

USCDornsife College Department of English

English 492: Narrative Studies Capstone: Telling Stories, Telling Lives (32767)

Units: 4 / Spring 2021, Thursdays 5-7:20 pm PT/ Location: Zoom

Professor Chris Freeman Office Hours: by appointment/Contact Info: cefreema@usc.edu

Course Description

The major in Narrative Studies (NARS) requires a senior capstone project, either a research project (MDA 490) or creative project (MDA 494). Each student designs an individual project that brings together what the student has learned about narrative through coursework available in many departments and programs across the entire university.

The NARS Senior Seminar provides a way to fulfill the required individual capstone in the context of a seminar. Students will meet weekly, in a workshop format, to discuss a mix of fiction, poetry, film, graphic novels, theory, and creative writing, while creating their own materials and critiquing one another's work. Their materials will be presented throughout the semester as a series of at least three self-directed portfolios that will draw upon their prior studies in narrative, bringing those varied studies into a whole and individualized vision.

The seminar is restricted to NARS majors in senior standing. Admission is by application only and preserves the application process already used for independent NARS capstones. Admission to the seminar will be based on the quality of a student's proposed portfolio projects.

Learning Objectives

The capstone experience is central to the completion of a major in Narrative Studies. This seminar will provide students the opportunity to assimilate the components of their studies and focus their creative endeavors. Students will use their experience and knowledge from prior courses in the major, and at the end of the semester, students will make a 15-minute formal public presentations of their portfolio work to the community of scholars in Narrative Studies. This semester, final presentations will be on Zoom and recorded and submitted for departmental archiving.

Course Notes

This course is primarily a workshop. TEssays by writers such as Alexander Chee, Patricia Hampl, and Barrie Jean Borich, posted on Blackboard, will serve as a source for some of our writing conversations and analysis; otherwise, the bulk of your job will be to develop your capstone project, to present it in workshops three or four times before week twelve, and to present the completed project to the English department, in public, at the end of April. Discussion and active participation are essential to your success

in the course and in the program. The final examination will be a public presentation of your capstone project.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

Readings posted on Blackboard, including excerpts from H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (theory, 2nd edition, 2008)

Grading Breakdown

30% Workshop participation

10% Discussion/participation

60% Final Project (20+ page paper & 15-20 minute presentation: more details will be forthcoming about this)

Schedule

The first three to four weeks will focus mainly on readings, while you get your first workshop presentation together; after that, most of our time will be a combination of workshops and one-on-one meetings.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE (SUBJECT TO AMENDMENT)

January 21: welcome to the class; work on schedule and groups; 6pm: Camille Wedin from spring 2020 on her project and presentation

January 28: groups organized (breakout rooms); Blackboard readings (Chee, “Writing Life” and Patricia Hampl) and topic updates; workshop groups/organizing/format; **submit a few sentences on our “librarian google doc” by Jan 29 at noon**

Workshop Groups

One: Michael A; Michael M; Margaret; Jack

Two: Aurellia; Pauline; Oliver; Dante

Three: Eleanor; Helen; Nicky; Elle

February 4: library workshop with reference librarian Dr. Sophia Lesinska; readings from B’board

February 11: workshop; readings

February 18: workshop; readings

February 25: workshop; readings

March 4: Individual meetings this week during class time

March 11: workshop; readings

March 18: workshop; reading

March 25: workshop; readings

April 1: workshop readings; presentation brainstorming

April 8: one-on-one meetings

April 15: workshop and one-on-one meetings as needed; presentation brainstorming

April 22: WELLNESS DAY: NO CLASS

April 29: last meeting: course evaluations and last minute workshopping on presentations

May 3 and 4: 2 sessions for presentations (15-20 minutes each)

May 10: all work due, Google Drive, by 5pm PT

Definition of Excellence in Teaching, USC Department of English

All writing is creative, and all civic engagement requires a sophisticated understanding of discourse and interpretation. The USC Department of English is committed to the power of the story, the word, and the image. We analyze and organize complex ideas, evaluate qualitative information, anticipate how real audiences respond to language, and study behaviors of complex characters leading uncertain lives with competing values. We develop critical abilities for a successful life, but our stories tell us why life is worth living.

Excellence in teaching is an active engagement with these commitments, perspectives, and values. A student with a major in **English** should graduate with an appreciation for (1) the relations between representation and the human soul, and (2) the relations between words and ideas. Teachers will encourage this appreciation through their knowledge and conveyance of the subject, the appropriateness of instructional materials, and the quality of their students' responses. We expect our students to:

- o understand the major representations in English discourse from earliest beginnings to the current moment; all literatures exist in conversation with earlier literatures;
- o organize and interpret evidence;
- o feel the experiences of others, both by engaging in literatures and by their own efforts to create new literatures;

- o understand how periods, cultural intentions, and literary genres differ;
- o grasp the skills and theories of interpretation, and the history of our own discipline;
- o see how interpretive interests shift with time and place;
- o attend to linguistic details of semantics, phrasing, and structure;
- o assume there are reasonable alternative understandings of a text;
- o adjudicate differences through reasoned arguments that honestly engage counter-arguments.

Our students will have lives in very different arenas, but all calling for skills in discourse, empathy, civil argument, and civic engagement. We cannot and should not say what those careers will be; we train students for jobs that have not yet been invented.

English Department students with an interdisciplinary major in **Narrative Studies** should expect instruction that inculcates an appreciation for all of the above, and coordinates with definitions of teaching excellence in USC’s corresponding departments.

The Department of English adheres to the modalities of instruction published in the “USC Definition of Excellence in Teaching.”

Approved September 18, 2018, Undergraduate Studies Committee, Department of English

ZOOM Recordings/Intellectual Property and Privacy/Ownership: *SCampus* Section 11.12(B)

Distribution or use of notes or recordings based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study is a violation of the USC Student Conduct Code. This includes, but is not limited to, providing materials for distribution by services publishing class notes. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information, which had been distributed to students or in any way had been displayed for use in relationship to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the Internet or via any other media. (See Section C.1 Class Notes Policy).

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 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 sarc@usc.edu describes reporting options and other resources.

Support Systems

A number of USC's schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute* <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. *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.