

Comparative Studies 677.01

Studies in Folklore: Folk Narrative: folk tale, oral history, and personal narrative

Professor Amy Shuman

Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 11:30-12:30.

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This course will examine some of the great claims that are made for narrative, from the concept of homo narrans, the idea that narrative is a fundamental characteristic of human beings to the concept of narrative as a way of organizing experience and making meaning out of chaos. In particular, in this class, we will examine personal experience narratives, the stories that people tell each other as part of everyday conversation. Some scholars consider storytelling to be a fundamental way in which humans organize their experiences. We will focus on the social aspects of storytelling--the kinds of stories people tell and the occasions on which they tell them--but we will also consider cognitive issues such as memory and psychological issues such as the therapeutic use of storytelling.

Some of the topics to be considered include the relation between stories and the experiences they describe, who tells what kinds of stories, the occasions when stories are told in everyday life, stories as repositories of family memories, children's first personal narratives, how stories help us to conceptualize our lives, and how stories are used to communicate ideas and beliefs indirectly.

Texts:

Packet of Readings available at Grade A Notes

Arthur Asa Berger Narratives in Popular Culture, Media, and Everyday Life

Assignments:

Mid-term exam

Term Paper divided into two assignments: Collection of Stories and Description/discussion of context or performance of stories

English 577: Studies in Folklore: Conversational Narratives
Professor Amy Shuman--566 Denney--email: shuman.1@osu.edu--phone: 292-6555
Office Hours: Tues and Thurs. 8:30-9:30 A.M.; Tues. and Thurs. 11:30-1:30 by appointment

Reading Schedule:

September 21: Introduction: Fairytale Handout

September 26: Storytelling Performance by Barbara Freeman
Read Burning Brightly: New Light from an Old Tale by Kay F. Stone in Feminist Messages ed. Joan Radner. U of Illinois Press, 1993. (packet)

September 28: Read Who's Afraid of the Brothers Grimm?: Socialization and Politicization through Fairy Tales by Jack Zipes in Fairytales and the Art of Subversion Wildman Press, 1983 and The Rationalization of Abandonment and Abuse in Fairy Tales: The Case of Hansel and Gretel by Jack Zipes in Happily Ever After: Fairy Tales, Children, and the Culture Industry Routledge: 1997. (packet)

October 3: Read pp. 1-40 in Berger and Methods and Data for Studying the Life Story by Charlotte Linde in Life Stories: the creation of coherence Oxford: 1993 (packet)

October 5: Read pp. 41-60 in Berger and Entitlement by Shuman (packet)

October 10: Read pp. 63-98 in Berger and Lives and Stories by Kirin Narayan in Storytellers, Saints and Scoundrels Univ. Of Penn.: 1989. (packet)

October 12: Read pp. 99-159 in Berger **Assignment:** bring in a narrative (from a newspaper or transcribed from everyday life conversation)

October 17: Read pp. 161-174 in Berger and Shuman Subversive Stories and the Critique of Empathy (packet)

October 19: Read Dialogic Narration and the Paradoxes of Masada by Edward M. Bruner and Phyllis Gorfain in Bruner, Ed. Text Play and Story: the Construction and Reconstruction of Self and Society AES, 1993 (packet)

October 24: Read: Bobbes and Zeydes: Old and New Roles for Elderly Jews by Barbara Myerhoff in Remembered Lives Univ. of Michigan, 1992.

October 26: View the film *Number Our Days* and Read Surviving Stories: Reflections on Number Our Days and Death in Due Time: Conviction, Order, and Continuity in Ritual Drama by Barbara Myerhoff in Remembered Lives Univ. of Michigan, 1992.

October 31: Read Life History among the Elderly: Performance Visibility, and Re-membering by Barbara Myerhoff in Remembered Lives Univ. of Michigan, 1992.

November 2: Read ALooking for Scars≅ by Kai Erikson in Everything in its Path Simon and Schuster, 1976 and AThe Death of Luigi Trastulli: Memory and the Event≅ by Alessandro Portelli in The Death of Luigi Trastulli and other stories: form and meaning in oral history SUNY: 1991.

November 7 AIntroduction≅ by Mullen in I Heard the Old Fisherman Say U. Texas Press.

November 9: Read: A parable in Context≅ by Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and AParable≅ by Shuman (packet)

November 14: **Assignment: Narratives for final project due**
Review for midterm

November 16: Midterm exam

November 21 Read: ASmall world stories≅ by Shuman (packet); discuss student collections

November 28 Read: AThe Appropriation of Personal Stories≅ by Shuman (packet); discuss student collections

November 30 summary

Final Exam: Tuesday, December 5 9:30-11:18 A.M.

Course Policies

*Plagiarism: In a folklore course, you are rewarded for citing others, whether written or oral sources. Your work is **more** valuable to the extent that you cite others rather than claim ideas as your own. Thus, in this course, plagiarism is self-defeating in more than one sense. Plagiarism is the representation of another's works or ideas as one's own: it includes the unacknowledged word for word use and/or paraphrasing of another person's work, and/or the inappropriate unacknowledged use of another person's ideas. All cases of suspected plagiarism, in accordance with university rules, will be reported to the Committee on Academic Misconduct.*

Disabilities: The Office for Disability Services, located in 150 Pomerene Hall, offers services for students with documented disabilities. Contact the ODS at 2-3307. Even if you do not have a documented disability, we are willing to make any accommodations necessary to help you to do your best work for this class.

Attendance: You are expected to attend all classes. If you are unable to attend class, when you return to class, you must submit a written summary of the readings due on that day. More than two absences will result in a lower grade. You are responsible for all materials discussed in class and should make your own arrangements to get notes from another student if you miss class, whether or not the absence is excused. If you anticipate an absence and inform us in advance, we will make every effort to tape-record the class for you.

