

**WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY**  
**English Department**

**ENG 440 (5 credits)**  
**Teaching English Language Arts in the**  
**Elementary (and Middle) School**  
**Fall 2009**

**Dr. Nancy J. Johnson**  
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***Class Time/Location:*** Mon., Wed., Fri. – 8:30-9:50 a.m. ~ Bond Hall 110

***Office Hours:*** Mon. 2:30-5:30 p.m.; Wed. 2:30-4 p.m.; Thurs. 10:30 a.m.-12 noon & by appointment  
One of my pleasures as a teacher is talking with students. You don't need to have a problem or a question or an excuse to either sign up for an appointment or just stop by during office hours to visit.

***Course Essential Questions:***

- What does it mean to “teach” and “learn” language arts?
- What happens to learners and learning when I partner my literacy teaching with literature?
- Who are my most trustworthy mentors and what can I learn from them?

***“Genuine literacy implies using reading, writing, thinking, and speaking daily in the real world, with options, appreciation, and meaningful purposes in various settings and with other people.”*** [Regie Routman, Transitions: From Literature to Literacy]

***Course Texts:***

**Core Texts/Resources (required):**

*Teaching with Intention: Defining Beliefs, Aligning Practice, Taking Action, K-5* (Debbie Miller)  
*The Wonder of It All: When Literature and Literacy Intersect* (N.J. Johnson & C. Giorgis)  
*Getting Started with Literature Circles* (K.L. Schlick Noe & N.J. Johnson) [copy fee]  
Selected articles [available on Blackboard]  
*Shabanu: Daughter of the Wind* (Suzanne Fisher Staples)  
Response notebook (lined or unlined, your choice)

**Additional Resources (optional):**

*Literature Circles Resource Guide* (B. Campbell Hill, K.L. Schlick Noe, N.J. Johnson)  
*Literature Circles in Middle School: One Teacher's Journey* (B. Campbell Hill, K.L. Schlick Noe, J. King)  
*Haveli* (Suzanne Fisher Staples)  
*In the Company of Children* (Joanne Hindley)  
Student Membership in either/both professional organizations:  
National Council of Teachers of English (journal: *Language Arts*)  
International Reading Association (journal: *Reading Teacher*) and North Sound Reading Council

***“As reading and writing teachers, we are not only accepting, we are inviting the challenge of change, and creating a collective sensibility marked by enthusiasm, critical awareness, courage, and understanding.”***

[Lorri Neilsen, A Stone in My Shoe]

***Course Expectations:***

**Attendance and Participation --** Your attendance and participation is valued (and expected!). You bring a rich learning background, an interest in reading, writing, literature and children, and varied language learning knowledge, beliefs, and experiences to this class. Your contribution enhances what we all learn. This class is grounded in the belief that learning doesn't occur in a vacuum; each of us

relies on language as our primary tool for learning and thinking in all disciplines. You are expected to converse, collaborate, and create during and outside of class. Please come to every session prepared and fully present, curious, willing to consider new ideas, and ready to share questions, concerns, and ah-ha's. This participation is vital to the dynamic nature of learning, to the success of this class, and to your own professional growth. Most of our work is dependent upon class involvement; there's usually no way to make up a missed class. [Please silence cell phones and refrain from distractions such as receiving/sending texts.]

**Oral, Written, and Art-Response Activities and Assignments** -- All assignments must be submitted on the dates listed on the course calendar in order to receive maximum credit. *Late papers and projects will only be accepted under unusual circumstances and with approval.*

### ***Learning Activities and Projects:***

**1) Readings** -- Most of our class discussions and theory-to-practice ideas will be based on information gleaned from the required reading of professional texts and journal articles. Please read all assigned material *prior* to each class session as background information and as preparation for class activities and discussions. (See course calendar for reading assignments.)

*"To teach is to join an eternal conversation . . . about things that matter, a conversation conducted with passion and discipline."* [Parker Palmer, To Know as We are Known]

**2) Reflective Response Letters/Written Conversations** – Writing can nudge us to think/learn/reflect about topics, issues, questions, wonderings, even puzzlement sparked from the assigned readings and class sessions. When we write for readers who respond to our ideas, our thinking is activated. You will participate in five written conversations throughout the term, shared with one (or two) of your classmates and with me. These will occur in the form of reflective response letters.

