

## Teaching Online with the Harry Potter Books 2 credits

**Course Goals:** In Summer 2013, UNH sponsored an online Harry Potter-themed course for students grade 4-8. (I will refer to this course as the HPOC, for "Harry Potter Online Course.") The HPOC content was structured around Common Core English language arts standards, and was designed to engage students with academic material through their interest in the Harry Potter book series. There were about 70 students, ranging in a fairly even distribution from grades 4-8, and post-course surveys were overwhelmingly positive. The same course is running currently in Summer 2014.

The course you are now enrolled in will use the HPOC as practical test case for thinking about two areas of pedagogy:

1. Strategies for, problems with and issues raised by online teaching and learning.
2. Using popular YA fiction, such as Harry Potter, as a launch pad for language arts teaching, with particular attention to the Common Core Standards

You will have access to the HPOC as if you were one of the summer middle-school students. Specific lessons from the HPOC will be assigned for this class to discuss on specific days. You are also free to watch the lectures, take the quizzes, and engage in all the normal student activities to whatever degree you like. Because the HPOC has a "sandbox" structure, in which all lessons can be taken in any order at any time, you have a great deal of freedom, just as the middle-school students who originally took the course did.

On a typical class day, you will watch a video lecture by the professor (usually about 15 minutes short), read a critical article on that day's topic, and review the designated section of the HPOC. Then there are usually two assignments – one fun and one not fun (often about the reading).

The HPOC was designed as a summer enrichment program, rather than an actual school-year course, and there are important differences. But I believe that reviewing the way the HPOC works can help us learn things and, more importantly, raise issues about online learning worth thinking about and discussing.

Grades:

Grade percentages are listed in the class schedule below.

Notice that they add up to 110%; this is not a mistake. I do this so that you can blow an assignment without killing your grade.

All Assignments should be in a form that would work well online.

**You can use docs, powerpoint slides, videos (if you want to be insanely complex) whatever, but no boring docs with text only.**



Well, actually,  
some of them can  
be boring; I'll let  
you know which  
.....

Use visuals,

**INTERESTING FONTS,**

**colors**, whatever would work on a PHONE (I'll be looking at them on my phone to be sure)

## **Class Schedule**

### **July 21 Introduction**

**Video: My experience creating online courses.**

**Video: How this course works.**

“How Digital Culture is Rewiring our Brains” <http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/society-and-culture/how-digital-culture-is-rewiring-our-brains-20120806-23q5p.html>

“Our “deep-reading” brain: its digital evolution poses questions.” Maryanne Wolf.

<http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/article/102396/Our-Deep-Reading-Brain-Its-Digital-Evolution--Poses-Questions.aspx>

### **July 22 The Digital Brain-- Teaching Smartphone Addicted Students**

## **Video Lectures:** Introduction-- Moving Laterally through Cyberspace

The Wikipedia Game

### **Critical Reading:**

Bennett, S., & Maton, K. (2010). Beyond the 'digital natives' debate: Towards a more nuanced understanding of students' technology experiences. *Journal of computer assisted learning*, 26(5), 321-331.

### **HPOC Lessons:**

- Grim Reapers: Biology of The Black Death, Neurology of Depression, and the Dementors of Azkaban
- Bad Blood: Democracy, Racism and Blood Purity

### **FUN ASSIGNMENT: WIKIPEDIA GAME (5%)**

Choose a Wikipedia game word match and offer 3 "routes." Write a paragraph comparing them, showing what different disciplines they access, and which one offers the most educational value. (No boring text-only docs – visually appealing please!!)

**NO-FUN ASSIGNMENT: (5%)** Please answer the following questions about the Bennett and Maton article. You'll need to look at the article, and also do some online snooping.

1. What's a "digital native"?
2. Bennett and Maton don't like this term. Why not?
3. What other writers has used the term?
4. Explain the term "networked individualism."
5. Who created the term?
6. Find a quote explaining it by that author.

## **July 23 Visual and Multimodal Literacy**

### **Video Lecture: Words and Pictures**

**Critical Reading:** Hassett, D. D., & Curwood, J. (2009). Theories and Practices of Multimodal Education: The Instructional Dynamics of Picture Books and Primary Classrooms. *Reading Teacher*, 63(4), 270-282.

## HPOC Lessons:

- Kapow!: Onomatopoeia in names like Salazar Slytherin and Severus Snape
- Literary Allusion: Why Voldemort's return is so terrifying
- Symbols: What the invisibility cloak means

### FUN ASSIGNMENT: (5%)

Hassett and Curwood describe font as an example of a multimodal communication, because it “contains meaning beyond the word itself.”

