



## The Power of Storytelling: Narrative Theory and Practice

HON 238-01, Spring 2022

Course Syllabus

**Instructor:** Julie Jenner

**Meeting Time:** Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, 11:00-11:50 pm

**Meeting Place:** ClassZoom for the first week, then Doti Hall 105

**Instructor's e-mail:** [jenner@chapman.edu](mailto:jenner@chapman.edu)

**Office Hours:** by appointment on Zoom

### Course Description

A distinctly human endeavor, storytelling can serve many purposes: interpreting past and present, projecting a future, encouraging empathy, providing testimony, giving voice to personal realities, and more. Through the composition of personalized writing projects that are critical and creative and through the analysis of narrative across media and its use in various genres and texts of established authors, students explore the humanistic value and rhetorical effect of storytelling in their work and the works of others. This writing seminar will focus on the structure and function of narrative and its conventions, the persuasive use of narrators and narration, and the implications of interpretation and adaptation across media.

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### Learning Outcomes

#### Written Inquiry

The student establishes active, genuine, and responsible authorial engagement; communicates a purpose—an argument or other intentional point/goal; invokes a specific audience, develops the

argument/content with an internal logic-organization; integrates references, citations, and source material logically and dialogically, indicating how such forms of evidence relate to each other and the author's position; and composes the text with: a style or styles appropriate to the purpose and intended audience, consistent use of the diction appropriate to the author's topic and purpose, the ability to establish and vary authorial voice(s) and tone(s), a choice of form(s) and genre(s) appropriate to purpose and audience (forms may be digital and/or multimodal), and rhetorically effective use of document design.

## **Honors Program**

Upon completing a course in the University Honors Program, students will have:

- obtained a starting point for integrative exploration of the development of cultures and intellectual achievements through a variety of disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives;
- sharpened their ability to critically analyze and synthesize a broad range of knowledge through the study of primary texts and engagement in active learning with fellow students, faculty, and texts (broadly understood);
- understood how to apply more integrative and interdisciplinary forms of understanding in the advancement of knowledge and in addressing complex challenges shaping the world;
- developed effective communication skills.

## **Course Specific**

Students will:

- learn to identify and deploy the central components of narrative and the different ways in which storytelling techniques manifest in different genres (fiction and non-fiction) and media.
- learn specific strategies in writing narratives that can be transferred across media and multiple writing genres.
- critically analyze narrative contexts according to compositional components and interpretation and respond effectively to that analysis through well-crafted compositions.
- understand how storytelling is used to negotiate social, educational, and intellectual relationships in various contexts to a range of audiences.
- apply storytelling craft knowledge to their writing with attention to how techniques channel and alter the significance of one's narratives.
- learn how to generate new creative ideas.
- learn how to give constructive feedback to other writers.
- recognize the benefit of multiple drafts, feedback, and revision in the writing process.
- engage in regular writing practice and complete a revised portfolio of work.

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## **Course Components**

### **Course Format**

We will meet in class on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 11 am to 11:50 am unless directed otherwise. Exceptions might include any field trips, fieldwork, or individual conferences. Check updated course schedule or conference schedule for special meeting places.

## Required Texts

The course textbook is *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, third edition (ISBN 978-1-108-82335-7) by H. Porter Abbott. You will also be asked to acquire any additional text(s) necessary for upcoming writing projects and to engage with a variety of primary texts and selected works that address specific topics in narrative. Any additional readings and viewings will be provided on Canvas modules.

## Technology

You will need to bring a laptop or similar device to each class to engage in Canvas discussions or other in-class activities. If need be, you can borrow a laptop free of charge, with a valid student id, at a display in Argyros Forum. Please let me know if you cannot meet this requirement for any reason. This course employs features of Canvas. It is your responsibility to learn to use all the web functions relevant to this course.

## Tentative Course Schedule

### Section 1: Components of Narrative

- Week 1: Introductions: Writing Community, Reading and Writing Narrative, Course Content and Structure
- Week 2: Narrative Discourse, Narrator, and Narration
- Week 3: Character, Dialogue, and Plot Action
- Week 4: Borders, Narrative Structures, Space and Storyworlds
- Week 5: Setting, Style, and Significance

### Section 2: Crafting Narrative

- Week 6: Narrative Craft and Individual Mid-term Conferences
- Week 7: Inspiration, Imagination, and Creativity
- Week 8: Conflict, Closure, Beginnings, and Endings
- Week 9: Workshops: Narrative Writing Project

### Section 3: Narratives in Perspective

- Week 10: Interpretation of Narrative
- Week 11: Adaptation across Media
- Week 12: Truth, Rhetoric, and Collaboration in Narrative
- Week 13: Workshops: Interpretation Project
- Week 14: Individual Conferences and Final Portfolio

The weekly course schedule with in-class activities and homework assignments is available on Canvas under the modules for each week. Please note that I don't recommend printing out the schedule as readings, viewings, and assignment due dates are subject to change. Always consult Canvas Modules for the most recent version of the course schedule.

