen. What genre practices did you notice that struck you as surprising, unusual, or unexpected? What did you see that you expected to? When you respond to these questions, use as much detail about your observations as you can (e.g., rather than “I wasn’t surprised that a textbook was used,” write about what the genre conventions of the textbook were and why it didn’t surprise you). You want to write as much as you can about what genres are taught in this classroom, and why you think they are taught.

Short essay 2: After you’ve finished your classroom study and your interview, think through your interpretation of the evidence you’ve collected in this DW assignment and

what evidence from the reading(s) for this assignment help you to interpret them. Begin with evidence from the reading that you find useful—a quote, a summary or paraphrase of a section, or some other reference. Then, describe how this section of the reading will help you to interpret the data you've collected in your own research.