At the beginning of the term I'll offer some possible ways to focus these letters. As the term progresses, you're responsible for developing an interesting focal point to keep your letters lively and the conversation engaging. In all cases, **each letter must include your response to the required readings and to the focus of our class sessions (and maybe also to your conversation partners' ideas and thinking)**. Please avoid summarizing the readings or cataloguing what you like and don't like. *Limit each letter to no more than four pages (approximately 45-60 minutes of thoughtful writing/ rereading/ revising per letter)*. Letters will be collected, read, and responded to throughout the term in a generative written conversation. (*See pg. 4 for response letter information and rubric and course calendar for due dates.*)

**3) Heart Mapping Project** -- As a means of introducing yourself to your classmates through words and images, you will design and create a visual heart map and then, inspired by selected memories, feelings, and reflections in your visual, you will craft a poem that defines you. We'll walk through the process of creating the visual heart map and poem (with numerous examples) during class. All parts of this project will be presented in small groups on *Fri., October 16<sup>th</sup>*.

*"A teacher of language is more than a teacher of words, or she ought to be. Language . . . is a mode of expression to create meaning, to communicate, to stir the intellect, the emotion, the soul. . . . When we take 'arts' out of the language arts, and leave only reading and writing words on the page, we take the heart out of learning, the soul out of the curriculum."* [Lorri Neilsen, A Stone in My Shoe: Teaching Literacy in Times of Change]

**4) Readers' Theatre Script Project OR Choral Reading Project** – As we focus on the importance of nurturing oral language in reading/writing development, you will learn about and participate in choral reading and readers' theatre. Following these experiences, you will complete *either*:

**Readers' Theatre Script Project:** Write a readers' theatre script for a children's book of your choice (whole book, chapter, or excerpt, depending on length), selecting literature that interests you and appeals to children at the ages/grades you'd like to teach. Be sure to list bibliographic information for your selection. Make four copies of your script to share with class members. **Due Mon., Oct. 26<sup>th</sup>**

OR

**Choral Reading Project:** Choose a theme/topic, then select one related poem as the "teaching piece" to choreograph with speaking roles, planning for students at the ages/grades you hope to teach. Choose 5-6 related poems for student choreography and presentation. Poetry selections must come from a minimum of two sources, with source material (bibliographic information) listed for each poem. Make four copies of your project to share with class members. **Due Mon., Oct. 26<sup>th</sup>**

**5) Literature Circle Involvement and Extension Project** – To better understand the role of talk/listening to deepen comprehension and interpretation, you will participate in literature circles (book clubs) focused on the novel, *Shabanu*. This experience will culminate in a collaborative literary extension; a project to extend ideas and interpretation gleaned from your literature circle work and from reading *Getting Started with Literature Circles*. **Extension Project due: Wed., November 25<sup>th</sup>**

**6) The Presence of Literature: Language Arts Plan** – In lieu of a final exam, you will demonstrate your ability to think, plan, and consider what's possible in an elementary or middle school classroom when you partner your teaching with children's/young adult literature. This final project offers a chance to re-visit what you read, discussed, participated in, and focused on both directly and indirectly since the beginning of the term and then to make some decisions for your own teaching. This project is designed in two parts – the first is making intentional decisions about the literature you'll bring into your classroom; the second is revealing what you'll do with that literature and why. Participating in this type of final serves as a good exercise in how teachers make decisions and where they go for support; it will also develop your confidence and ability to create curriculum, rather than allow others to create it for you. We'll explore the development of this plan in class. Plans will be presented in small groups during our finals week scheduled time on **Mon., December 7 from 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.**

### **Assessment/Evaluation/Grading:**

Grading is based on the satisfactory and timely completion of all Course Expectations and Learning Activities/Projects, as well as the quality of the work produced. Projects will be read and evaluated on thoroughness, clarity of thought and presentation, timeliness, professional appearance (including grammatical and spelling correctness), and creativity (where appropriate). Punctual attendance and participation are valued and could affect your final grade. If you miss more than four classes (for any reason) I'll recommend that you drop and re-take the class another term.

