Purpose of the Course

The purpose of this course is to introduce you to the components of systems to improve early grade reading in developing countries and to system reform and change. The goal is to enable you to:

• Articulate the theory of system change (key concepts), and list some strategies (practice) for system change, including understanding the incremental nature of change.
• Explain the various components of the system (supervision, materials, training, curriculum) that need real reforms in order to make the system effective.
• Articulate the broader context (culture, government, political, economics) that influences how the system changes or doesn’t.
• Describe the importance of evaluating the effectiveness of system change, starting with how to assess primary students’ reading improvement.

The course will be relevant to those interested in early grade reading for both international and U.S.-based contexts.

Course objectives:

By the end of the course, you will be able to:
• Explain the importance of system reform for improving early grade reading;
• Articulate what is meant by system reform;
• Outline the major theories about how to build or reform an effective system for children’s reading;
• Outline the strategies for system change;
• Articulate the various components of the system such as policy, finance, curriculum, materials, training, supervision, and inclusion that need reform to make the system effective for early grade reading;
• Discuss the importance of context, such as cultural, social, political, and economic factors that influence the effectiveness of system; and
• Describe the importance of evaluating the effectiveness of system change.

### Topics and Methodology

The course will cover the following topics:

1. Systems theory: theories linked to strategies and context
2. Strategies for system reform
3. Components of the system: educational policies
4. Components of the system: instructional system
5. Components of the system: teacher preparation
6. Components of the system: supervision and support
7. Components of the system: inclusion and exclusion
8. Components of the system: monitoring and evaluation
9. Components of the system: finances

This course will combine elements of both theory and practice and in doing so will require participants to read literature, review films, and engage in a mix of individual and small group activities. Our readings will be drawn from both scholarly journals and in-depth reports on reading, system, and system reforms. Individual and group work will invite you to use the readings to reflect upon, write and share the evolution of your thinking throughout the duration of the course.

Action Research is integrated into this course. By practicing this methodology, you will develop a valuable skill and process that will support your decisions on how system change can be facilitated to improve early grade reading in a specific context. This methodology will require you to seek out information beyond what has been assigned in the course, conduct analyses, design action plans, test your plans, and then reflect upon and revise those plans. This process will occur multiple times during different timeframes but the cycle of inquiry will remain the same.

This is an online course and includes both synchronous and asynchronous interaction. Students will primarily learn from the course materials provided online in modules, supplemented by course units that will emphasize, illustrate and/or demonstrate key principles from the key topics. Students will also engage in interactive learning through discussion of course-related topics, group work and the completion of learning exercises. Case-study driven reflective written assignments will help students to personalize the material and see its relevance to their lives. Group work will be decided upon and scheduled early on in order to align schedules and provide advance planning.

This online course structure is different in many ways from a course in a traditional classroom context, but most students find it to be an excellent way to learn. Online courses have certain advantages over classroom courses (e.g., flexibility), but there are some disadvantages as well (such as the need to be a self-starter and self-motivated). Taking an online course is therefore not an ideal option for everyone. Consider carefully whether this course is a good fit for your needs and abilities. There are some documents in the folder entitled “Guidelines and Considerations” that may be able to help you assess whether this class is a good fit for you.
The assignments are cumulative but are divided up into smaller assignments throughout the course. The final project is a case study/plan of a system analysis and reform plan in your own context.

I (the instructor) will assess each individual assignment, providing feedback that should inform your final project. The course is graded as pass/fail unless you request a grade.

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### Course Requirements

This course requires the active participation of all class members: reading and sharing feedback, helping others develop their ideas, and expressing your own thoughts in class activities and small-group work.

- In order to take this course, you should have at least 7 hours per week dedicated for reading, writing and discussion. For your participation to be helpful to everyone, it is essential that you follow the course schedule and complete the required readings by the date required.

- Those interested in getting the certificate must complete the foundational course *How Children in Developing Countries Learn to Read* before taking this course.

- Please let me know in advance if you will be traveling or expect to be unavailable for an extended period of time. I expect you to communicate with classmates and small group members so as to minimize the impact of your absence.

- I encourage you to use my office hours as a time for us to discuss your papers, the readings or questions you have about the course. Office hours will happen in the Blackboard Chat Room at three times during the week in order to accommodate different time zones. I will be available at the following times (Eastern Standard Time): Mondays 9–10 a.m., Wednesdays 6-8 p.m., Fridays 2-4 p.m. You can sign up by putting your initials next to a 20-minute time slot for a specific date on the sign-up sheet in the folder “Office Hours”. I will also respond to emails but please consider the pace of the course and time differences; I suggest that you plan ahead and sign up for office hours.

- All assignments are due when indicated. You should review all assignments at the beginning of the class to ensure that you allow enough time for each. Some assignments require you to contact people and so you should schedule these conversations in advance of these assignments.

- You may take this course either on a grade or a “pass/fail” basis. There are instructions on the Blackboard course website about how to indicate your preference to me.

