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# Curriculum and Teaching in English Language Arts Education

# Spring 2025

**Course**: CTSE 7520, Curriculum Trends and Issues in ELA Education

**Day/Time:** Wednesday 5:00-7:50

Haley 2461

Zoom: <https://auburn.zoom.us/j/2066822598>

**Instructor**: Dr. Mike Cook, Associate Professor of English Education

**Office Hours:** 11:00-12:00 Monday and Wednesday, and by appointment

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**Course Description**

*From the university course bulletin: Nature of learners and of knowledge and implications for building curricula and planning instruction in the area of specialization..*

Adolescents come to schools both with a tremendous amount of literacy and language resources and a need for continuing support so that they can sustain, extend, and bridge their reading and writing capabilities across content areas and also with their everyday lives. Indeed, as people move within and across various contexts and communities across their lifespans, it is an ongoing endeavor to learn how to participate in these contexts and communities in ways that are valued by the group yet remain personally meaningful and affirming. These opportunities are fundamentally shaped by people’s individual biographies and personalities as well as their identities, such as their race, gender, sexuality, socioeconomic status, religion or faith, nationality, dis/ability status, and language(s)

This course engages students in broader questions of knowledge and learning with respect to adolescent literacy and language practices with an emphasis on the implications for teaching and curriculum in secondary English language arts (ELA) classrooms. It is organized into four major sections. The first two sections offer “Contexts” (Justice in Schools and Communities and Race and ELA) and open up questions about knowledge and learning by exploring identity, power, knowledge, and learning with respect to adolescents/ce and secondary schooling. They serve to situate the remaining two sections of the course by providing foundational insights about schooling, power, identity, and education’s liberatory possibilities. The next two sections explore the concept of Advocacy and the possibilities of/in Literature Instruction (or Critical Literary Analysis). Each topic will be situated in the opening “Contexts” sections’ insights, helping to develop nuanced understandings about how the intertwined threads of the language arts classroom are influenced by and in turn influence schooling and community contexts.

**Texts:**

Appleman, D. (2015). *Critical encounters in secondary English: Teaching literary theory to adolescents*. Teachers College Press. THIRD EDITION

Kinloch, V., Nemeth, E.A., Butler, T.T., & Player, G.D. (2021). *Where is the justice? Engaged pedagogies in schools and communities*. Teachers College Press.

Styslinger, M.E. (2023). Workshopping the Canon for Democracy and Justice. NCTE. 9780814100967

Wilkerson, I. (2023). *Caste: The origins of our discontents* (adapted for young adults). Penguin Random House. 9780593427972

Additional course content will be available in Canvas. Please bring the readings to any virtual class meetings.

**Student Learning Outcomes**

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to demonstrate their ability with the following NCTE Teacher Preparation Standards (2021):

Standard 1: Candidates apply and demonstrate knowledge of learners and learning to foster inclusive learning environments that support coherent, relevant, standards-aligned, differentiated, and antiracist/antibias instruction to engage grade 7-12 learners in ELA.

Standard 2: Candidates apply and demonstrate knowledge and theoretical perspectives, including antiracist/antibias ELA, pertaining to texts, composition, language, and languaging.

Standard 3: Candidates apply and demonstrate knowledge of theories, research, and ELA to plan coherent, relevant, standards-aligned, differentiated, antiracist/antibias instruction and assessment.

Standard 4: Candidates implement planned coherent, relevant, standards-aligned, differentiated, and antiracist/antibias ELA instruction and assessment to motivate and engage all learners.

Standard 5: Candidates reflect on their ELA practice, use knowledge and theoretical perspectives to collaborate with educational community members, and demonstrate readiness for leadership, professional learning, and advocacy.

**Assessment**

Let me open with this: I believe that grades generally get in the way of learning. This, of course, has consequence for teaching, for student growth, for our democracy, and (I might add) for humanity. As a result, “grading” in this class may be radically different than anything you’ve experienced in your prior schooling.

While final course grades are unavoidable (Auburn requires that you each receive a letter grade), your work throughout the semester will NOT receive grades. But…and this is key…there are a few requirements you will have to meet for your assignments to be officially “turned in.” Requirements for each assignment include, but are not limited to:

* Submitting initial drafts on/by relevant due dates
* Engaging in required revisions (sometimes multiple rounds) and resubmitting on/by relevant due dates

Final assignments will not be considered accepted (and turned in) until all rounds of required revision have been successfully/adequately completed. Once an assignment is accepted, it is understood to represent the equivalent of an ‘A’. **Note:** It is important to keep in mind that while I have a no grade policy, your course requirements are just that—requirements and not options.

