**A CULTURAL STUDIES APPROACH   
TO LITERATURE METHODS**

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English language arts methods courses addressing the teaching of literature traditionally have emphasized reader response approaches first articulated by Louise Rosenblatt in *Literature as Exploration* (1938) and further developed by leading scholars in the National Council of the Teachers of English and Rosenblatt herself in the 1960s-90s (Squire, 1964; Squire and Applebee, 1968; Purves, 1972; Purves and Beach, 1972; Bleich, 1975, Rosenblatt, 1978; Beach, 1993). As a movement for the reform of English teaching, reader response focuses on the interaction between reader and text and helps teachers move away from telling students what to think or herding them all to the same “correct” interpretation. Reader response has favored large and small group discussion, literature circles, creative writing, dramatic and artistic activities that foster students actively engaging with literature and developing and sharing their individual response and understanding.

While future English teachers still need to understand reader response, in recent years we have developed more complex understandings of readers, texts, and contexts than those encompassed by reader response approaches. Current social and linguistic theory has shown us that Rosenblatt’s “individual reader” is always, already constructed by his or her social, cultural, linguistic, and historical situation (Foucault, 1974; Saussure, 1977; Culler, 1981; Eagleton, 1983). Thus it has become clear that we need to multiply, complicate, and enrich initial responses, inviting students to explore texts and see issues from a variety of cultural, theoretical, and critical perspectives.

Just as it is naïve to think of readers as isolated individuals, texts themselves have become understood not as discrete entities, closed off from other texts, but as participating in an intertextual web of shared language and social codes (Barthes, 1974; Derrida, 1976; Kristeva, 1980; Bakhtin, 1986). Reader response romanticized the uniqueness of both reader and literary work. In an increasingly unequal world, reader response did not emphasize multicultural texts or perspectives, differential power relationships, connections between literature and history, or the use and function of rhetoric. It has not examined the relationships between texts, between literary works and informational texts, or between written works and other cultural signs and images (Berger, 1972; Scholes, 1982; Hall, 1997; Barry, 1997).

Thus, reader response has not helped teachers develop meaningful and relevant curriculum. A reader response course has been typically a series of “pearls on a string,” one literary work after the next where texts are chosen from a narrow range, content is disconnected, critical thinking doesn’t build, writing is conducted as an isolated exercise about established texts, and preparation for taking action in the world is short-circuited. Reader response teaching not only has not addressed a wide range of materials such as visual images, digital materials, or “informational text,” it has not provided guidance for integrating these diverse forms into English study. In a time when standardized approaches sap meaning from the curriculum, reader response has not put issues in student’s lives at the center of attention or foreground important questions in the world. In our era of neo-liberal reform, when funding for education and support for teachers is undercut, class size increased, curriculum corporatized and testing standardized, reader response has not supported students or teachers thinking carefully and critically about schooling or school knowledge.

Cultural Studies

The limitations of reader response for teaching English are precisely the strengths of a cultural studies approach. Cultural studies has recognized literacy as a social, cultural, and historical activity. A tradition of critical thought in university humanities and social science disciplines, cultural studies has promise for significant renovation of curriculum and instruction in secondary schools, especially English language arts. Emerging in the 1970s, cultural studies brought together elements of marxism, feminism, multiculturalism, literary criticism, social theory, postcolonial studies, popular culture studies, and media/film studies (Benjamin, 1969; Williams, 1980; Spivak, 1987; Bennett, 1990; Easthope, 1991; Shiach, 1999; Storey, 2003). Growing academic interest in cultural studies in the eighties and nineties led to a variety of conferences, journals, and institutionalized programs. First associated with the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham, England and, in particular, the work of Stuart Hall, cultural studies has considered not only traditional high culture but also, in the anthropological sense, popular culture and everyday practices. In cultural studies the word “text” has encompassed literary and informational texts, film, television, and the internet, advertising, architecture, and fashion — in fact, any type of meaningful cultural artifact.

