“The universe is made up of stories, not atoms.” – Muriel Rukeyser

“The most powerful thing you can hear, and the only thing that ever persuades any of us in our own lives, is [when] you meet somebody whose story contradicts the thing you think you know. At that point, it’s possible to question what you know, because the authenticity of their experience is real enough to do it.” – Ira Glass

“Storytelling is something [human] brains do, naturally and implicitly. Implicit storytelling has created ourselves, and it should be no surprise that it pervades the entire fabric of human societies and cultures.” – Antonio Damasio

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Prof. Doe Mayer  
Mary Pickford Chair

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Course Summary

This course will enhance and broaden your understanding of the major components of stories by viewing storytelling through a global lens. We will be studying structure, theory, and the effects of culture on storytelling. You will develop skills to understand the power of stories more profoundly; to use them in your own lives and within the frameworks of organizations, marketing and advertising; to identify better social change strategies; and to become aware of all the new professional and academic fields that are recognizing the importance of storytelling to enhance effectiveness and emotional connection.

Learning Objectives

- To have a deeper connection to the power of story and its creative attractiveness in terms of your own lives and your work. You will see how stories continue to have meaning in the present day in new forms like transmedia and webisodes, in older forms like oral storytelling, and in advertisements, marketing and messaging in both the profit and non-profit sectors.
- To identify and articulate some of the most prevalent theories that help us to comprehend why storytelling is so important in all cultures worldwide.
- To understand how culture affects stories globally, from the fates and gods of the Greek dramas, to religious stories in all cultures, to the community-based frame in many societies, to the individual agency of a single protagonist in much of Western storytelling.
- To cultivate skills in how stories can strengthen strategies for social change and to apply those skills to your specific interests and passions.
- To enhance your collaborative creative abilities through group discussion, giving and responding to feedback, and collective brainstorming.

Required Textbooks


Course Requirements and Evaluation

The final course grade will be based on the following distribution:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment #1</th>
<th>10% (Paper: 7%; Oral presentation: 3%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assignment #2</td>
<td>10% (Paper: 7%; Oral presentation: 3%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment #3</td>
<td>10% (Oral presentation only: 10%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment #4</td>
<td>15% (Paper: 10%; Oral presentation: 5%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment #5</td>
<td>20% (Paper: 15%; Oral presentation: 5%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weekly reading summaries</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class contribution</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100%</td>
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Class contribution includes offering insightful comments during group discussions, asking thoughtful informed questions during question and answer sessions with guests, having read the weekly readings in advance, being prepared to speak about them in class.

Weekly reading summaries: Write a short review of each required reading in the syllabus. Describe two or three main points that you have picked up from the reading. Include your personal response to each reading in terms of your own experiences and thoughts about the content. Turn in the summary on Blackboard on each applicable Sunday night by midnight.

Class attendance includes being on time to class and after the break. Tardiness is disrespectful to your instructor and your colleagues. Anyone not in class five minutes after the starting time or after the break will be considered late. Two times being late equals one unexcused absence. Written medical are required for excused absences, in advance (by email) except in case of emergency. Two unexcused absences result in a lowered grade; four absences are grounds for failing the class.

Personal computers and wireless Internet are a key part of today’s technological culture, but they can also distract you from the class discussion and dampen participation. I expect you to use computers for note taking purposes only, and to avoid using other mobile devices during class time. Any deviation will result in laptops and other equipment being banned from the classroom and contribution grades being impacted. Jil or I will tap you on the shoulder if we see you using these devices in an inappropriate manner.

Schedule/reading assignment changes: the syllabus will change due to guest speaker schedules and connected readings. Please check with Blackboard or Jil for updates. She will email you changes or updates as well. They will also be announced in class.

Assignments

Most assignments for this class involve a paper and an oral presentation. You will not be able to read your paper. You must rehearse your presentation and figure out what will make the best explanation and story for the class audience, and tell it in a timed number of minutes depending on the assignment. You may use cards to remind yourself of your structure and points, but you cannot read the assignment. You may use PowerPoint or slides or Prezi to enhance your oral presentation, but it is not required. All oral presentations will include being prepared to answer questions posed by your colleagues or the professor.

All assignments (except for the reading summaries due Sunday nights on Blackboard) should be handed in to Professor Mayer as hard copies, as well as through Blackboard.