The real idea here is to remove grades as a barrier to learning and growth and to make your experiences in this course more about learning itself and about developing as teachers, and not about the grade. Designing instruction and assessments and teaching itself are iterative processes, those we never master but use experience, feedback, and even failure to develop and get better. Thus, grading individual assignments is inauthentic in this course. I want you to grow as ELA teachers and scholars and as people tasked with providing relevant, equitable, and just educational experiences to your future students. I want you (and your future students) to focus on something other than competition and about focusing on what one needs for an ‘A’. Instead, I want you all to focus on what you need to do to improve and to grow. And I want to make your learning and your development as teachers humane and useful.

We’ll be talking quite a bit about this throughout the semester, and I look forward to your thoughts and perceptions. \*I am more than happy to schedule time to chat with any of you if you have questions or concerns.

**Note:** During the first two weeks of the semester, we will collaboratively establish any necessary course policies, norms, expectations, consequences, etc. I believe this should be a team and democratic effort, and I hope this serves as one example of how you can include your future students in such discussions and classroom policy development. Among the policies we may establish together are:

**Collaborative Course Policies:**

To be included…

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**The College of Education’s Statement on Professionalism**

As faculty, staff, and students interact in professional settings, they are expected to demonstrate professional behaviors as defined in the College’s conceptual framework. These professional commitments or dispositions are listed below:

* Engage in responsible and ethical professional practices.
* Contribute to collaborative learning communities.
* Demonstrate a commitment to diversity.
* Model and nurture intellectual vitality.

**A Note on Shared Teaching Resources**

Although all educators are glad to share their teaching materials, for the purposes of academic integrity it is essential that you cite all uses and incorporation of materials that you obtain from others and turn in as class assignments or utilize in your own teaching. Acknowledgement is key in maintaining academic honesty.

**Recommendation**

Widen your circle of influence. Become a member of The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), the Alabama Council of Teachers of English (ACTE), the Literacy Research Association (LRA), or the International Literacy Association (ILA). Visit their webpages and view their resources. Like the facebook pages of these and related groups devoted to the teaching of English. Visit readwritethink.org or <http://www.nwp.org/> (National Writing Project) to find teaching resources.

**Course Policy Statements:**

Attendance is expected of every student. Being a teacher requires you to be physically and mentally present daily. Thus, the courses in this program expect the same of you. If you must miss class, please note the following: You should contact the instructor as early as possible (preferably prior to class but no later than the day following your absence). Part of this communication should include details of your plan for getting caught and moving forward. Note that you should also contact a classmate for material you miss.

All written assignments must be **submitted as Microsoft Word documents via Canvas** (unless otherwise specified) by the due date and time (my default is prior to the start of class on the day the assignment is due). Note: I offer a two-day grace period on major assignments. Any assignment turned in after 11:59pm on Friday is considered late. For any assignment not submitted on time, it is the student’s responsibility for contacting the instructor (preferably prior to the due date you are about to miss) and clearly articulating a plan for how and when to complete and submit the assignment. All reading assignments should be read by the beginning of class time on the date specified in the course schedule. Not completing the reading assignments will prevent you from being an informed participant of class discussions and in-class assignments. As future teachers, it is expected that you exhibit characteristics of professionalism, which include adhering to all deadlines/due dates for assignments and completing all readings as assigned.

**Professional Dispositions**

**Note on technology use:** Refrain from using technology during class in ways that do not support your learning and engagement in the course material. Part of growing your professional reputation and habits is managing your appropriate use of technology. Put more plainly: please do not watch videos, text, or engage with other social media during our course time.

**Email Correspondence:** As teachers, timely communication with students, administrators, parents, and so forth is important and expected. As teachers in training, I hold similar expectations for you. I will often use email to communicate with you (e.g., feedback on assignments, course questions, etc.), so it is necessary that you check your email daily. I expect you to respond to emails from me within 24 hours (if received on a weekday) or 48 hours (if received on a weekend).

