

# Pitt Education

TLL 1520: Supporting Literacies in Inclusive Classrooms  
Syllabus (Spring 2025)  
University of Pittsburgh School of Education

---

**Instructor:** Ghirmay Alazar, PhD  
**Email:** galazar@pitt.edu  
**Office Hours:** By appointment  
**Class Meeting Schedule:** Mondays and Wednesdays 3:00-4:15p  
**Room:** Posvar 5108

*The syllabus online is the official syllabus for this course. Updated versions will be identified as "Revised Syllabus" with date.*

---

## Program Pillars

Our program pillars are *centering care and relationality*, *inviting and honoring diverse ways of knowing*, and *seeking to unsettle and remake unjust systems, structures, practices, and norms*. Throughout your program, you will be supported to develop your own teaching praxis around these three pillars. Educators can live these pillars (and the commitments they represent) in our instruction, by, for example, how we deliberately design lessons and units of study, how we think about and use assessments, the routines we employ, and how we interact with students. Educators can also engage these pillars in ways that go beyond our instruction within our classrooms—by partnering with families and schools, by advocating for specific students, and by pressing for local and broader forms of policy change.



## Course Description

Equitable instruction includes recognizing and honoring the literacies of all students while also supporting their development of new literacies. This course is designed to prepare pre-service education professionals to: 1) support the literacies of students with disabilities; and 2) support the disciplinary literacies of all students.

## Learning Goals

In this course, you will:

- Consider how the teaching and learning of literacies matters for your developing teaching praxis
- Design rich, inquiry-based literacy learning opportunities for a range of student learners
- Create additional literacy and language learning scaffolds for individuals and small groups
- Administer and interpret various literacy assessments and design research-validated instructional plans in the area of literacy for children with disabilities who are included in general education settings.

## Guiding Questions

As a class, we will examine empirical research, reports, and curricular materials to investigate the following questions:

- What are literacies, and why do we pluralize them? How can we come to know our students as literate beings? What are disciplinary literacies?
- What is the role of reading, writing, and text use in subject area learning, and how can we design for our students' disciplinary literacies learning as an integrated part of our instruction?
- How do we integrate literacy instructional techniques for students?
- How do we determine reading challenges, assess readability, identify appropriate strategies/resources, and develop reading materials to support instruction?

## Course Readings

The course is organized into four modules:

- Module 1: concepts underlying disciplinary literacy teaching and learning
- Module 2: literacy practices of focal academic field
- Module 3: designing for disciplinary literacy learning
- Module 4: supporting students with varying needs and exceptionalities

All articles and chapters will be available online. There is no required textbook for this course.

## Course Assignments

Assignments	Point Value
Quick writes and responses	50
Substantial contribution and participation in class activities	25
Disciplinary practice project and presentation	25

Mini-unit plan and presentation	25
Final project	50
<b>Total</b>	<b>175</b>

### Course Schedule

Date	Guiding Questions	To Complete before Class	Assignments Due in Class
<b>Module 1: What is literacy? What is disciplinary literacy and why does it matter?</b>			
Jan 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introductions</li> <li>• What is literacy? discussion</li> <li>• Syllabus review</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review Syllabus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• N/A</li> </ul>
Jan 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is disciplinary literacy?</li> <li>• Why is it important for teaching equitably (for promoting inclusion and access)?</li> <li>• How can it support goals of teaching for justice (for promoting critical consciousness and social transformation)?</li> </ul>	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moje (2015) focusing on <i>engaging</i>. Use reading roadmap</li> <li>• Wilder and Msseemmaa (2019). Use reading roadmap</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bring annotated copies of articles and your reading roadmap with you to class</li> <li>• <i>Note: in class today we will form small groups of 2-3; you will work with these partners over the next few weeks.</i></li> </ul>
Jan 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What constitutes disciplinary literacy in my subject area?</li> <li>• What are key texts, purposes, and practices of my focal discipline?</li> </ul>	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discipline-specific readings posted on Canvas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quickwrite</li> </ul>
Jan 20	No class--MLK Day		
Jan 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What constitutes disciplinary literacy in my subject area?</li> <li>• What are key texts, purposes, and practices of my focal discipline?</li> <li>• How do these dimensions relate to other disciplines?</li> </ul>	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moje 2015</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bring your annotated physical copy of the article or summaries of key takeaways to class!</li> </ul>
Jan 27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are your literacies? How are disciplinary literacies part of your life? How do they add value to</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit reflective essay (quickwrite) on Google before class</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quickwrite</li> </ul>