With origins in adult education courses outside of the traditional university, cultural studies has included activist scholarship committed to disempowered populations (Grossberg, 1992), a politically engaged pedagogy, and a self-conscious critique of schooling. Issues of voice and empowerment have been central to cultural studies. Drawing on Antonio Gramsci’s concept of cultural hegemony, cultural studies has been committed to critical thinking about the way that texts and ideologies are used to naturalize and perpetuate social, racial, and economic inequality. Cultural studies has also been interested in agency, play, resistance, appropriation, and the diverse way texts and signs can be utilized (Storey, 2003, p. 5). The feminist understanding that the “personal is political” has been important to cultural studies as its practitioners consider how the practices of daily life are connected to broader social systems (Hall, 1992, p. 282). Cultural Studies has attended to youth identity and culture (Hebdidge, 1979; Mahiri, 2003; Jefferson & Hall, 2006). Cultural studies has also emphasized not only the local, but also the ways that social practices extend beyond nation-states (Gilroy, 1992, p.188).

Teaching and learning have been important areas of work in cultural studies (Steinberg & Kincheloe, 1996). Giroux has argued that cultural studies “provides the basis for understanding pedagogy as a form of cultural production rather than as the transmission of a particular skill, body of knowledge, or set of values” (1992, p.202). In terms strikingly relevant to our current era of neo-liberal reform, Giroux stated that cultural studies “runs counter to the instrumental, disinterested rationality that governs traditional notions of the process of schooling, the meaning of pedagogy, and the identity of teachers” (1994, p. 468). Cultural studies has overcome artificial distinctions between content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge (Segall, 2004) and has been considered as the successor to critical pedagogy in an increasingly postmodern world (Hytten, 1998). A teacher might use cultural studies to help students think about race and social class inequalities in schooling, tracking, the standards movement, standardized testing, and the relationship of these features of education to the overall social order (Willis, 1978; Sefton-Green, 2011). Indeed, Giroux (1992) stated that cultural studies approaches can empower teachers as public intellectuals and make their work socially transformative.

Cultural studies has particular relevance to contemporary English language arts teaching. Cultural studies has raised questions about the literary canon, about who defines “cultural literacy,” about why English classes tend to emphasize the literary features of text (genres, terms) and abstracted reading and writing “skills.” A cultural studies critique has shown how traditional literary pedagogy can function to uncritically transmit class-based knowledge and values and decenter the focus on individual texts in favor of broader social formations (Balsamo, 1992, p. 146-7). Cultural studies has helped teachers recognize the language arts competencies and knowledges that students develop outside of school, and foster meaningful study of media and popular culture (Buckingham & Sefton-Green, 1994; Hill, 2009). Cultural studies has helped us move away from a relentless focus on isolated works and begin to understand texts as constructions within complex webs of other texts and critically examining the role and position of the reader (Pirie, 1997). Cultural studies has lead to the formation of more meaningful and relevant thematic language arts curriculum and facilitate students becoming critical researchers of popular culture, mainstream media, film, television, music, as well as canonical texts. (Carey-Webb, 2001; Morrell, 2005; Webb, 2012). Cultural studies is consistent with directly teaching literary theories to secondary students to develop their analytic skills (Appleman, 2000; Schade-Eckert, 2006; Gillespie, 2010). While cultural studies clearly goes beyond reader response approaches, reader response’s emphasis on student-based reaction to texts remains important in order to avoid top-down, “political correct” teaching (Carey-Webb, 2001).

A Cultural Studies Methods Course

Very few of the future teachers in English 4800 Teaching Literature in Secondary Schools at Western Michigan University have had previous experience with cultural studies. These mostly white students from Michigan are often the first in their family to earn a college degree. They have taken our other required methods course (4790 Teaching Writing in Secondary Schools) as well as English and education courses, and will be intern teachers in the following semester. Multicultural texts present in their college courses were rarely part of their high school experience. In a recent survey I conducted, they reported that their secondary school English curriculum was organized around literary genre study, terms, and anthologies or standard paperbacks, such as *Romeo and Juliet*, *To Kill a Mockingbird,* or *Animal Farm*.

In the first week of the course, I immerse these students in new technologies and literacies and the enormous range of potential teaching materials available on line.[[1]](#endnote-1) As they copy, alter, link, and intervene in digital texts from various online archives my students begin to think about texts, hypertexts, intertextuality, and the complex network of texts engaged by the reading process in ways that go beyond reader response and start them toward cultural studies (Pope, 1994; Landow, 2007). Consideration of the diverse curricular opportunities created by reading, writing and communicating on-line raises questions about established materials, new approaches, and teacher freedom. This semester my students read a short excerpt (p.63-72) from Joel Spring’s *Education Networks: Power, Wealth, Cyberspace and the Digital Mind* (2012) which generated concern about for-profit, corporate-created curriculum. Our discussion went from mass-marketed textbooks to on-line courses -- such as those being created by Pearson to meet the Common Core Standards -- and we considered whether these supposedly “research-based” and “politically safe” materials would engage the interest and range expectations for all students. Creating their own teaching website with textual, informational, and video resources and links for their future students, parents, and colleagues (linked to our course on-line syllabus at AllenWebb.net) helped these future teachers start to see ways that the Internet can foster alternative teacher- and student-created materials and resources.