**Attendance**

Integral to being a teacher is showing up, on time, well-prepared to engage with the students and the day’s lessons. In this class, we practice this professional ethic by showing up with required readings completed, participating meaningfully in class discussions/activities, etc., sitting with the discomfort that can accompany learning and growing, and serving as critical colleagues to one another. Absences are antithetical to this ethic. Thus, excessive absences will impact your grade and reflect negatively on the professional dispositions necessary to progress into teaching. **Because this class meets once per week, I consider anything over one (1) absence to be excessive, thus impacting your grade.**

Should you need to **miss a class**, you will do what professional educators must do and inform me of your absence *before*the class meeting and, of course, make arrangements to meet with me to see what you’ve missed. Excessive absence will jeopardize your ability to succeed in this course.

I do follow Auburn University’s excused absence policy; you can find it at [www.auburn.edu/studentpolicies](https://nam11.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.auburn.edu%2Fstudentpolicies&data=05%7C02%7Cmpc0035%40auburn.edu%7Ced5028e2686b4abad47208dcac0219fd%7Cccb6deedbd294b388979d72780f62d3b%7C0%7C0%7C638574372241764603%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=fybU4qk%2BSilj3GJaZb8NyvppduFrldLBhPUUrss343Y%3D&reserved=0). Since we are practicing and demonstrating our professional behaviors, you are expected to make every effort to be on time to class. Coming in late, no matter how quiet you try to be, can create a disruption.

Should attendance or timely submission of complete assignments become a concern, the instructor will contact you to schedule a meeting to discuss possible plans of action. This may include documented Action Plans.

**Attribution Note:** Attendance policy adapted from AU English Language Arts program language, with special thanks to Dr. Heidi Hadley.

Make-Up Policy: If you are absent, you are still responsible for turning in work that is due and for finding out about material presented and assignments made. As per the Student eHandbook, you are the one responsible for initiating and turning in make-up work for an excused absence.

Late Work. As I noted above, it is your responsibility for contacting me prior to missing any deadlines (with rare exceptions) with your plan for completing the submitting the work. This should include a definitive due date and time. Note: Do not simply email late assignments to me without first contacting me with a proposed plan. Part of any late submission must include this proactive (as proactive as possible) communication. Work is late if it is not ready at the start of class, or by the predetermined time, on the specified due date or if it is not sent electronically on the due date.

University Rules: I abide by all university rules, including those concerning academic honesty and harassment/discrimination (see below for additional details).

Academic Honesty Policy: All portions of the Auburn University student academic honesty code (Title XII) found in the *Tiger Cub* will apply to university courses. All academic honesty violations or alleged violations of the SGA Code of Laws will be reported to the Office of the Provost, which will then refer the case to the Academic Honesty Committee.

**Note on intellectual property, GenAI, and professional ethics:** Finally, I assume you are enrolled in the course because of your eagerness to assume the ethical responsibilities of a future English educator. I assume that all work you complete for this course will be original work, not borrowed (without acknowledgement) from others or plagiarized. Of course, as all teachers do, you will be gathering ideas and practices from each other, program faculty, teacher blogs, etc.; however, turned in work should always reflect your own adaptation, contextual thinking, attribution, etc. Should I encounter plagiarism or other questionable practices that suggest your work or ideas are not yours in origin or are not properly accredited, you may jeopardize your ability to pass the course successfully. Lastly, we will spend part of this course discussing the affordances and constraints of GenAI for teaching and learning. While these tools have much to offer us, and we will experiment with them, the work you submit should be yours. That is, even when/if you use technology to brainstorm, generate ideas, experiment with voice and organization, etc., your submitted work should represent your own thoughts, understandings, and voice and should appropriately attribute relevant information, components, etc. to the technology used.

Disability Accommodations: Students who need special accommodations in class, as provided by the Americans with Disabilities Act, should arrange for a confidential meeting with the instructor during office hours in the first week of classes (or as soon as possible if accommodations are needed immediately). The student must bring a copy of their Accommodations Letter and an Instructor Verification Form to the meeting. If the student does not have these forms, they should make an appointment with the Program for Students with Disabilities, 1288 Haley Center, 844-2096 (V/TT).