	your life? Do they help you engage with questions of power, and if so, how?		
<b>Module 2: Teaching disciplinary literacy</b>			
Jan 29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Think back on your experiences as a student. How would you characterize the literacy learning opportunities you've had? Where did you receive literacy instruction (or not)? What were the consequences for you as a learner?</li> <li>How can we <i>teach</i> disciplinary literacy in our classrooms?</li> </ul>	<p>Re-read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moje (2015) focusing on <i>engineering, examining, and evaluating</i>. Add to your annotations from earlier this month in a different color ink.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bring annotated copy of article</li> </ul>
Feb 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What constitutes disciplinary literacy <i>teaching</i> in your subject area?</li> </ul>	<p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discipline-specific readings on Canvas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Group work</li> </ul>
Feb 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What constitutes disciplinary literacy <i>teaching</i> in your subject area?</li> </ul>	<p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any remaining pieces on Canvas</li> </ul> <p>With your group, prepare a presentation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>that summarizes your thinking about how skillful educators in your subject area teach students the texts, purposes, and practices of your focal discipline.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presentations and discussion</li> </ul>
<b>Module 3: Designing for disciplinary literacy learning</b>			
Feb 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How can we design mini-units that will support students' inquiry, curiosity, and persistence with challenging texts?</li> <li>Authoring worthy guiding questions and selecting texts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read Wiggins and McTigue Ch. 1</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Small group classroom activity: mini-unit project</li> </ul>
Feb 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cont. mini-unit topics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bring your mini unit framework</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Group mini-unit project</li> </ul>

Feb 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating a final assessment and rubric</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Wiggins and McTigue Ch. 7 and 8</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• N/A</li> </ul>
Feb 19	“TBD ”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TBD</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>
Feb 24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyzing texts for likely challenges</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Lupo (2019)</li> <li>• Watch Rainey text analysis video</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit your unit assessment</li> </ul>
Feb 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How will you support the highest priority text demands of your mini-unit?</li> <li>• Stepping back, what are ways that we have been practicing responsive, equitable, and just teaching through our <i>selection and analysis of texts</i>?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Closely read and analyze your focal texts</li> <li>• Prepare a text analysis of your focal texts</li> <li>• Before spring break: submit your text analysis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mid-term reflection and synthesis</li> </ul>
Mar 3-9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No class—Spring Break</li> </ul>		
Mar 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Best Practices in Vocabulary Instruction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In class Reading</li> </ul>	N/A
Mar 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Best Practices to Support the Literacy Development of Bilingual Learners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Garcia 2023</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quickwrite 6</li> </ul>
Mar 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Best Practices in Fluency Instruction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kuhn 2023</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teamwork</li> </ul>
Mar 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Best Practices to Change the Trajectory of Students Experiencing Reading Difficulties</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risko 2023</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quickwrite 7</li> </ul>
<b>Module 4: Supporting students with varying needs and exceptionalities</b>			
Mar 24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyzing student cases</li> <li>• We have been focusing on ways that educators can support all students. Now we will turn to specific types of differentiated support that some young people may need and how to offer such differentiation. We'll practice thinking about this while not essentializing or treating these needs as static and also while not using deficit language or</li> </ul>	<p>Read/listen to Theo's case and take notes using graphic organizers</p> <p>Read/listen to Jocelyn's case and take notes using graphic organizers</p> <p>.</p> <p>Read/listen to Tyrone's case and take notes using graphic organizers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bring graphic organizer to class</li> </ul>

	framing—these are professional ethics standards. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does this case help you rethink dimensions of your plan?</li> </ul>		
Mar 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How will you differentiate for Theo/Jocelyn/Tyrone?</li> </ul>	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bring graphic organizer to class</li> </ul>
Mar 31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyzing student cases</li> <li>• Draft a Lesson Plan and a specific standard(s) you're covering for student cases</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review Lapp (2023).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quickwrite 8</li> </ul>
Apr 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does the cases help you rethink dimensions of your lesson plan?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lesson Plan</li> </ul>
Apr 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finalize student cases</li> <li>• Finalize your lesson plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quickwrite 9</li> </ul>
Apr 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disciplinary practice project and presentation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disciplinary practice project and presentation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quickwrite 10 (presentation reflection)</li> </ul>
<b>Module 5: Culminating project</b>			
Apr 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss Final Project</li> <li>• Workshop time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual project: Create a mini-unit to support your students' continued disciplinary literacy learning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• N/A</li> </ul>
Apr 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workshop time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• N/A</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• N/A</li> </ul>
Apr 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Final class meeting</li> <li>• Circling back to the pillars and our original readings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Come ready to share your progress and receive feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical friends discussion and feedback</li> </ul>