## Coursework at a Glance

The course is organized into three general parts. SECTION I: *Components of Narrative* will focus on defining narrative and the way it acts upon us, as well as providing an in-depth exploration through

journal exercises, an analytical writing project, and discussion of the foundational elements of storytelling, including narrator, character, plot, setting, and more. In SECTION 2: *Crafting Narrative*, you will have the opportunity to focus on the crafting of a narrative, be it fiction or nonfiction, applying the narrative elements introduced in the first section. Also, you will have the opportunity to participate in a peer workshop, giving and receiving feedback on your original work in a structured and supportive environment. And lastly, in SECTION 3: *Narratives in Perspective*, topics such as rhetorical power, interpretation, and adaptation will be the focus. You will engage in an individualized writing project about one or more of these topics.

Your progress in the course will be evaluated based on the following (6) areas:

**(1) Participation** (*Attendance, Collaborations, and Discussions*)

Your presence is crucial to your success in this class. Because we do a lot of group work, your peers depend on you being present and attentive. You show respect to the writing community by being informed and fulfilling your responsibilities to your classmates. Participation will be evaluated based on your performance on a combination of activities, including overall attendance, collaboration, and discussions throughout the semester.

*Attendance*

The University recommends a minimal policy that students who are absent 20 percent of the course should be failed. For this course, you are allowed three unexcused absences. I allow for three unexcused absences because I understand how life has a way of sometimes interfering with our regular schedules, so use these absences wisely. Your participation grade will be lowered by five points for each unexcused absence over the three allowed. Though I appreciate the heads up immensely, simply telling me in advance that you will be absent from class does not excuse the absence; it merely explains it. For an absence to be considered excused, you must provide official documentation. Some examples of official documentation include a note from the campus health center or a doctor in case of sickness, a copy of the notice in case of jury duty or some other court hearing, or a note from an instructor regarding an absence due to performance or sport. Let me know immediately if you need clarification about the nature of the absence or its documentation. I take attendance at the beginning of class each day. Tardiness is disruptive to the class and is noted on the attendance roster. I understand having to be late due to unavoidable circumstances; however, if I notice your tardiness becoming excessive or habitual, I will lower your participation grade, with three tardy arrivals equivalent to one unexcused absence. It is your responsibility to do all assigned reading and work for any missed class sessions and contact me via email for class details. All assignments, due dates, guidelines, and readings will be posted on Canvas before the class.

*Collaborations and Discussions*

We are a community of writers and learners in this course. You will engage with peers for group discussions, workshops, and group activities assigned throughout the semester. Giving and receiving feedback on works in progress is invaluable to growing as a writer and understanding writing as a social process. There will be times when we will be utilizing the *Discussion* board feature on Canvas to post your responses to peer work and other activities. Content of these posts will range from creative exercises to

responses to readings and viewings. This is a community space, so keep in mind that peers will also have access to the material you post.

You will receive all participation points when you attend class regularly (not having more than three unexcused absences), are on time, are engaged learners, bring readings and necessary materials to class (this includes laptops and writing journals), avoid distractive use of technology (using phones in class for personal communication), contribute regularly and in an informed manner to the class discussions, successfully collaborate with others, participate in any class activities such as assigned discussion posts and presentations, manifest professional behavior (also in email exchanges), and help others to do all of the above. Your participation grade will count as 10% of your overall course grade.

**(2) Writer's Journal:** Intended as a semester-long practice, the writer's journal is an information management device where you can collect reflections, ideas, quotes, questions, images relevant to the content of the course. You can choose to use a physical journal or a digital one. Please note that you will need to submit a digital version to me through Canvas at midterm and again at the end of the semester for evaluation. The journal comprises 15% percent of your grade and is evaluated based on the completion of assigned entries and quality of effort.

**(3) Narrative Component Analysis:** In the first section of the course, you will be asked to complete an analysis of a work of your choice, applying what you learned about the components of narrative introduced throughout SECTION I of the course. A proposal and presentation are part of this project. Specific guidelines for this assignment will be posted on Canvas Modules. This project makes up 15% of your total grade. A revised version is a required part of your final portfolio.

**(4) Narrative Writing Project:**

In SECTION 2, you will have the opportunity to craft an original narrative, carefully considering authorial choices of style, voice, genre, and mode of delivery. This project will be peer workshopped. This project also includes a reflection component and together is worth 15% of your grade. This project will be completed in two phases: draft and revision. Guidelines will be posted in Canvas Modules. A revised version is a required part of your final portfolio.