Course contingency: If normal class and/or lab activities are disrupted due to illness, emergency, or crisis situation, the syllabus and other course plans and assignments may be modified to allow completion of the course. If this occurs, an addendum to your syllabus and/or course assignments will replace the original materials. Additionally, I will make every effort to send you an email message ahead of time.

Professionalism: As faculty, staff, and students interact in professional settings, they are expected to demonstrate professional behaviors as defined in the College’s conceptual framework. These professional commitments or dispositions are listed below:

* Engage in responsible and ethical professional practices
* Contribute to collaborative learning communities
* Demonstrate a commitment to diversity
* Model and nurture intellectual vitality

**Assignments and Projects**

**Course Requirements**

Attendance and Participation

Clinical Experience and Assignment

Discussion Leadership

Response Paper 1

Response Paper 2

Final Project

ELA Program Common Book Discussion

**Attendance and Participation**

Class participation is a vital part of the course and consists of

* careful reading of assignment texts (including bringing those texts with you to class);
* expressing your questions, insights, and criticism of readings and emerging issues;
* participating in class activities;
* applying course concepts to your present and future teaching situations;
* taking risks in your writing and thinking;
* supporting the thinking of your colleagues through listening, encouragement, and constructive dialogue.

Your participation in class activities (whether face-to-face or on Zoom) and through CANVAS, and other means will help students build knowledge together and explore various aspects of the readings to apply them to their own future teaching and contexts. In order to participate, students must be present (physically and cognitively) and have thoughtfully completed the assigned readings. Ongoing failure to contribute to class activities will result in a lower grade. Failure to attend class will result in a lower grade.

**Clinical Experience and Assignment**

As part of this course, you will complete clinical experience hours. For those of you who are classroom teachers, you will be able to complete the bulk of these in your own classrooms (noting that I’ll ask you to spend some intentional time in your ELA colleagues’ classrooms as well). For those who are not currently teaching, you will be placed with a local teacher (more information to come).

As part of your clinical experience, you will connect your proposed final project with your time in ELA classrooms. See below for more information on the Final Project. We’ll talk in greater detail about the requirements and expectations, and you’ll have opportunities to meet with me to discuss these (before, during, and after you complete you hours).

**Discussion Leadership**

Twice during the semester, you will be responsible for facilitating class discussion about the readings for that week. You should design some sort of activity to engage the group in exploring the key concepts, arguments, tensions, and questions raised by the author(s) for the week. While each week will include open-ended discussion time for sharing our responses to the readings, for the week you lead you will need to have a more structured and planned activity (or set of activities) for that week. These should last approximately 45-60 minutes.

Prior to our next class meeting, you must submit a 250-500 word reflection about your experiences. What did you learn through the experience? What went well? What would you change? How has this experience influenced your thinking about curriculum, assessment, ELA education, and equity?

During Week 3 of class, you will have the opportunity to sign up for a particular class meeting. If you would like, I am more than happy to meet with you to discuss ideas and provide feedback prior to the class period you lead.

**Response Paper 1**

This initial response paper serves as a culminating assessment for the first portion of our course focusing on our first two conceptual topics: (1) Constructing Adolescence and (2) The Canon and Justice.

Just as our class discussions and activities provide you with immediate, in-process, and informal opportunities to react to our content and to reflect on your learning, the response paper offers an opportunity to reflect more broadly across an entire section of the course so that you can synthesize concepts from other texts and articulate your own perspectives in the scholarly conversation. Thus, your discussion should be grounded in the authors and ideas from the course syllabus, and your paper should foreground your insights.

For this response paper, consider questions such as:

* What does it mean to be an adolescent? And why is that such a difficult question to answer?
* Is adolescence something young people experience or something imposed upon young people? And what does that mean for youth and adults?
* In what ways do historical constructions of youth influence us as teachers?
* What does it mean to teach canonical texts toward justice?
* How might ELA teachers draw on traditional/canonical texts for democracy and justice?
* What is the responsibility and place of English education and English teachers in these broader debates about adolescence, identity, and power?

Your response paper should be 2-5 pages (not including any cover page or references) and should the APA style guidelines. It should include citations from Lesko and at least one additional academic source not included on the syllabus.

Due Date: February 26

**Response Paper 2**

The second response paper serves as a culminating assessment for the second portion of our course focusing on our final two conceptual topics: (1) Justice in Schools and Communities and (2) Literature Instruction—Critical Theory in Secondary Settings.