		<i>Points and Grade Equivalents:</i>	
Attendance and Participation	20	192-200	= A
Reflective Response Letters/Written Conversation	50	183-191	= A-
Heart Mapping Project	25	174-182	= B+
Readers Theatre OR Choral Reading Project	25	165-173	= B
Literature Circles Work (including Extension Project)	30	156-164	= B-
<u>The Presence of Literature: Language Arts Plan</u>	<u>50</u>	147-155	= C+
TOTAL Points Possible	200	138-146	= C
		129-137	= C-

*"Classroom environments are organic—they grow as we do. The best of them reflect the hearts and souls of those who inhabit them. They're never really finished. They're never really "done." How could they be, when every day students and teachers learn something new?"* [Debbie Miller, *Teaching with Intention*, p. 42]

## *Writing Reflective Response Letters/Written Conversation*

### What are Reflective Response Letters?

- A place to think on paper by engaging in a written conversation about the readings and class sessions; an opportunity to converse about ideas sparked by readings, class meetings, interactions with classmates, experiences as a learner, and your plans for teaching.
- A place to discover and build upon what you know/believe about reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, and image-making.
- A place to pose questions, consider answers, and develop your sense of what matters about the teaching and learning of language arts.

### Why Write Them?

- To nudge you to read actively and more thoughtfully, considering your participation as a learner in light of what you experience in class sessions and assignments.
- To provide evidence of your growing understanding about English/language arts.
- To compel you to interact with others about ideas, issues, theories, and intentional teaching.

### Possible Approaches to Writing Response Letters

- Start each letter with a quote [Golden Line] from your readings (or from class), and then respond to the significance of that quote by considering how it relates to what you know/believe as a learner and (future) teacher.
- Raise a question or two related to the week's readings or class sessions, then aim to answer that question based on your understanding as gleaned through readings, class, your work in schools, and your experience as a language user (e.g., How does time spent on oral language activities support children's growth as writers and readers? What's the value of invented spelling? How is image-making considered part of language arts?).
- Divide your letter into three distinct parts; first respond to comments/ideas/questions received from your readers, then respond to the required readings, and finally respond to class sessions.
- Avoid summarizing, retelling, or reacting to readings and what we do in class. Rather, *respond* to what the readings and class activities cause you to think about and to consider as a learner/teacher.

### Response Letter Expectations

- Prepare five letters throughout the term (see course calendar for due dates).
- Letters will run about four typed pages (double-spaced). This translates into approximately 45-60 minutes of writing/rereading/rewriting per letter.
- Letters must be readable and turned in on the due dates – letters will not be accepted late.
- Letters should be proofread for meaning and edited for correctness. Respect and demonstrate your professionalism by producing thoughtful, clear, and easy-to-comprehend letters.
- Reflective Response Letters are worth approximately 25% of your grade. While I won't put a letter grade on each response letter, I will read, respond, raise questions, and aim to keep you thinking about your learning this term. You'll know from my comments if your responses aren't adequate and/or if they need to move in a different direction. [See rubric below]

### Response Letter Rubric

- S+** Demonstrates thoughtful interaction with ideas presented from conversation partners, in assigned readings *and* time spent in class. Cites specifics from letters/text/class to explain stance and to support thinking. Provides evidence of completed readings and class participation. Avoids summarizing, reacting, and "like/didn't like" commentary. Attends to required length (*aim for 4 pages*) and demonstrates clarity and correctness.
- S** Responds to specific ideas from conversation partners, required readings *and* time spent in class. Attends to required length and demonstrates clarity and correctness.
- S-** Response lacks focus and clarity and attention to correctness. Exhibits little evidence of careful, complete reading and/or involvement in class.
- U** Letter is unsatisfactory/incomplete/no credit given.