Criteria for Oral Presentations:

- Well-rehearsed.
- Respects time limits and leaves some time for questions.
- Organized presentation which audience can follow.
- Spoken with clarity, engagement and authority.
- Limited use of PowerPoint and other visual methods. Don’t read PowerPoint slides or turn your back to the audience!
- Good eye contact, gestures and facial expressions.
Criteria for Written Presentations:

- Paper is clear and logical. Reader can follow your thinking easily.
- Writing is free of errors in grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- Material shows critical thinking based on research and your own original ideas.
- Uses appropriate number of academic and other references and follows guidelines as to length, 1 ½ spaced etc.

Assignment #1: Ancient Tales – Stories from the Past. Due Week 5 (9/19).

Look at a short myth, folktale, legend or origin story that has not been discussed in class thus far and is not from your own culture or background. Analyze it in terms of structure, values, and what it says about the society it represents. This assignment requires the use of at least three academic references that discuss the story you have chosen, as well as your own point of view about the story and what it reflects of the society that it depicts. Write a 3-4 page 1½ spaced paper and be prepared to speak about your example in class (using PowerPoint or Prezi images if you would like) for a maximum of 6 minutes each (4-5 minutes for the story, 1-2 mins for class discussion.) You're welcome to use an example from the text, Best Loved Folktales of the World, as your tale. If the story is dense and difficult to follow, summarize it in the oral presentation to make it clearer-- do not use the whole oral presentation to tell the story.

In your academic thinking, you might want to consider where the story comes from and how that affects it, the historical timeframe of the story, whether the tale has traveled and changed in time or through diasporas, the specific cultural context (religion, philosophy of time, entertainment, ritual, sacred observance, housing, tools or attire of the culture), aspects of daily life or customs reflected in the tale. Be sure to include a bibliography /citation list of appropriate academic references. Please check with me before the assignment is due so that there are no duplications of the stories chosen.

Assignment #2: Storytelling and You. Due Week 7 (10/3).

For this assignment, choose a story that is personal, autobiographical, or family framed. You may select a story that you've told many times, but try to construct it using what you have learned about structure, performance, and emotional connection. Please hand it in as a 3-4 page, 1 ½ spaced paper telling your story and discussing its history and meaning to you. Describe the process of what you learned in choosing to present this story. Also be prepared to present it orally (five minutes maximum) to the class without reading, including your understanding of the genesis and how you have changed it. Again, you must rehearse in advance in order to do this well.

Assignment #3: Storytelling in Global Films. Due Week 9 (10/17).

This collaborative assignment will involve the class breaking up into groups of three or four to view one of the following feature films from other countries and connect it to the content of the class in an oral presentation. You will have leeway in how you choose to do this, including analyzing structure, how the story is told, whether you recognize universal myths, folktales or other components of our study earlier in the semester. Each group will have fifteen minutes to present this assignment to the class, including the possible use of film clips. Each member of the group must participate in the oral presentation. Organize and rehearse this in advance. For this project, you must view together one of the following feature films representing another culture:

- Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner, Canadian Inuit, 2001
- The Official Story, Argentina, 1985
- The Battle of Algiers, France & Italy, 1966
- The Lunch Box, India, 2013
- Persona, Sweden, 1966
- Raise the Red Lantern, China, 1991
- Man on Wire, UK, 2009
Assignment #4: Storytelling in Other Media. Due Week 11 (11/7).

This assignment requires you to find a story in a medium that we have not been discussing in the class. This might be a song, a dance, comics, posters, poetry, or any other media that you think can be effective for storytelling. Feel free to use graphics—pictures of paintings or lyrics of songs etc. to illustrate your ideas more clearly. Just use 1 example of another media. Hand in a 3-5 page, 1½ spaced paper, discussing this example. Please apply what you have learned about structure, audience, creativity, values, and culture. Use at least 3-4 academic references in your research for the paper. You will also be required to present it to the class orally in five minutes, either showing the media or explaining it clearly, so the class audience can understand. Do not spend your entire oral period telling the story. Summarize it in 1-2 mins. and leave the other 3 to 4 mins for the other components of the assignment.


