

WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Woodring College of Education

EDUC 309 – 4 credits –Summer 2012 Online/Hybrid Storytelling: Oral Narrative in History, Culture, and Society

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Thoughtful, knowledgeable, and effective educators for a diverse society.

Catalogue Description:

Current trends and interdisciplinary applications of storytelling. Selection, adaptation and presentation of stories for various settings and audiences, with focus on the history of oral narrative traditions, cultural perspectives, and societal impact.

Additional Description: This course will offer students practical instruction in the traditional art of storytelling. The class will look at how this ancient art form can be used to enliven classroom learning, improve public communication skills, build communities, enhance environmental education, and more. In this performance-focused class students will learn how they can become more imaginative and confident storytellers and communicators. This course meets the WWU requirement for GUR block B.

Instructional Methods:

This course will make extensive use of Blackboard functions to deliver information, create discussion forums, provide collaborative/interactive space and link to numerous resources. Students will need to access Blackboard on a regular basis to view materials, participate in interactive tools and submit assignments. Instruction will include text-based materials, recorded lecture/performance, real-time web conferencing, online group discussion, viewing videotaped performances of student and professional storytellers, evaluation of storytelling performances, and individual coaching. Optional face-to-face meetings will be available for local students to participate in discussion and perform before a live audience. Distance students will record their performances and post video online for viewing and assessment.

Course Objectives:

1. To develop an appreciation of storytelling as a communication art.
2. To explore the history of oral narrative, cultural traditions of storytelling in different ancient and modern people groups, and the roll of oral narrative in contemporary culture and society.
3. To discover the numerous applications of oral narrative in a wide variety of interdisciplinary areas: environmental education; public speaking; anthropology; counseling; education; creative writing; theatre/performance arts; business administration/leadership; and more.
4. To experience and evaluate the power of storytelling as a teaching and learning tool in educational settings: exposure to other cultures; connection to history; increased appreciation of literature, language and narrative forms; improved listening and comprehension effectiveness; community-building; enhanced imagination, creativity and memory; etc.
5. To find out how to work with different audience types and how to tailor their communication to engage and meet the needs of their listeners.
6. To develop a working knowledge of the print/multimedia/live sources of material suitable for storytelling and of the professional literature of the field.
7. To examine the roll of individual and family narratives in personal communication.
8. To learn how to choose, retell, or write appropriate stories, and discover the best methods of learning/preparing and performing/telling the story.
9. To increase the ability to communicate in public with more confidence, clarity, imagination, and animation. This will be gained through the improved use of movement, vocal dynamics, facial expression, characterization, audience contact, word choice, etc.

Assignments:

1. **Literature Review / Research Paper:** (15% of grade):

- There is no required textbook for this class; however there are numerous books on storytelling which address its application to a wide variety of fields. In place of textbook reading each student is expected to read approx. *200 total pages* from *at least 4 different sources*. This reading may be from books, magazines, journal articles, internet resources, etc. These readings will concentrate on storytelling technique, skills learning, history, theory, cultural issues, interdisciplinary applications, etc. (The reading of stories is included in the next assignment.)
- In order to document and evaluate these readings, students will produce a 4-5 page report focusing on your *reactions and personal applications* of the material you are reviewing. Please include all the bibliographic details at the top of your discussion of each book, chapter, or journal article, including # of pages read.
- Alternatively, if you have interest in a specific disciplinary area, your report may be in the form of a topic-focused research paper containing citations, with a standard bibliography at the end.

2. **Story File:** (15% of grade)

- Throughout the quarter students will create a file of multicultural folktales they might wish to perform. This file will contain information on 10-15 printed, recorded, or live stories. These stories should come from at least 5 different sources and 5 different cultural origins. It is expected that students may read or listen to as many as 5-10 stories for every one that is chosen for this file.
- (Optional) – Stories may be chosen with thematic or interdisciplinary areas in mind, e.g. environmental education, urban legends, mythological pour quoi tales, audience participation stories, musical stories, curriculum connection tales, etc.
- Entries should be typed single-spaced, and should be about ½ to 1 page in length. They should be in consistent format with your name on each entry.
- At least 2 of these entries should be of greater detail including bibliographic information of multiple versions of a folktale with discussion of the traditional variations. (1-2 pgs.)
- For each story chosen students will provide the following applicable information:

Title of Story:

Time Length:

Name of Reteller:

Cultural Origin: (applicable only to folklore)

Title of Anthology:

Age Range:

Editor:

Source: (including call # if source is a library)

Illustrator:

Theme:

Publisher:

Synopsis of Story: (paragraph)

Copyright Date:

Performance/Application Notations: (paragraph)

3. **Storytelling Performances:**

- Students will present several stories either in face-to-face sessions or videotaped in front of a live audience (friends, family or a community venue).
- Presentations, including introduction, should be 4-6 minutes long.
- Performances will be videotaped in order for students to evaluate themselves more fully and to allow other students to observe and offer peer assessments.
- No notes or written outlines will be used during performances. Students will learn to communicate by employing mental imagery and physical action to aid the memory process.
- A 1 page self evaluation is due after each story performance.

1st Performance - "Retold" Folktale: (10% of grade)

- In this performance, students will choose a story that comes from the oral tradition of a specific culture/country. These folktales should be retold in the student's own words. Some phrases, lines and sentences may remain the same as in the printed/recorded story, but for the most part the story should be paraphrased so that the storyteller can remain spontaneous during the telling.