**ENG 440 Course Calendar ~ Fall 2009**  
*(Working calendar -- Subject to change with notice)*

Monday	Wednesday	Friday
<p><b>September 28</b> Examining and developing beliefs about learning. Beginning to align theory and practice.</p> <p><b>Read:</b> <i>Teaching with Intention</i>, Ch. 1 &amp; 2</p> <p><b>Due:</b> Letter #1</p>	<p><b>September 23</b> Introductions &amp; Course Overview</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> Memory Box activity</p>	<p><b>September 25</b> Comprehensive Language Arts/Literacy Learning: What do we know and believe? Who can we learn from?</p> <p><b>Read:</b> <i>Teaching with Intention</i>, Acknowledgements &amp; Intro. <i>The Wonder of It All</i>, Intro &amp; Ch. 1 [p. ix-15]</p>
<p><b>October 5</b> Building a Foundation for Literacy: Oral Language</p> <p><b>Read:</b> <i>Article:</i> "Crossroads of Literacy and Orality: Reading Poetry Aloud"</p>	<p><b>September 30</b> Creating a community for learning -- Honoring environment</p> <p><b>Bring:</b> Memory Box</p> <p><b>Read:</b> <i>Teaching with Intention</i>, Ch. 3 <i>The Wonder of It All</i>, Ch. 2</p>	<p><b>October 2</b> At the Heart of Literacy: Response</p> <p><b>Read:</b> <i>The Wonder of It All</i>, Ch. 3</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> Heart-Mapping Project—Part I</p>
<p><b>October 12</b> Introduction to Readers' Theatre</p> <p><b>Read:</b> <i>Article:</i> "The Power of Reader's Theatre" &amp; "Hassle-free Drama: The Joy of Reader's Theatre"</p> <p><b>Due:</b> Letter #2</p>	<p><b>October 7</b> Introduction to Choral Reading</p> <p><b>Read:</b> <i>Articles:</i> "Using Choral Reading to Promote Language Learning for ESL Students" &amp; "Joyful Noises: Creating Poems for Voices &amp; Ears"</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> Heart-Mapping Project—Part II</p>	<p><b>October 9</b> WORD Conference ~ Spokane, WA</p> <p>No Class ~ work on Heart Mapping project</p>
<p><b>October 16</b> Introduction to Readers' Theatre</p> <p><b>Read:</b> <i>Article:</i> "The Power of Reader's Theatre" &amp; "Hassle-free Drama: The Joy of Reader's Theatre"</p> <p><b>Due:</b> Letter #2</p>	<p><b>October 14</b> Readers' Theatre (continued)</p> <p><b>Read:</b> <i>Article:</i> "Weaving Readers Theatre and Nonfiction into the Curriculum"</p>	<p><b>October 16</b> Oracy: Putting Some Pieces Together</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> Choral reading/Readers' theatre project</p> <p><b>Due:</b> Heart-Mapping Project</p>

"Real life isn't scripted. Neither is real teaching."

[Debbie Miller, *Teaching with Intention*, p. 17]