For example, Times New Roman, as a font, represents “the safety of tradition” (Kress, 2003, p. 139), whereas Jokerman or Blacklabel fonts can be used as a way to personalize a MySpace page or blog—a way of representing an identity “on the screen” (Turkle, 1995). However, it only is possible to assign meaning to a particular font because of the social genres and conventions in use in a given discourse and time. (p. 272)

Choose 3 fonts from your word processing program. Describe what you think each font conveys. What sort of writing would you choose this font for? What message would it convey to your reader? Would bolding, italicizing, or changing its size change that meaning significantly (obviously these things always intensify, but would there be more to it)? Write your discussion in the font itself. Add pictures that will help convey the font's meaning.

You are handing in 3 descriptions of fonts in a fun, illustrated format.

### NO-FUN ASSIGNMENT: (7.5%)

1. Why did Curwood and Hassett choose to study actual books, if they wanted to understand multimodal learning in a digital age?

2. What the heck does the following passage mean?

As we noted earlier, this type of interaction is representative of the socially negotiated construction of meaning within an experiential space (Smagorinsky, 2001), where the elements of multimodal texts become tools for students' cognitive activity within a social realm.”

3. Find the Smagorinsky article that Hassett and Curwood refer to in the previous quotation. Briefly explain Smagorinsky's discussion of the Confederate Battle Flag and how it relates to multimodal reading.

## **July 24 Etymology as Gateway to Interdisciplinary Thinking**

**Video Lecture:** The Technological Democratization of Cryptic Knowledge

**Critical Reading:**

Nilsen, Alleen Pace ; Nilsen, Don L. F "Latin Revived: Source-Based Vocabulary Lessons Courtesy of Harry Potter." *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, v50 n2 p128-134 Oct 2006. 17 pp.

**HPOC Lessons:**

- Flirting: Fleur Delacour's Simple and Complex Character Traits
- Friendship: Understanding Luna Lovegood's Hidden Character Motivations
- Spells: Professor Flitwick's Spellbook,

DICTIONARY USE (NO-FUN ASSIGNMENT) (7.5%)

Choose a paragraph from a work you might read in class – it can be any literary work, a Harry Potter book, or nonfiction. Identify 5 words in the paragraph that would offer particularly useful etymology research. By useful, I mean understanding the etymologies will give insight into, or help clarify the meaning of, the paragraph. You'll probably have to look at etymology for a lot more than 5 before you find good ones.

Show us the words, the etymologies, and explain why they matter. (No boring text-only docs – visually appealing please!!)

## **July 25 Tangential Learning, Interdisciplinary Thinking and Online Assessment**

**Video Lecture:** Using Online Cheating to your Advantage

Youtube Video: Tangential Learning

**Critical Reading:** Comber, B., & Nixon, H. (2011). Critical Reading Comprehension in an Era of Accountability. *Australian Educational Researcher*, 38(2), 167-179.

**HPOC Lessons:**

- Centaurs: Conflict-Based Themes
- Werewolves

**FUN ASSIGNMENT:** (5%) Create a Multiple Choice quiz that involves tangential learning. It should include at least six questions, with increasing complexity. The “tangents” should lead students into a variety of disciplines. The quiz can be on any topic, but here are suggestions if you can't think of one.

Shakespeare's Sonnet 30

Lincoln's Gettysburg Address

Zebra Mussels

Final scene of *Death of a Salesman*

NO-FUN ASSIGNMENT: (10%)

Comber and Nixon describe a class that uses “place-based pedagogy” to help students learn in a variety of fields all at once. This involves tangential learning, because as the kids are walking down the street doing their mapping exercise, they are learning things about architecture, government structure, and engineering. The Harry Potter quizzes offer imaginary place-based learning; rather than learning things connected to their physical environment, students are learning things connected to the imaginary environment of Hogwarts and the wizarding world. The Harry Potter universe is so richly imagined and expansive, and kids are so familiar with it, that it serves pretty much the same function as a real environment.

The other crucial similarity is that students give a damn about their own neighborhood and about the Harry Potter world. Often teachers try to create a rich environment to encourage multidisciplinary learning – like you’re teaching the *Odyssey* so you learn about ancient Greek history and dress up in togas – but kids don’t really care about it that much.

What other “places” – either real or imaginary – would kids care about enough that you could use them as the foundation for a rich multidisciplinary learning unit?

Write a paragraph (at least 150 words) explaining why your “place” would work and create a chart like Comber and Nixon’s Table 1 to show how different learning tasks would take place there. Also try to choose particular literary works that would fit into such a unit.

Some suggestions:

Sports – Kids care about high school sports, and professional sports, and there are a variety of literacy and numeracy skills could be easily linked to a sports environment. Using active verbs and sentence structure; how fast do baseballs fly; the roll of basketball in American race relations. The different skills would change a lot depending on the sport.