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### Assignments and Grading
1. Participation in discussions 30
2. Description and analysis of ‘Policy’ component of early grade reading system in your country/context 5
3. Description and analysis of instructional component 5
4. Description and analysis of teacher/personnel component 5
5. Description and analysis of supervision and support component 5
6. Description and analysis of inclusion component 5
7. Description and analysis of monitoring and evaluation component 5
8. Description and analysis of finance component 5
9. Final paper: Case study/plan of system change in your own context/country 35

TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS 100

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>94-100</td>
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<td>87-89</td>
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<td>80-82</td>
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<td>C+</td>
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<td>73-76</td>
<td>C</td>
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<td>0-72</td>
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ALL PAPERS SHOULD BE SINGLE-SPACED and SUBMITTED through the appropriate link on the BLACKBOARD WEBSITE. I will not accept e-mailed or paper copies of your assignments.

**Incompletes**

Students who are unable to complete course requirements within the allotted time because of severe medical or personal problems may request a grade of Incomplete from me at least two weeks before the end of the course. Normally, incomplete grades are warranted only if a student is passing the course at the time of the request and if the course requirements can be completed by the end of the following semester. If I grant you an incomplete, I will require a one-page write-up from you including

1. A description of the work that remains to be completed,
2. A description of how you intend to complete the unfinished work, and
3. The date by which the work is to be completed.

**Accommodation Statement**
The University of Massachusetts Amherst is committed to providing an equal educational opportunity for all students. If you have a documented physical, psychological, or learning disability on file with Disability Services, you may be eligible for reasonable academic accommodations to help you succeed in this course. If you have a documented disability that requires an accommodation, please notify me within the first two weeks of the semester so that we may make appropriate arrangements. You can get more information on how to access Disability Services at http://www.umass.edu/disability/

**Academic Honesty Statement**

Since the integrity of the academic enterprise of any institution of higher education requires honesty in scholarship and research, academic honesty is required of all students at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Academic dishonesty is prohibited in all programs of the University. Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to: cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and facilitating dishonesty. Appropriate sanctions may be imposed on any student who has committed an act of academic dishonesty. Instructors should take reasonable steps to address academic misconduct. Any person who has reason to believe that a student has committed academic dishonesty should bring such information to the attention of the appropriate course instructor as soon as possible. Instances of academic dishonesty not related to a specific course should be brought to the attention of the appropriate department Head or Chair. Since students are expected to be familiar with this policy and the commonly accepted standards of academic integrity, ignorance of such standards is not normally sufficient evidence of lack of intent. Follow the link below for detailed information on the Academic Honesty Policy http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/acadhonesty/

**References for Course Readings**


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date and Focus of Class</th>
<th>Readings to be completed</th>
<th>Assignments Due</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><strong>Course Overview, Introductions</strong>&lt;br&gt; Systems theory</td>
<td>Course Etiquette&lt;br&gt; Full Syllabus&lt;br&gt; Banathy, B. H. <em>A systems view of institutionalizing change in education.</em></td>
<td>Introductions &amp; Outreach</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><strong>Systems theory (continued): theories linked to strategies and context</strong></td>
<td>Nordtveit, B. H. <em>Development as a complex process of change: conception and analysis of projects, programs and policies.</em> pp. 110-117.</td>
<td>Post on discussion board in response to questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><strong>Strategies for system reform</strong></td>
<td>DeStefano, J., &amp; Crouch, L. <em>Education reform support today.</em> pp. 1-61.</td>
<td>Post on discussion board in response to questions</td>
</tr>
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<td>4</td>
<td><strong>Components of the system: Policies</strong></td>
<td>Hartwell, A. <em>Policy Matters.</em> pp. 1-28.</td>
<td>Description and analysis policy component&lt;br&gt; Post response to others’ assignments on policy</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td><strong>Components of the system: instructional system</strong></td>
<td>Crouch, L. <em>Motivating early grade instruction and learning: institutional issues.</em> pp. 227-250.&lt;br&gt; Cummings, W. &amp; Williams, J. <em>Options to Improve Learning Acquisition,</em> Chap. 6, pp. 183-216.</td>
<td>Description and analysis of instructional component&lt;br&gt; Post response to others’ assignments on instructional system</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td><strong>Components of the system: supervision and support</strong></td>
<td>International Institute for Educational Planning. <em>Supervision: a key component of a quality monitoring system.</em> pp. 1-33</td>
<td>Description and analysis of supervision and support component&lt;br&gt; Post response to others’ assignments on supervision and support</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td><strong>Components of the system: inclusion and exclusion</strong></td>
<td>Ainscow, M. <em>Developing inclusive education systems: what are the levers for change?</em> pp. 109-124.&lt;br&gt; Cummings, W. &amp; Williams, J. <em>Education Policies to Promote Social Cohesion,</em></td>
<td>Description and analysis of inclusion and exclusion component&lt;br&gt; Post response to others’ assignments on</td>
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<td>Chapter</td>
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<td>Chap. 9, pp. 277-308.</td>
<td>inclusion and exclusion</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Sharing of cases and plans</td>
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<td>Final project presentations</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Wrapping up</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Final project presentations</td>
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