Final project due by: Apr 28

### Quickwrite and Quickwrite Response Guidelines

You will have multiple quickwrites and quickwrite responses to complete this semester. Each should be thoughtful and reflect your careful consideration of the course themes and readings. It is encouraged that you ask questions and make personal connections with the readings.

By the due date, you should complete at least one initial post (estimated length 300-500 words) and one response to your dialogue partner (estimated length 150-250 words).

## Rubric for Reflections

	Meets (5 pts)	Approaching (3 pts)	Needs improvement (0 points)
<b>Quality of initial post</b>	Reflection includes well-reasoned claims based in course readings. It is evident that you are carefully reading and synthesizing important ideas. You identify takeaways for your own professional practice and/or name important questions or tensions that persist.	Reflection includes ideas related to course readings. It appears that you have not read as carefully because the reflection mostly summarizes content, it leans too heavily on direct quotations, and/or it does not engage deeply with the ideas.	Reflection does not engage with ideas from readings or is not completed on time.
<b>Quality of response</b>	Response engages substantively with your partner's ideas. You meaningfully extend and press on the ideas in your partner's writing by, for example, suggesting additional connections or interpretations or linking to specific points in course texts. Your manner of response indicates continued intellectual engagement with course readings and themes.	Response engages partially with your partner's ideas. Instead of extending or pressing on your partner's ideas, you might make a more superficial connection or focus in on a smaller detail in their writing rather than grappling with the full set of ideas.	Response does not engage with partner's ideas, is not grounded in readings and course themes, or is not completed on time.

## Graphic Organizer Project Guidelines

With a small group, you will deeply explore the literacy practices and teaching approaches of an academic discipline of your choosing. You can choose mathematics, literature, one of the natural/experimental sciences (e.g., biology), or one of the social sciences (e.g., history).

Read and consider the ideas for your discipline. Then, use the readings to complete the graphic organizer template. Be sure to cite the readings you are drawing upon as a part of your work.

Once you have completed the graphic organizer, you will construct a presentation and share your findings with the class.

### Graphic Organizer

My focal discipline is: \_\_\_\_\_

### Disciplinary Literacy in My Focal Discipline

Types of <b>questions</b> that drive the disciplinary inquiry of adult professionals	Ways of pursuing questions that adult professionals use (how do disciplinarians <b>conduct investigations</b> ?)	Ways of communicating that adult professionals use (what are <b>literacy practices</b> disciplinarians use to read/write texts?)

### Ideas for Teaching Students My Focal Discipline

[NOTE: your ideas about teaching should only be here, not in the table above]

Specific Examples or Ideas
<i>How could you engage students in disciplinary inquiry?</i> <i>What texts could they read and write?</i> <i>How could you support students' disciplinary reading, writing, and talk?</i>



## Mini Unit Project Guidelines

With a small group, you will develop:

- a short (approximately 5-day) mini unit aimed at supporting students' disciplinary literacy learning
- a text analysis and plan for supporting prioritized literacy demands
- and a written explanation of your reasoning that draws on course readings and themes
- a recorded video presentation of your work

The **unit plan** should include the following:

- Clearly stated unit goals (length: 1 paragraph)
- Summative assessment and rubric aligned with unit goals (length: variable)
- Sequenced daily objectives, formative assessments, and activities that “add up” to the unit goals (length: variable)
- Texts that you would read/use with students

The **text analysis** should include:

- Analysis of one text, considering:
  - What is the relevance of this text to disciplinary practice?
  - What are the literacy demands of this text? Give examples.
  - Consider background knowledge, structure/ genre, vocabulary, and engagement.
  - Are there any features that are challenging to you as an adult reader?
- A ranking of the most important literacy demands to support. Which text demands are highest priority and why do you say so?
- Your plan for scaffolding prioritized literacy demands of that text. What is your plan for supporting these demands within your mini unit?

The **mini unit rationale** should describe why you made the specific decisions you've made and how you drew from and adapted the ideas from class readings. (length: 2-3 pages single spaced). Include a works cited section at the end.