Just as our class discussions and activities provide you with immediate, in-process, and informal opportunities to react to our content and to reflect on your learning, the response paper offers an opportunity to reflect more broadly across an entire section of the course so that you can synthesize concepts from other texts and articulate your own perspectives in the scholarly conversation. Thus, your discussion should be grounded in the authors and ideas from the course syllabus, and your paper should foreground your insights.

For this response paper, consider questions such as:

* What’s at the intersection of teaching and communities?
* What is justice? What is justice with regard to schools? Communities?
* What knowledge counts? And what counts as knowledge? Conversely, what doesn’t count as knowledge?
* What does it mean to engage students in critical literary analysis?
* What does critical literary analysis have to offer ELA (and teachers and students)?
* What shifts in thinking about teachers, teaching, curricula, students, and so forth are necessary to fulfill our promise to students, families, and communities?
* How can people – educators, students, families, communities and community members, and other stakeholders – determine what students know? And what students can/should know?

Your response paper should be 2-5 pages (not including any cover page or references) and should the APA style guidelines. It should include citations from Kinloch et al. and Appleman and at least one additional academic source not included on the syllabus.

Due Date: April 16

**Final Project**

Each of you will be completing an individual project that will serve as the culminating assessment for the course. For everyone, this will involve researching a specific subtopic under the broader umbrella of teaching and curriculum in ELA education. This project must involve finding, reading, and analyzing scholarship on these topics, but it might move beyond this too (e.g., doing an action research project or teacher inquiry project, instructional design work, and so forth). The topic, nature of the project, and the end product will be negotiated in collaboration with me.

For masters students, I encourage you to focus on producing artifacts for your own classroom (such as a unit plan) and authoring a reflection describing how you synthesized and applied research to inform your work. For doctoral students, focus on producing a written product that you might submit for a conference presentation or a manuscript suitable for a journal in your field (e.g., *The ALAN Review*, *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, *English Journal*, *Voices from the Middle*, etc.).

You will need to put together a one-page proposal for your project to submit to me by Wed. March 19. The proposal should discuss the following:

* Your topic
* The project that you will complete
	+ Explain what you will do—for example, for a traditional research project, you should be specific about the extent and parameters such as what books you might read or the number of sources you’ll seek
* The final product that you will produce
	+ Describe it in general, but also name the details such as the length of the paper, the number of sources you’ll use and from what publication outlets
* Timeline for completing the project, including benchmarks for your work for the two “final project update” assignments
* Why the topic, research, and final product are meaningful for you

Ideally, I would like to meet with each of you individually prior to your proposal submission. We can generate ideas, and I can provide feedback and suggestions. Based on your submitted proposal, we will interact a second time where I’ll give you feedback again, and you can move forward to complete the project.

You will submit two “work-in-progress” update assignments (April 2 and 9). In each update, you should address the following:

* Discuss what your major learning has been about your topic since the last check in
* Describe any changes in your project (such as your topic or final product) that you see as valuable based on your learning and progress
* Briefly describe the work you have completed since the last check in
* Evaluate your progress with respect to the timeline and revise your initial timeline based on your progress

You should also be prepared to share an update briefly with your peers during our class sessions.

At the end of the semester (currently scheduled for April 30), you’ll (1) submit your final product to me and (2) present your project to the class (15-20 minutes, including a visual aid such as a PowerPoint and/or handout). This will summarize and give an overview of the final project that you produced.

Note that each small assignment is required for the final product to be submitted. You can NOT skip the proposal and updates and then submit a final product on April 30. The opportunity for feedback and conversation along the way is crucial to deepening your learning through the final project.

**ELA Program Common Book Discussions**

This semester, every Auburn ELA program course is including *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* as a required text (we will also be viewing a related documentary or film). In addition to reading the text, you are expected to attend at least one of our program-wide book discussions. The expectation is that you read the book in its entirety and come to the meeting prepared, with an open mind, to do the necessary but complex work of discussing race/ism and antiracism in society and education, specifically in ELA education. In an effort to accommodate everyone’s schedules, we are offering two days/times for our program book discussion. We ask that you attend one of them (although you are certainly welcome at both).

* Monday, March 31 5:00-7:00pm
* Friday, April 4, 9:00-11:00am

Location for both sessions: TBA