To begin contrasting student experience with cultural studies perspectives, we examined how different language arts curriculum frameworks foster certain kinds of readings and pedagogies. This semester we looked at the canonical poem “The Passionate Shepard to His Love” written by Christopher Marlowe in 1599. We discussed how traditional frameworks such as reading skills, cultural literacy, or literary forms approaches would address either decoding words and vocabulary, or providing knowledge of famous authors and texts, or examining poetic language and structures. The future teachers in my class thought that a reader response teacher would ask students about their personal responses to the poem, how it made them feel, and how the poem connected to their own experiences. When we speculated about how a cultural studies teacher would approach the poem, my students came up with several possibilities: a class might explore the social context of the poem -- an exchange between an elegant man and refined lady -- and how the work implicitly constructed class and gender roles; a class might consider the differences between the real life of shepherds and rural workers in the 16th C and the “beds of roses / and a thousand fragrant posies” portrayed in the poem; and/or they could consider the possible impact on the pastoral and bucolic setting, the poem’s “valleys, groves, hills and fields,” of industrialization, urban expansion, and modernization. Going beyond the poem itself, bringing in historical and cultural material and engaging in additional research, would strengthen all of these cultural studies approaches.

Next my students learn more specifically about cultural studies teaching. They read sample chapters illustrating cultural studies approaches from my books (*Literature and Lives*, *Teaching Literature of Today’s Middle East*). I emphasized that cultural studies teaching should:

* Address issues that matter in the world and/or students’ lives;
* Incorporate a diversity of historically and thematically related materials, including traditional, multicultural and young adult literature, popular culture, mass media, and informational text;
* Engage in close reading not to understand works in isolation but to connect texts to other texts, explore social codes, written and visual rhetorics, and historically grounded themes
* Address issues of power and inequality;
* Incorporate multiple viewpoints and different cultural perspectives;
* Center controversy and critical thinking;
* Foster creative engagement and action taking.

This semester we also considered the limitations and affordances of the new Common Core standards for cultural studies teaching. We read from *Teaching to Exceed the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards* (Beach, Thein, & Webb, 2012) and students participated in a series of collaborative activities in the on-line Virtual High School (LiteraryWorlds.org) designed to accompany the book. While at the time of writing testing regimes for the standards are still underdevelopment, these future teachers learned that precisely in order to achieve outstanding intellectual and academic accomplishment, the Common Core Standards set general goals for student learning but do not specify what or how to teach.  We considered ways cultural studies teaching can facilitate meaningful combinations of literary works with “informational text” or “seminal documents of American history” and create opportunities for the close reading and analytic and persuasive writing emphasized in the Common Core.

My students then develop a short cultural studies unit plan that allows them to start thinking about how to create cultural studies lessons at the secondary level around specific literary texts. Some titles of recent plans include “*Reservation Blues* and Cultural Diversity,” “*The Outsiders*: Youth Violence and Social Conflict,” “*Amazing ‘True’ Story of a Teenage Single Mom* and Teen Pregnancy,” “*Emma* and Social Acceptance.” (Sample plans are available at CulturalStudiesTeaching.wikispaces.com.)

The remaining eight weeks of the course are focused on more deeply understanding cultural studies teaching. I turn the class over to groups of 3-5 students leading two-week units focused on helping their fellow future teachers consider more comprehensive approaches that go beyond literary works as anchor texts and toward the use of a variety of materials to help future teachers create rich and extended examination of exemplary cultural studies themes in secondary schools. My syllabus suggests some cultural studies topics that seem to me to be current and controversial. Fall 2012 suggestions included: elections and democracy; social class inequality / Occupy Movement; English language learners; unions; the environment / global warming; terrorism; the Iraq and Afghan Wars; the Arab Spring; Islam and Islamophobia; sexuality; sexual orientation; mass media and consumerism; Native American experience; white privilege; and, service learning. As soon as the first week of the semester student groups form and chose among these, or propose their own. During the student-led portion of the course the groups determine all reading, make all assignments, lead all activities, and give grades. The goal is to significantly influence their classmates approach as classroom teachers, and, in turn, as I tell them, to impact literally thousands of secondary students.