Some other popular culture phenom. It would have to be one that MOST students share; *Hunger Games* comes to mind.

Prom – This might be somewhat gender limited, but certainly one could address social customs, fashion history, dance history, blood-alcohol chemistry, the physics of low dance dips or limosine wide turns.

You are handing in 1 paragraph (150 words) and one chart.

## **July 28 Fan Fiction and Classroom Community**

### **Video Lecture: Fan Culture, Fantasy and the Encyclopedic Imagination**

**Critical Reading:** Black, R. (2009). Online fan fiction, global identities, and imagination. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 43(4), 397-425.

Curwood, J.S., Magnifico, A.M., & Lammers, J.C. (2013). Writing in the wild: Writers' motivations in fan-based affinity spaces. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 56(8), 677-685.

Cherland, Meredith. "Harry's Girls: Harry Potter and the Discourse of Gender"  
*Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, v52 n4 p273-282 Dec 2008. 10 pp.

### **HPOC Lessons:**

- The Common Room
- Sirens

**SORT OF FUN ASSIGNMENT: (10%)** Argue for or against an all-girls writing space. Use quotations from the articles you read for today to support your point. 500 words or more.

## **July 29 Grammar, Rules and Writing**

**Video Lecture:** Grammar for writers

**Critical Reading:** Patel, P., & Laud, L. (2009). Helping Students to Add Detail and Flair to Their Stories. *Preventing School Failure*, 54(1), 2-10.

### **HPOC Lessons:**

- Prepositions: Why it matters where you sit on the Hogwarts Express.
- Pronouns: Why Dobby talks that weird way.
- Semicolons: Why Buckbeak flies so fast.

**FUN ASSIGNMENT: (5%)** Create 2 creative writing assignments that help students learn a particular grammatical skill by writing fiction. It can be Harry Potter fan fiction, some other kind of fan fiction, or just regular old fiction. Each assignment should begin with a brief explanation of the grammatical skill you are teaching, and an explanation of why you would use it in a piece of fiction. (No boring text-only docs – visually appealing please!!)

## **July 30 Interweaving Science with Language Arts**

**Video Lecture:** Thematic Engagement with Science (Not just Oh By the Way)

**Critical Reading:** Bintz, W. P., Wright, P., & Sheffer, J. (2010). Using copy change with trade books to teach earth science: by using copy change with trade books to teach earth science, these teachers were able to integrate science and literacy while addressing science and literacy content standards. *The Reading Teacher*, (2), 106.

Palmer, Laura K. "Using Harry Potter to Introduce Students to DNA Fingerprinting & Forensic Science." *American Biology Teacher*, v72 n4 p241-244 Apr 2010. 4 pp.

**HPOC Lessons:**

- Lost in the Woods: Vernal Pool Ecology, Albinism, and the Forbidden Forest
- Rabbit Holes: Home, Family and Genetics at The Burrow

**FUN ASSIGNMENT: (10%)**

In a powerpoint or another visually complex format together 2 images, 2 short informational passages describing an important scientific concept, and a passage from Harry Potter or another literary work. The links between these works should help us better understand BOTH the scientific texts and the literary passage. This should be a visually dynamic presentation which could be turned into a lecture.

**NO-FUN ASSIGNMENT (10%)**

Compare the interdisciplinary lessons described in the Bintz et al article and the Palmer article. Which do you think is more effective? How much does Palmer engage with the themes and concerns of the Potter books? What do you think of Bintz's "copy change" approach? (around 300 words)

**July 31 Interweaving History with Language Arts**

**Video Lecture:** Reading Old Stuff – Analyzing Primary Texts

**HPOC Lessons:**

- Bad Blood: Democracy, Racism and Blood Purity
- Living Corpses: Science, Medicine and Voldemort's desire to conquer death

**FUN ASSIGNMENT: (10%)**

In a powerpoint or another visually complex format, link together quotes from 2 important historical texts, 2 historically significant paintings or photographs, and a passage from Harry Potter or another literary work. The links between these works should help us better understand BOTH the historical texts and the literary passage. This should be a visually dynamic presentation which could be turned into a lecture.



## **August 1 Creating Online Lectures**

**Video Lecture:** Using Tegrity to Create Accessible Online Lessons

### **HPOC Lessons:**

- Bullies: Bullying and Cyberbullying at Hogwarts and Your School
- Candyland: Sugar, Shopping and the Shelves at Honeydukes
- Living Corpses: Science, Medicine and Voldemort's desire to conquer death

Online Workshop

FINAL ASSIGNMENT: (20%) Online Lesson