



ArmchairEd Course Syllabus  
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**Overview:**

ArmchairEd.com currently provides continuing education to educators, using premiere published books on cutting-edge educational themes and topics. The program has been operating since Fall, 2000, and has provided continuing education to hundreds of educators.

**Course Goals and Objectives:**

As a result of these courses, the student will be able to:

1. Stay current on educational themes and topics pertinent to teaching and education  
Identify current research in education  
Apply this knowledge to the student's current educational position

The following published books are currently being used as texts for the ArmchairEd course:  
*How the Science of Reading Informs Teaching*

Seidenberg, M. (2018). *Language at the speed of sight: how we read, why so many cant, and what can be done about it*. New York: Basic Books.

Gentry, R., & Ouellette, G. (2019). *Brain words: how the science of reading informs teaching*. Portsmouth, NH: Stenhouse Publishers.

Understanding the science of reading is more important than ever. This course draws on cutting-edge research in machine learning, linguistics, and early childhood development. The past two decades have brought giant leaps in our understanding of how the brain works. In this course, you will learn how children's brains develop as they become readers and discover ways you can take concrete steps to promote this critical developmental passage. Using a research-based framework of "brain words"—dictionaries in the brain where students store and automatically access sounds, spellings, and meanings—the course offers a wealth of information that will transform thinking and practice:

- Reading and neurological circuitry, including evidence that spelling is at the core of the reading brain
- Tools to recognize what works, what doesn't, and why
- Practical classroom activities for daily teaching and student assessment
- Insights about what brain research tells us about whole language and phonics-first movements
- Deepened understanding of dyslexia through the enhanced lens of brain science

**Credit Options:**

The course will be offered for five credits, based on the length and substance of the books. The five-credit course will include 50 multiple-choice questions and five required essays.

**Grading Rubric:**

Pass/Fail Coursework must be passed with 70% criterion

Letter Grade: 90% A grade  
80% B grade  
70% C grade

Multiple Choice Test: 25% of overall grade

### **Two essays required for Language at the Speed of Sight**

Option 1: Make a copy of the Proposed Requirements for Licensure as a Certified Skilled Reader on p 102-103 of the text. Read through it carefully and mark every requirement that you are presently teaching your students. In your essay, identify the items you marked and comment on how you are presenting those elements to your students. Include the copy of the Requirement with your essay.

Option 2: Seidenberg views "low SES or speaking a minority dialect" as risk factors for students in our schools. Research recommendations for teacher actions to improve learning for these specific students. In your essay, describe what you found out and how you will incorporate at least two of the strategies into your teaching to benefit your at-risk students. After a minimum of two weeks, summarize your essay by describing the results you see in the at-risk students you identified.

Option 3: How we read . . . Why so many can't . . . What can be done about it. What do you think? After reading this text and hearing what a reading scientist thinks about learning to read, are you willing to do some action research to see what can be done about it? Choose one of your most impaired readers, listen to the child read, talk to him/her about reading. Can you make a plan that will impact the student's reading and bring new understanding? Your essay will be a plan of action to determine what is impacting the student's learning and some ways you can make reading easier. Implement the plan for at least two weeks and evaluate.

Option 4: Create your own demonstration of the learning you take from this text. Identify your topic and describe it in an introductory paragraph. You may choose from the list below or develop your own.

Plan a unit with assessment

Action Research

Extended learning, including research and developed activities

Compare/contrast your current education practice to that of the text

Create forms or systems for use in your classroom including assessment tools

Plan an 'event', meeting or other pertinent program and report/reflect on it

### **Two essays required for Brain Words**

Option 1: Connect with a kindergarten or first grade teacher and ask for a copy of a piece of writing done by a child who uses invented spelling. (If you teach K or 1, use a writing sample of one of your own students.) Date the writing you selected and in your essay, (You might want to reread p. 66-69 to review the phases of developmental spelling.) After four weeks, access another piece of writing from the child, analyze the writing and determine the phase the writing indicates now. Summarize your essay with any changes you see in the second piece of writing.

Option 2: Answer the questions in the Keypoint, p. 61 to begin your essay. Choose one of these reading instruction elements as your focus in the next month. Identify the reading element you choose to work on and create a plan for the focus in your reading instruction for four weeks.

Option 3: The authors assert that many schools do not teach spelling now. Is your school one of them? Begin your essay with a description of spelling in your classroom. Reread p. 116-122 in the text. Regardless of whether or not you have a district selected spelling program, what can you add to your spelling program to strengthen it by adding elements from the text? Describe ways you can make your spelling program stronger, try them for three weeks and summarize your essay with the results and whether the strategies strengthened the spelling program.

Option 4: Create your own demonstration of the learning you take from this text. Identify your topic and describe it in an introductory paragraph. You may choose from the list below or develop your own.

Plan a unit with assessment

Action Research

Extended learning, including research and developed activities

Compare/contrast your current education practice to that of the text

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### **Essay scoring rubric:**

Two essays required for Brain Words

Two essays required for Language at the Speed of Sight

Each essay 10% of overall grade

Single Spaced, 10 to 12 size font

Use of introduction and summary statement (even when a unit is developed)

Demonstration of grammar, spelling and writing skill

Demonstration of applied knowledge

**One essay required for Brain Words and Language at the Speed of Sight**

Combined essay: Both of these texts focus on the science of reading. Both of them conclude that the phonological pathway must be understood in order for students to become competent readers, writers and spellers. Brain Words is very directive in the way to accomplish this, with the spell-to-read connection and the five steps to learning brain words. Language at the Speed of Sight really leaves it up to school districts and teachers to determine how to proceed with phonology. For your last essay, put the focus on your most impaired readers. Create a small group and for one month, teach them with reading science in mind. In your essay, describe the plan you will follow for developing reading skills to improve your students' reading. Summarize the essay with a report on your results.

**Combined Essay Scoring Rubric:**

35% of overall grade  
Single spaced, 10 to 12 size font  
Use of introduction and summary statement (even when a unit is developed)  
Demonstration of grammar, spelling and writing skill  
Demonstration of applied knowledge

- **You must download the coursework before starting this course.**
- **Submit all coursework at the same time.**
- **All essays must be fully completed and the rubric followed to receive a grade. Essays not completed to required length will not be processed and revisions will be required.**