Let me briefly describe a couple of recent student-led units to give some flavor of how the course prepares teachers to address cultural studies topics. In my most recent class Megan Klein, Ryan Dougherty, and Shelbi Ciccone decided to help the other future teachers in the class think about teaching a popular and growing genre: soldier memoirs from the Iraq and Afghan wars. Many of these memoirs are compelling stories written by young men and women not long out of high school, provide diverse of perspectives on the conflict, and raise questions for secondary students now of enlistment age. Their unit began by having us write notes about our memories of news media portrayals of the wars, read 100 pages of a soldier memoir, and write two-page responses (“recommended (but not required) memoirs: *My War, House To House, The Unforgiving Minute, Faith Under Fire, One Bullet Away, The Blog Of War*”). The next class period involved a discussion of the memoirs and a visit to the class of two of their friends, both former American soldiers involved in the conflicts – one was on the leading edge of the Iraq invasion. Subsequent classes included viewing and discussing the famous Wikileaks “Collateral Murder” (YouTube) video taken from an American helicopter recording the chatter of American troops and the killing of several Iraqis including a Reuters reporter. The group leaders had us do extensive reading about Iraq and Afghan culture including a selection from Muhsin al-Musawi’s *Reading Iraq*, reading about the history of American involvement in the Middle East, and study a passage from a recent American history textbook about 9-11. They organized a whole class visit to a local mosque and a meeting with the mosque’s Imam. (None of these future teachers had ever been to a mosque.) The final project required us to identify resources helpful to secondary English teachers teaching about these wars, write an explanation of this resource, and email them to a member of the group who posted them on a website. Future teachers identified a wide range of resources from a young adult novel by Walter Dean Meyers (*Sunrise over Fallujah*) to scenes from the television cartoon series *Family Guy*.

In the same class, Sarah Mazure, Tony Cerullo, and Mike Scully focused their unit on how to teach about sexuality. They called their unit “Libido and the Librarian” and created a website (LibidoandtheLibrarian.weebly.com). For our first class meeting they assigned the young adult novel *Perks of Being a Wallflower*, and had us select passages that addressed sexuality and write about teaching the passage. They began with a discussion of sexuality in schools and the relevance of the topic to language arts classes before turning to *Wallflower*. For the next class we were assigned to select a popular book, magazine, movie, television program, or video game and examine the portrayal of gender and sexuality and share responses on the class computer conference. They also created an on-line image gallery from pop culture, a collection of YouTube clips addressing the media and sexuality and teaching about homophobia, and addressing sexuality and gender roles for us to examine and discuss. Subsequent classes read Viv Ellis’ 2009 article from the *English Journal “*What English Can Contribute to Understanding Sexual Identities,” articles on obscenity, a blog post by Laurie Hulse Anderson about her novel *Speak* and whether or not it is pornography, and a news report about a high school that removed novels by Sarah Ockler and Kurt Vonnegut from their curriculum and library. They had students examine the short story “Ugly Duckling” by A.A. Milne and accompanying teacher’s guide from a middle school textbook. Their final project was to have us write a teaching plan, with explanation and “thorough justification” for teaching a text charged with “obscenity.”

These were interesting and important units where future teachers working collaboratively trained other future teachers in meaningful and relevant cultural studies teaching. I venture to say that all of the units that my students have created are interesting and important; I urge you not to try to draw on the specific texts or approaches my students used, but to attend to the critical insights and creative possibilities that cultural studies offers – and the innovation possible when students have freedom to make decisions. While the topics are important, most important is the idea of cultural studies itself, the vision of creating meaningful thematic curriculum that will help secondary students think critically about dominant ways of knowing, examine pressing cultural questions, closely read a wide diversity of genres and “texts,” and connect to both local and global issues.

In the development of these units I am on the sidelines, making a few suggestions but not directing student leader choices of materials or activities. I want the future teachers in my class to develop the ability to create meaningful cultural studies curriculum on their own, to see their future classrooms as places where issues in the world and student’s lives are at the center of attention. I see this as part of my methods course shaping teachers – to use Giroux’s expression – as public intellectuals (1994, p. 468).