<p><b>October 19</b> At the Heart of Literacy: Response <b>Read:</b> <i>The Wonder of It All</i>, Ch. 3</p>	<p><b>October 21</b> Teaching Reading/Creating Writers: Partnering with Literature <b>Read:</b> <i>The Wonder of It All</i>, Ch. 4</p>	<p><b>October 23</b> Teaching Reading/Creating Readers: Supporting the Thinking Process <b>Read:</b> <i>Teaching with Intention</i>, Chapter 4</p>
<p><b>October 26</b> Teaching Reading/Creating Readers: Partnering with Literature to Build Fluency and Interest <b>Due:</b> Choral Reading/Readers' Theatre Project</p>	<p><b>October 28</b> Teaching Writing/Creating Writers: Partnering with Literature <b>Read:</b> <i>The Wonder of It All</i>, Ch. 5</p>	<p><b>October 30</b> Teaching Writing/Creating Writers: What Writers Need <b>Due:</b> Letter #3</p>
<p><b>November 2</b> Teaching Writing/Creating Writers: Nurturing Response through Interactive Read Alouds <b>Explanation:</b> Literature Circles work</p>	<p><b>November 4</b> Literature Circles/Book Clubs: Definitions and Common Threads <b>Read:</b> <i>Getting Started with Literature Circles</i>, Intro-Ch. 3 <b>Due:</b> Letter #4</p>	<p><b>November 6</b> Literature Circles: Choosing Response-Rich Books <i>Shabannu</i> Discussion #1 <b>Read:</b> <i>Shabannu</i>, pages 1-64 <i>Getting Started with Literature Circles</i>, Ch. 4 <b>Due:</b> Written/Sketched Response to <i>Shabannu</i></p>
<p><b>November 9</b> Literature Circles: Teaching, Guiding, and Nurturing Discussion <i>Shabannu</i> discussion #2 <b>Read:</b> <i>Shabannu</i>, pages 65-120 <i>Getting Started with Literature Circles</i>, Ch. 5 <b>Due:</b> Written/Sketched Response to <i>Shabannu</i></p>	<p><b>November 11</b> No Class ~ Veteran's Day Work on Letter #4</p>	<p><b>November 13</b> Literature Circles: During Reading Response &amp; Focus Lessons <i>Shabannu</i> discussion #3 <b>Read:</b> <i>Shabannu</i>, pages 121-173 <i>Getting Started with Literature Circles</i>, Ch. 6 &amp; 7 <b>Due:</b> Written/Sketched Response to <i>Shabannu</i></p>
<p><b>November 16</b> <i>Shabannu</i> discussion #4 <b>Read:</b> <i>Shabannu</i>, pages 174-240 <b>Due:</b> Written/Sketched Response to <i>Shabannu</i> Letter #4 <b>Explanation:</b> The Presence of Literature: Language Arts Plan</p>	<p><b>November 18</b> Literature Circles: After-Reading Responses &amp; Extension Projects <b>Read:</b> <i>Getting Started with Literature Circles</i>, Ch. 8 <b>Explanation:</b> <i>Shabannu</i> Extension Project &amp; Self-Reflection</p>	<p><b>November 20</b> NCTE Convention ~ San Antonio, TX No Class: Work on Extension Project</p>

Monday	Wednesday	Friday
<p><b>November 23</b> Partnering Literacy Learning with Literature</p> <p><b>Clarification:</b> The Presence of Literature: Language Arts Plan</p>	<p><b>November 25</b> Celebrating <i>Shabamu</i>: Extension Project Sharing</p> <p><b>Due:</b> <i>Shabamu</i> Extension Project &amp; Self-Reflection</p>	<p><b>November 27</b> No Class – Thanksgiving Break</p> <p>Work on Language Arts Plan &amp; Letter #5</p>
<p><b>November 30</b> Teaching for Understanding: Partnering Literacy, Literature and Inquiry</p> <p><b>Read:</b> <i>Teaching with Intention</i>, Ch. 5 <i>The Wonder of It All</i>, Ch. 6</p> <p><b>Due:</b> Letter #5</p>	<p><b>December 2</b> Teaching for Understanding: Planning for Learning</p> <p><b>Read:</b> <i>Teaching with Intention</i>, Ch. 6 <i>The Wonder of It All</i>, Ch. 7</p>	<p><b>December 4</b> Literacy Assessment and Reflection</p> <p><b>Read:</b> <i>Teaching with Intention</i>, Ch. 7 &amp; 8</p> <p><b>Due:</b> <i>Teaching Tattoos</i></p>
<p><b>Finals Week Schedule</b> <b>Monday, December 7<sup>th</sup> ~ 10:30 am- 12:30 pm</b></p> <p>Sharing: The Presence of Literature LA Plans</p> <p><b>Due:</b> Language Arts Integration Plan [bring ____ copies]</p>		

*"I have to recognize that all kids will not take to reading and writing as passionately as I do. If I surround them with the structure, with tools, with irresistible models, and with my passion for reading and writing, I stand a better chance."*  
[Linda Rief, All That Matters: What Is It We Value in School and Beyond?]

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**MARK YOUR CALENDAR & PLAN TO ATTEND . . .**

**Western Washington University's 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Children's Literature Conference**

Mark your calendar for **Saturday, March 6, 2009** to attend WWU's 6<sup>th</sup> Children's Literature Conference featuring four significant contributors to the field of children's/young adult literature: Marla Frazee (and her editor Allyn Johnston), John Green, Gerald McDermott, and Linda Sue Park. Access [www.wwucl.com](http://www.wwucl.com) for information and registration materials.

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