2nd Performance – Personal Experience Story: (10% of grade)

- Students will tell a story from their own lives employing appropriate narrative structure and delivery techniques. This story may be a childhood story, or one of adventure, mischief, self discovery, etc. but the subject matter must be appropriate for a captive audience.
- Students will also submit:
 - 1) A list of 10-12 other personal stories with titles and brief synopses (3-4 sentences each).
 - 2) (Optional) Text of your story. (Do not write out your story until after performing it)

3rd Performance - Tale with a Twist: (10% of grade)

For this performance, students may choose from the following options:

- Performance of a cultural folktale that includes additional performance elements, e.g.: audience participation, props, puppets, music/singing, tandem or bilingual telling, sign language, etc.
- Performance of literary or modern material (author identified): short story, poetry, monologue, tall tale, urban legend, etc. This option may require greater memorization of wording.

4th Performance – Family History Story: (10% of grade)

- Students will tell a story from their own family history. This story could be an immigration story, a character study, an object story, an adventure, or some other type of “heirloom” story.
- Students will also submit:
 - 1) A list of 10-12 other family history stories with titles and brief synopses (3-4 sentences each).
 - 2) (Optional) Text of your story. (Do not write out your story until after performing it)

4. **Storyteller Evaluation Report:** (10% of grade)

- In order to provide students with the opportunity to evaluate differing performance/presentation styles of storytellers, students will view or listen to at least 4 hours of storyteller performances. Students should view video of professional storytellers, listen to audio recordings of stories, and (if possible) arrange to see live storytelling performances sometime during the quarter.
- Students will submit a 5 page paper pointing out observations, analysis, and comparisons of the storytellers observed, as well as personal applications of what was learned from them.
- Similar evaluation criterion will be used as is used for class performances.
- At least 10 different storytellers should be evaluated and compared.

5. **Performance Assessments** (10% of grade):

- Self-assessments (5% of grade)
 - Students will write a self-evaluation for each of the 4 performances.
 - 300-400 words – posted to Bb blog.
- Peer-Assessments (5% of grade)
 - Students will choose at least 3 other student performances on which to comment.
 - 100 words – posted to comment section of student Bb blogs.

6. **Personal Projects** (10% of grade)

- Students may choose how to gain this last 10% of their grade.
- Options might include:
 - Participate in a community storytelling event (on campus, in town, or in a school or library) and evaluate your performance in 1-2 pages. **(5%)**
 - Increase reading by 50 pages, 2 additional sources, and 1-2 write-up pages. **(5%)**
 - Create a story-file of authored stories and/or poems suitable for oral performance **(5-10%)**
 - Type up the text of your personal and/or family stories, transcribing from audio or video. **(2% each)**
 - Create an illustrated family history webpage or scrapbook album **(5-10%)**
 - Collect workplace/corporate stories for applied storytelling uses. **(5-10%)**
 - Other projects/ideas may be considered with instructor’s approval.
 - ...More details and ideas will be posted on Blackboard.

Topics for Discussion and Learning:

- *Class topics may include (but are not limited to) the following:*
- history and multicultural traditions of oral storytelling
- current trends and application of storytelling into interdisciplinary areas such as Education, Anthropology, Folklore, Business Administration, Environmental Education, Psychology, Healing Arts, Theatre, Creative Writing, ...and more
- resources for storytellers
 - storytelling guides for performers, educators, business professionals, etc.
 - critical/academic publications examining folklore, mythology, urban legends, organizational narrative, literary tales, cultural viewpoints, oral tradition, etc.
 - anthologies of folklore – Dewey system 398.2
 - internet resources, folklore motif index guides, storytelling organizations, periodicals, etc.
- choosing appropriate material
 - retelling multicultural folktales, fables, and mythology
 - examining multiple variations of folktales to determine plot parameters/options
 - creating original stories: family history (heirloom stories), personal experience tales
 - finding narratives for use in business and professional settings
 - use of literary tales, modern short stories and picture books
 - choosing poetry to incorporate into programs
- techniques for effective learning and rehearsal
 - using storymaps and storyboards vs. outlines or written notes
 - focus on listening, internal visualization, and sensory imagery to aid memory/learning
 - extemporaneous vs. memorized delivery
- techniques for effective storytelling delivery
 - using space, movement, gestures, simple props and costuming
 - enhancing facial expression, triggering, eye contact, sense of spontaneity
 - developing oral communication techniques; vocal expression, quality, diction
 - improving word choice and sentence structure
 - building sensory and emotive imagery, suspense, anticipation
 - using improvisation to enliven stories
 - incorporating audience participation techniques
 - adapting stories and performance styles for differing audiences, contexts, age groups
- how to incorporate storytelling into the classroom and curriculum
 - the teacher as storyteller
 - using storytelling across the curriculum; using stories to teach history, science, math, social studies, creative writing, multicultural understanding, etc.
 - improving language and vocabulary skills
 - enhancing listening and oral skills
 - encouraging cultural and emotive awareness
 - increasing children's interest in literature and independent reading
 - the student as storyteller
 - encouraging confidence in personal expression, reducing performance anxiety
 - increasing oral communication and public presentation skills
 - meeting Essential Academic Learning Requirement (EALR) for Oral Communication
 - boosting creative development, imagination, and creative writing
 - using group story-circles – group storytelling/story creation
 - dramatizing folklore and literary tales – group storytelling
- building a storytelling program
- copyright laws and acknowledgement of authors/retellers/cultures