Since the units include the study of a portion of a traditional, for-profit classroom textbook (the A.A. Milne story from a middle school literature textbook or the recent history textbook’s discussion of 9-11) we have looked at the way knowledge and learning are constructed in commercial texts and how the mass-marketed pedagogical apparatus shapes what students are “supposed” to know -- and don’t need to know. We consider how the existing curriculum can be critiqued and also serve as a launching point for including different materials and a broader, and more critical, range of perspectives.

Obviously the idea is not to shy away from controversy, but to center controversy, to have controversial questions energize learning. Diana Hess (2009) argued that the inclusion of controversial questions in the curriculum is essential to the functioning of a democratic society. In my classes we have often discussed how teachers develop the freedom they need to address controversial topics in real world schools, public, private or religious. We have considered how careful reading and examination of curriculum guides, state or national standards, or school policies often reveals more flexibility than teachers typically take advantage of. We have shared many ways to support experimental teaching including clear communication with students, parents, colleagues and administrators, and the importance of including a diversity of perspectives, alternative assignments, garnering positive attention at the school or in the local newspaper, and drawing on support from professional organizations. We have talked about how a fear of risk taking, reluctance to stand up for what one believes in, or even a lack of interest in new and challenging ideas can be destructive to the teaching process and to the teacher as a person and professional.

The student-led approach to teaching the course has made the class a continual learning experience for me, as the professor. A class full of capable college students researching and debating the teaching of a diversity of evolving topics has brought to the table a variety of reading, film, popular culture, Internet resources, and other materials that I would never have been able to gather on my own. While I am clearly still the professor, meeting with a new group of students every two weeks outside of class to review their planned unit, in class I am no longer in front of the room or at the head of the circle. I do the reading, sometimes the written assignments, and participate in discussions just like the other students. I don’t think the students forget that I am the professor, but my role now is dramatically different. I do a lot of listening. If it is not immodest to say, I think Friere’s description of problem-posing education fits this class pretty well:

Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with students-teachers. The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself [sic] taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow. In this process, arguments based on "authority" are no longer valid; in order to function authority must be on the side of freedom, not against it. Here, no one teaches another, nor is anyone self-taught. People teach each other… (Freire, 1968, p. 67)

Reflections on Cultural Studies and Literature Methods

Preparing teachers in the era of basic skills, mandated standards, and for-profit corporate curriculum and testing, it is important that we empower them to envision meaningful, high expectation teaching so that they can push back against administrators or colleagues who misunderstand standards as standardization, or who think of schooling merely as a way to fit students into the existing economy. One of the risks of standards is that they can lead to fragmented curriculum organized by addressing individual standards, rather than integrated curriculum that builds increasing sophisticated connections and understanding. Cultural studies frames teaching as transformative cultural work rather than the conveyance of disconnected information or abstracted, isolated skills. Cultural studies facilitates the development of integrated, thematic curriculum in which a wide range of literary, informational, and visual texts can be placed into meaningful dialogue. Cultural studies requires the development of close and careful reading skills emphasizing context and a meaningful and purposeful understanding of history. It can include canonical texts and make these texts relevant to contemporary issues and problems, allowing students to study what Foucault calls “the history of the present.” (Foucault, 1979, p. 31) Thus, a cultural studies approach fosters deep and complex thinking. It easily lends itself to differentiated instruction where groups or individuals in the same class working at different academic levels can address the same topics and themes using a diversity of materials suited to different abilities and interests.

Cultural studies can focus on issues in the lives of students, critical thinking about their own literacy practices and the media that surround them, and attention to important and controversial issues in the world. It calls for writing that develops persuasive argument to real audiences, and involves taking action to address issues. Cultural studies can help students and teachers think critically about schooling. A cultural studies pedagogy can draw on and develop analysis of the events, texts, and social interactions that shape and engage students, facilitating relevant questions about power, inequality, and social justice. It is relevant to important issues in the world and students’ lives, to preparing citizens for our unfinished democracy, and to creating a more just and sustainable world.

There has been some evolution in my approach to tackling the theoretical difficulties of cultural studies. When I began teaching the course in the 1990s I included on the reading list explicit critical theory and essays about cultural studies by Giroux and others. While I enjoyed engaging future teachers directly with challenging theoretical reading, it was the rare student who was able to master these texts on their own. As I increasingly tried to use class time to maximum effect, these essays migrated from this undergraduate certification course to my graduate courses for inservice teachers.