The **recorded video presentation** should be 8-10 min long and explain your project and reasoning.

As you plan, be sure to deeply consider key elements of disciplinary literacy teaching:

- *Engaging*: Ways to engage students in disciplinary inquiry
  - What will students be investigating?
  - How will they investigate it?
  - What texts will they read and write?
- *Engineering*: Ways to support students' success
  - How will you support students' disciplinary reading and writing?
  - How will you support their disciplinary talk?
  - How will you gather information about what students are learning?
  - How will you gather information about how their disciplinary reading, writing, and reasoning is developing?
- *Examining*: Ways you will help students analyze disciplinary language
  - How will you help students notice disciplinary language?
  - How will you help students use disciplinary language?
- *Evaluating*: Ways you will help students

- How will you help students reflect on disciplinary literacy in relation to their identities and other ways of knowing?
- decide whether or how they will use disciplinary practices, and/or
- critique problematic or outdated elements of disciplinary practice, such as specific norms, conventions, or assumptions.

### Rubric for Mini Unit Project

	<b>Exceeds (10 pts)</b>	<b>Meets (8 pts)</b>	<b>Approaching (6 pts)</b>	<b>Needs improvement (0 pts)</b>
<b>Unit Focus and Alignment</b>	Your unit is designed to support students' disciplinary inquiry with texts. It includes specific ways that you will support students' disciplinary reading, writing, and talk and assess their learning. It is clear that all aspects of the lesson are aligned with one another and in the service of disciplinary literacy.	Your unit includes disciplinary inquiry with texts. It includes ways that you will support students' disciplinary reading, writing, and talk and assess their learning. Most aspects of the lesson are aligned with one another and in the service of disciplinary literacy.	Your unit includes some opportunity for students to learn aspects of disciplinary literacy. A strong inquiry frame may be absent, or there may be major areas of misalignment (e.g., the texts are not suitable for pursuing the disciplinary question).	Major dimensions of disciplinary literacy teaching are missing.
<b>Depth of Design</b>	Your unit fully addresses Moje's 4Es. In addition to text-based inquiry learning, your unit includes opportunities for students to meaningfully reflect on their identities or ways of knowing. Students are offered opportunities to critique and/or make choices about whether and how they will employ disciplinary conventions/norms/assumptions.	Your unit addresses Moje's 4Es. It includes some opportunity for students to reflect on their identities or ways of knowing. Students are offered opportunities to critique and/or make choices about whether and how they will employ disciplinary conventions/norms/assumptions.	Your unit partially addresses Moje's 4Es. One "E" may be missing or included only superficially.	Major dimensions of disciplinary literacy teaching are missing.
<b>Lesson Justification</b>	You thoroughly justify your design based on disciplinary literacy goals and principles.	You justify your changes based on disciplinary literacy goals and principles. Most claims are warranted and clear.	You offer some justification for your changes. Some claims are warranted and clear, while others	You do not justify major design decisions, or your justifications are not well grounded.

			are vague or incomplete.	
<b>Text analysis</b>	You analyze one focal text for its strengths and limitations and possible challenges for student readers. You prioritize possible challenges and make a plan for supporting them in your instruction; you do not invoke deficit discourses at any point. Your analysis is nuanced and specific; your scaffolding plan seems particularly well suited for supporting likely needs of real youth.	You analyze one focal text for its strengths and limitations and possible challenges for student readers. You prioritize likely challenges and make a plan for supporting them in your instruction; you do not invoke deficit discourses at any point.	Your analysis and/or scaffolding plan are partial. For example, you miss key text demands in your analysis, or you prioritize only superficial text demands in your scaffolding plan.	Your analysis and/or scaffolding plan are incomplete or unsatisfactory. For example, you may have dimensions missing, you may indicate misunderstanding about major course concepts, or you may invoke deficit discourses about students or contexts that keep you from drawing productive conclusions for your teaching.
<b>Use of Course Readings (throughout)</b>	You draw deeply on course readings and course themes to justify your design and inform your reflection. It is clear that you have used the course readings and concepts to drive your thinking.	You draw on multiple course readings/themes to justify your design and inform your reflection. Sometimes there are missed opportunities to draw on course readings/themes or imprecisions in the way the readings are used.	You draw on multiple course readings to justify your design and inform your reflection. The majority of the citations are superficial (i.e., they read as if they are “tagged on” rather than as if they are driving the thinking).	You do not draw on specific course readings or only use course readings superficially.