

Storytelling and Social Change CR410/510: 201201

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Course Description

This course introduces students to the academic literature on storytelling, and explores the vital role that storytelling plays in limiting, creating and sustaining social change. Through critical thinking and deliberate analysis, students will deconstruct the grand narratives of dominant discourse, explore counter narratives that have emerged from the margins, and examine how social change has surfaced as a result. We will also dig in our own experiences and awareness to find the personal narratives that explain our understandings of self, voice, agency, and change, and that may serve as a means for transformation.

Learning Outcomes (Six levels of learning as described in Bloom's Taxonomy)

1. Knowledge: Through writing and discussion, students will demonstrate an understanding of the storytelling process as a mechanism for creating social change.
2. Comprehension: Through course requirements, students will demonstrate an understanding of the obvious and subtle distinctions between the different types of storytelling in the storytelling project model.
3. Application: Students will apply their knowledge of storytelling as they deconstruct scenarios in the media and in their own lives.
4. Analysis: Students will use their skills to critically analyze the stories addressed in class, in the reading assigned for the course, shared by their classmates, and generated through their own personal experiences.
5. Synthesis: Students will demonstrate their ability to blend their theoretical knowledge with their practical understanding in the final project.
6. Evaluation: Students will apply their ability to critical analyze stories in relationship/response to course material, assignments and their self-evaluation of learning.

Assigned Reading

All assigned reading will be made available through web-links, the PSU library or will be provided as handouts. Reading for the final paper will be selected from a list of recommendations from the Professor.

Additional/Recommended Reading

Bell, L. (2010). *Storytelling for social justice: Connecting narrative and the arts in antiracist teaching*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Picher, M. (2007). Democratic process and the theater of the oppressed. *New Directions for Adult & Continuing Education*, 116, 79-88. doi: 10.1002/ace.278

- Rohd, M. (1999). Hope is vital: Theatre that solves problems. *Teaching Theatre*, 10(4), 19.
- Senehi, J. (2002). Constructive storytelling: A peace process. *Peace and Conflict Studies*, 9(2), 41-63.
- Thomas, R. E., & Rappaport, J. (1996). Art as community narrative: A resource for social change. In M. B. Lykes, A. Banuaziz, R. Liem, & M. Morris (Eds.), *Myths about the powerless: Contesting social inequalities* (pp. 317-). Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Pres.

Class Participation: 100 points

Class participation is worth 100 points: 20 points for Friday's evening session, 40 points for Saturday and 40 points for Sunday. Expectations for participation are that you are present in class, and willing to stay engaged with active class discussion. Even if you are silent, the expectation is that you will stay engaged with the discussion, and will contribute to the learning of the class community.

Final Paper: 100 points

For the Final Paper, you are asked to read a novel that tells the story of conflict (selected from list provided by professor), and write a 5-8 page story analysis of the novel. This paper is worth 100 points, and will answer the following questions:

- Who is telling this story?
- What is their perspective?
- What kind of story is it (based on the storytelling project model)?
- Are other stories/perspectives offered? If so, how?
- How is the process of social change described/represented in this story?
- What is your feeling about the social change process after reading this story?
- How do you feel about yourself, your own/comparative agency and voice after reading this story?
- What do you think the author's purpose was in writing this story?

Graduate Credit Requirement: 100 points

If you are taking this course for graduate credit, you are also expected to complete an additional assignment, which involves reading a peer-reviewed article or book/book chapter (from the recommended reading list or found through your own research) that further explores the relationship between storytelling and social change, and writing an article review as a response. This is meant to be an academic writing assignment, which synthesizes your understanding of this emerging topic with the author's perspective/research.

Undergraduate Grading Criteria

190-200 A; 180-189 A-; 170-179 B+; 160-169 B; 150-159 B-; 140-149 C+; 130-139 C; 120-129 C-; 110-119 D+; 100-109 D; 90-99 D-; 89 and below F.

Graduate Grading Criteria

280-300 A; 260-279 A-; 240-259 B+; 220-239 B; 200-219 B-; 199 and below does not pass.

Friday

- 5 Introductions
- 5:30 **Storytelling and Social Change: What's the Connection?**
- 6 The Art of Story: Where/How do we Hear Stories?
- 6:30 **BREAK**
- 7 TED: Danger of the Single Story
- 7:30 **Naming the Single Story: The Art and Importance of Deconstruction**
- 8 Exercise and Discussion
- 8:30 **Closing: Assignment**
Read: Bell, L, & Roberts, R. (2010). The storytelling project model: A theoretical framework for critical examination of racism through the arts. *Teachers College Record 112*(9), 2295-2319.

Saturday

- 9 Discussion of Reading/Assignment
- 9:30 Using Bell's Storytelling Model to Deconstruct Single Story and Find Multiple Stories
- 10 Exercise from Curriculum
- 10:30 **Break**
- 11 What about the Arts?
- 11:30 Exercise
- 12 **LUNCH**
- 1:30 Theater: Sojourn and Theater of the Oppressed
- 2 TO Development
- 2:30 TO Practice
- 3 **TO Spectator spectacular**
- 4 Discussion/Evaluation
- 4:30 **Closing**
Read: Lederach Handout

Sunday

- 9 Discussion of Reading
- 9:30 Inspiration and Possibilizing
- 10 How do these compare with Stock Stories of Social Change?
- 10:30 **Break**
- 11 Telling our own Stories: How/When/Why/Does it Count?
- 11:30 Exercise
- 12 **LUNCH**
- 1:30 **Narrative Practice**
- 2:00 Exercise
- 2:30 Discussion
- 3:00 **Dialogue**
- 3:30 Exercise
- 4 Discussion: What Changed?
- 4:30 **Closing: Review of Final Paper**

Please notify instructor immediately if you require special accommodation