Rather than laying theory on my students I have found that they more deeply understand the approach if they not only read about it but also experience it, and that includes creating, developing, and shaping much of my course. It is not surprising that the questions addressed in the theory frequently emerge in our discussions: What should the curriculum be? Who defines it? Whose interests does it serve?

I find that the future teachers in my classes respond positively to cultural studies. Here are three samples from recent computer conference discussions:

I have always thought of teaching through the more traditional approach. I was making lessons that focused on things that are "testable" like plot, character development, lit language, etc. Now, I'm beginning to rethink my priorities however. Before, cultural aspects were present in my lessons, but more in the back seat, and now I'm questioning why that is. High school is always seen as a difficult time in people's lives. By trying to teach about the world around the students, they are given the chance to begin actively participating in it. Because of new found understanding, students will become sensitive to cultural issues, which raises awareness of each other and themselves. (Stephanie Herda)

The problem with English classes I'm realizing is that, somewhat ironically, the focus has shifted too much on the teaching of the literature itself when it should be on the teaching of how to use the literature to examine and understand issues faced by society. What I really appreciate is the use of the "classics" in the cultural studies approach, because often times teachers are forced to teach many of these texts, and, as it turns out, they can be implemented in a wide variety of ways I never even though of. (Matt Furrow)

I think one of the best things about teaching from a cultural studies perspective and pulling in other genres (art, film, articles, short stories, history, testimonials, etc.) is that teaching in this way fosters (real) literacy and promotes critical thinking and critical exploration of one's own ideologies and relationships with the somewhat fluctuating culture in which one lives. When our students ask "Why do we have to do this," we shouldn't hesitate to talk explicitly about how reading and watching and discussing and writing helps them think, learn, and internalize. (Virginia Shedd)

Concerns that a few students express early in the semester about transitioning away from a traditional literary canon or approach, by the end of the student-led experience, seem to evaporate. A certain excitement about the student-led portion of the class combined with our discussions of controversy, rigid curriculums, testing and standards, prepare future teachers to address these concerns as well as move beyond them.

Like all preservice methods instructors, I find myself caught between theory and practice, between what students are interested in knowing and what I think they need to know, between what I want to convince new teachers is possible and the established practices they are familiar with and likely to encounter in the schools. Interestingly, it is not the case the future teachers are only interested in practice, and the professor only in theory. The preservice teachers I work with are typically not interested in practical questions such as “How do you get students to do their homework?” or “How do you handle the paper load?” – questions inservice teachers resonate with. As I have described, my preservice students are eager to explore inventive, critical thinking curriculum involving new materials and approaches. I use the final exam for the class to try to give them some perspectives to compare to cultural studies. They write about what and how they learned in the class by comparing our class with other approaches to English education, either by (their choice): 1) reading a standard English education methods textbook, 2) studying several on-line syllabi of methods courses at other universities (at EnglishMethods.com), or 3) making several observations and talking with a secondary English teacher in the field. They bring their take-home essays to class at the time set for the final exam and we discuss their observations.

Of course, I am curious how aspiring teacher enthusiasm for cultural studies will play out as these new teachers enter the system and their career unfolds. Writing this chapter I undertook a survey of all the graduates I was able to reach of my cultural studies methods course from the last eight years. This survey did generate information about challenges encountered by teachers attempting to use cultural studies methods. Teachers pointed to practical difficulties such as administrators opposed to controversial topics, challenges obtaining texts given tight budgets, and limitations imposed by mandated curriculum. A seven-year veteran teacher explained that preservice course work over all had not sufficiently stressed standards-based instruction (though, of course, eight years ago there was less emphasis on standards). The same teacher reported of my class that, in retrospect, “It seemed as though we were working in a fantasy world.” Despite these concerns of a few, the vast majority of graduates of my methods course remained overwhelming positive about the course and cultural studies. 88.9% believed the student-led approach was “an effective way to learn about cultural studies.” 75.5% stated that they were able to use cultural studies approaches in their teaching. 96.6% of these experienced teachers believe that cultural studies is “an effective way to teach English.”

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1. I teach in a classroom I designed for this class that has a set of laptops so we can easily integrate the Internet, and cameras and microphones in the ceiling so we can record student-led activities that they can analyze later on their own or with me. Description of the room at EnglishEducationLab.info. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)