**Discuss with Professor Mayer two weeks before this assignment is due.

In this assignment, you can choose any one of a number of topics that have come up in the class and intrigued you. Either you can develop your own creative example or present a research paper (8-10 pages, 1½ spaced) describing or analyzing the topic as appropriate. For instance, you could look at how narrative is being used in another discipline such as science or journalism. You could apply the storytelling techniques we have studied in the context of a not-for-profit organization or as a marketing strategy. You could design an advertisement or PSA using your new storytelling skills. You should discuss the process of developing this, as well as what you learned in the implementation. Your paper must include at least three academic references, whether your paper is a research paper or a creative work. Although you can reference class readings and texts, those readings should be additional to the three new academic references. In class, you will present this assignment and be prepared to discuss it. You will have ten minutes to present, and an additional 2 minutes to answer questions. Remember to send on Blackboard and submit a hard copy as well. I will return and grade digitally.

Late assignments/Emergencies: No late assignments will be accepted. If you have a legitimate and verifiable emergency that makes it impossible to turn in your assignment you must:

1. email Prof. Mayer before the beginning of class the day the assignment is due to notify her of your emergency;
2. provide official proof (doctor’s note or other evidence); and
3. arrange to email the assignment at a time to be determined.
## CLASS SCHEDULE

**NOTE:** This list of readings does not include all textbook chapters and websites. Please check the full syllabus (Reading & Assignment Schedule) for weekly required reading list.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>8/22</td>
<td>Why Stories?</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>8/29</td>
<td>How Stories Make Us Human</td>
<td>Haven Chapters 1-2; Gottschall 1-67</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>9/5</td>
<td>Thinking of Stories Through Structure and Theory: How Storytelling Makes Sense</td>
<td>Kaplan et al. Haven Chapters 3-5; Hinyard &amp; Kreuter 777-789 Vogler 3-23</td>
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<td>Week 4</td>
<td>9/12</td>
<td>Stories of Origins, Myths, Folktales, Heroes and Villains</td>
<td>Cole (as directed in Reading &amp; Assignment Schedule) Dundes &amp; Bronner 55-66 Gopnik 19-73</td>
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<td>Week 5</td>
<td>9/19</td>
<td>Ancient Tales – Stories from the Past</td>
<td>Haven Chapter 6-7</td>
<td>Assignment #1 Due</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 6</td>
<td>9/26</td>
<td>Stories from a Personal Point of View</td>
<td>Gottschall 156-176 Lambert 15-24 Simmons Chapters 1 &amp; 9 Center for Digital Storytelling (as directed in Reading &amp; Assignment Schedule)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 7</td>
<td>10/3</td>
<td>Storytelling and You</td>
<td>Haven Chapters 8-9</td>
<td>Assignment #2 Due</td>
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<td>Week 8</td>
<td>10/10</td>
<td>Stories in Theater and Film</td>
<td>Boal McKee Chapters 2 &amp; 4 Howard &amp; Mabley, 3-94 (suggested) Dannenbaum, Hodge, &amp; Mayer 189-192</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 9</td>
<td>10/17</td>
<td>Storytelling for Social Change</td>
<td>Ganz 273-289 Singhal, Wang, &amp; Rogers 321-333 Comminit.com (as directed in Reading &amp; Assignment Schedule)</td>
<td>Assignment #3 Due</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 10</td>
<td>10/24</td>
<td>Storytelling in Other Media I</td>
<td>Jenkins 93-130 Reed 103-128</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 11</td>
<td>10/31</td>
<td>Storytelling in Other Media II</td>
<td>Haven Chapter 10 Tolan</td>
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<td>Week</td>
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<td>Week 12</td>
<td>11/7</td>
<td>Storytelling in Other Media III Limitations of Stories</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>Assignment #4 Due</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 13</td>
<td>11/14</td>
<td>Storytelling in Other Academic Disciplines</td>
<td>Berger &amp; Quinney Murphy, Frank, Chatterjee &amp; Baezconde-Garbanati Wilson 1-74</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 14</td>
<td>11/21</td>
<td>Storytelling for Non-Profits</td>
<td>Goodman 1-65 Adbusters.org as directed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 15</td>
<td>11/28</td>
<td>Group A Final Papers and Presentations DUE (Class May Run Longer)</td>
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<td>Group A: Assignment #5 Due</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 16</td>
<td>12/7 (2-4PM)</td>
<td>Group B Final Papers and Presentations DUE</td>
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<td>Group B: Assignment #5 Due</td>
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READING AND ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE

NOTE: Readings and assignments are subject to further change. Other than the required textbooks, all other readings can be accessed on Blackboard or via the Internet. Please use this reading schedule to clarify your journal contributions, as some of the materials are not in the textbooks or Blackboard, but they are online.

