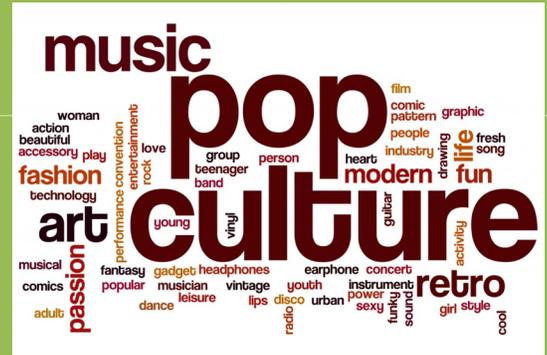


Dr. Haeny Yoon

Tuesday, March 27

11:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Erickson Hall: 252



Popular Culture Texts in the Literacy Landscape: Play as Critical Work in Contemporary Childhood(s)

What does SpongeBob have to do with social connection? How do the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles help us understand children's literacy learning? How does Star Wars construct culture? Children's engagement with popular culture is a production site for meaning-making and play. Yet, children's participation with popular culture texts is relegated to non-academic periods in favor of decontextualized literacy instruction (e.g. letter writing, phonics). However, children are actively pursuing these literacy skills in their involvement with media and pop culture. At times, it makes adults uncomfortable to see children playing out typical gender roles, violent storylines, and "bathroom humor" in classroom spaces where serious academic work takes precedence over the silliness of pop culture and play. Drawing from examples in kindergarten classrooms, this presentation examines popular culture texts in the lives of young children as a performative tool—to (re)produce social identities related to race/class/gender/ability; to initiate and maintain friendships; to (re)imagine stories; and to practice literacy in authentic spaces. For adults and children, popular culture is both deeply satisfying and unapologetically problematic; ripe with ideological complexities about forces of good/evil, constructions of heroes, limitations of gender—just to name a few. Therefore, when we take seriously the critical work that children take up in these seemingly haphazard play events, we open up spaces for literacy as a social, political, and cultural tool.



Dr. Haeny Yoon, (Ph.D., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) is an Assistant Professor in the Early Childhood Program at Teachers College, Columbia University. She teaches courses on curriculum, language/literacy, children's play, and qualitative methodologies. Her interest in curriculum, teacher development, and children's play stems from working as a staff developer and primary school teacher for 12 years. She has published about children's competencies in early literacies in *Research in the Teaching of English*, *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, *Multicultural Education Review*, *Bank Street Occasional Papers*, *Language Arts*, and *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*. She has a new book entitled, *Rewriting Early Literacies: Reading and Rewriting Worlds*, co-written with Mariana Souto-Manning. Bringing together theory and practice is a central part of Dr. Yoon's research which involves ethnographic studies of young children's literacies in K-2 classrooms, case studies on preservice teacher learning (specifically teachers of Color), and critical analysis of curriculum in elementary schools as well as higher education.