Week 1: Why Stories? (8/22)

What is a story? Story versus narrative, collective action, and power. What are the distinctions and do they matter? Why are stories so powerful?

Week 2: How Stories Make Us Human (8/29)

Readings:

Week 3: Thinking of Stories Through Structure and Theory: How Storytelling Makes Sense (9/5)

Theories of why storytelling is powerful, including communications, social science, critical thinking, and neuroscience.

Guest Speaker: Professor Mary Helen Immordino-Yang, PhD, Connections between Neuroscience and Storytelling

Readings:
Week 4: Stories of Origins, Myths, Folktales, Heroes and Villains (9/12)

Guest Speaker: Prof. Tok Thompson PhD, Anthropology, The Origins of Storytelling

Readings:
- Introduction, pp. xvii;
- Cinderella (France), pp. 3-8;
- Jack and the Beanstalk (Britain), pp. 193-198;
- Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp (Arabian Nights), pp. 467-476;
- Anansi and his Visitor (Ashanti Tribe), pp. 615-617; and
- Simple Wang (China), pp. 528-531.


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Week 5: Ancient Tales – Stories from the Past (9/19)

Readings:

Assignment #1 Due: Analysis of myth, folktale, legend, origin story.

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Week 6: Stories from a Personal Point of View (9/26)

Stories from a personal point of view – autobiographical, personal or family framed.

Readings:


Center for Digital Storytelling (http://storycenter.org/): peruse website and select 1 video to discuss in class.

** Between Weeks 7 and 8, all students meet individually with Professor Mayer for mid-term assessment.

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Week 7: Storytelling and You (10/3)

Readings:

Assignment #2 Due: Reconstructing the personal story.
Week 8: Stories in Theater and Film (10/10)

Guest Speaker: TBA

Readings:
(The following is suggested but not required):

Week 9: Storytelling for Social Change (10/17)

Readings:
Communit.com (http://www.comminit.com/global/spaces-frontpage): peruse this global communication site and find three case studies that emphasize stories that interest you and review in your weekly journal.

Assignment #3 Due: Group oral report on film from another culture.

Week 10: Storytelling in Other Media I (10/24)

We will look at additional media including transmedia efforts and other digital forms, music, dance, comics, posters, communication campaigns, etc.

Guest Speaker: Francesca Smith, Dance and Trans Media

Readings:
Reed, T.V. (2005). The Art of Protest: Culture and activism from the civil rights movement to the streets of Seattle. (Murals) Chapter 4, pp. 103-128.

** Between Weeks 11 and 13, all students meet individually with Prof. Mayer to discuss final projects.
Week 11: Storytelling in Other Media II (10/31)

Guest Speakers: Prof. Sandy Tolan, Annenberg School of Journalism USC

Readings:

Week 12: Storytelling in Other Media (11/7)
Limitations of Stories

Assignment #4 Due: Show examples of stories in other media.

Week 13: Storytelling in Other Academic Disciplines (11/14)

Guest speaker: Dr. Cheryl Mattingly, Anthropology, USC

Readings:

Week 13 Storytelling for Non-Profits (11/21)

Guest Speaker: Celia Hoffman, Assoc. Director, Goodman Center

Readings:
Adbusters.org (https://www.adbusters.org/): peruse this site and find 2 or 3 examples that interest you.

Week 15: Storytelling – What Intrigues You? (11/28 and 12/7 - 2-4PM scheduled USC exam time)

Assignment #5 Due: Since presentations and discussion will be longer, this assignment will take place over this last class and our scheduled finals time.

11/28 Group A papers and presentations – class may run longer to accommodate student presentations

Exam Final Schedule: Friday 12/7 2-4PM Group B papers and presentations
Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct

- Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Section 11, Behavior Violating University Standards https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions
- Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.
- Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university.
- You are encouraged to report any incidents to the Office of Equity and Diversity http://equity.usc.edu or to the Department of Public Safety http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us.
- This is important for the safety of the whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. The Center for Women and Men http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/ provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage http://sarc.usc.edu describes reporting options and other resources.

Support Systems

- The Office of Disability Services and Programs http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations.
- If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, USC Emergency Information http://emergency.usc.edu will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.