**(5) Interpretation Project:**

In SECTION 3, you will be asked to interpret a short narrative of your choice using an intentional, symptomatic, or adaptive approach. This assignment is worth 15% of your grade, and specific guidelines will be posted on Canvas Modules. A revised version is a required part of your final portfolio.

**(6) Final Portfolio:**

The final portfolio will take the place of a final exam and is due on the scheduled exam date for the course. The portfolio will contain revised work and new cumulative and reflective assignments. A detailed list of contents required for the portfolio and specific guidelines will be provided mid-semester in Canvas Modules. You will be reading an excerpt from the

portfolio to the class on the final exam day. The portfolio will comprise 30% of your grade for the course.

### **Late Work Policy**

As mentioned above, late assignments will not be accepted without an excused absence and an approved extension. You must turn in all assignments on time to receive credit. Writing Project drafts, if late, receive a one-time 10-point penalty that will be applied to the graded revision phase of the project. Please note that 10 points will be automatically deducted for any graded assignment not posted at the beginning of class on the due date.

You are required to turn in assignments in their designated areas on Canvas. Don't wait until the last minute to submit work; give yourself extra time in case any problems arise. If, by chance, you are having any difficulties posting on Canvas that day, send me a copy of your assignment by email, using your student email.

### **Course Evaluation**

I will post grades for completed assignments on Canvas as the course progresses. Your participation grade and writer's journal grade will be posted at mid-term and readjusted as needed at the end of the semester.

#### **Percentage Breakdown**

<b>Participation</b> ( <i>attendance, collaborations and discussions</i> )	10%
<b>Writers Journal</b> ( <i>exercises and reading responses</i> )	15%
<b>Narrative Component Analysis</b>	15%
<b>Narrative Writing Project</b> ( <i>draft and revision</i> )	15%
<b>Interpretation Project</b> ( <i>draft and revision</i> )	15%
<b>Final Portfolio</b>	30%

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Total	100%
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A-100-94; A- 93-90; B+ 89-87; B 86-84; B- 83-80; C+ 79-77; C 76-74; C- 73-70; D+ 69-67; D 66-64; D- 63-60; F 59-0

### **Peer Groups and Workshops**

We are a community of writers and learners in this course. You will engage with peers for group discussions, workshops, and collaborative activities. Giving and receiving feedback on works in progress is invaluable to growing as a writer and understanding writing as a social process. I will be providing guidelines on responding to your peers' work during workshops and peer review sessions.

### **Field Work and Trips**

There might be days when the class will be conducted outside the usual classroom space and time. For instance, we might meet at the library, museum, or in various areas around campus and the Orange Plaza Circle. Locations will be announced in advance and posted on the course schedule.

### **Guest Speakers and Special Events**

As needed, I will make space in our course schedule for guest speakers and special campus events that inform the content of the course. Locations and times will be announced in advance and posted on the course schedule.

## **Individual Conferences**

Individual conferences will take place around mid-term and again at the end of the semester. You are required to sign up for a time slot during these weeks. We will not hold class meetings during these conferencing days, but you are required to complete any readings or assignments as directed in the course schedule. Conferences are an opportunity to discuss any concerns or challenges you have with the class or writing in general or to discuss ideas for projects and revisions. These are the only mandatory conference meetings during the semester; however, please feel free to schedule additional meeting times with me as needed. Your success in this course is important to me.

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## **Additional University Policy**

**Chapman University's Academic Integrity Policy.** "Chapman University is a community of scholars that emphasizes the mutual responsibility of all members to seek knowledge honestly and in good faith. Students are responsible for doing their own work, and academic dishonesty of any kind will be subject to sanction by the instructor/administrator and referral to the university Academic Integrity Committee, which may impose additional sanctions, including expulsion. Please see the full description of Chapman University's policy on Academic Integrity at [www.chapman.edu/academics/academicintegrity/index.aspx](http://www.chapman.edu/academics/academicintegrity/index.aspx)."

**Chapman University's Students with Disabilities Policy.** "In compliance with ADA guidelines, students who have any condition, either permanent or temporary, that might affect their ability to perform in this class are encouraged to contact the Disability Services Office. If you need to utilize your approved accommodations in this class, please follow the proper notification procedure for informing your professor(s). This notification process must occur more than a week before any accommodation can be utilized. Please contact Disability Services at (714) 516-4520 or visit [www.chapman.edu/students/student-health-services/disability-services](http://www.chapman.edu/students/student-health-services/disability-services) if you have questions regarding this procedure or for information or to make an appointment to discuss and/or request potential accommodations based on documentation of your disability. Once formal approval of your need for accommodation has been granted, you are encouraged to talk with your professor(s) about your accommodation options. The granting of any accommodation will not be retroactive and cannot jeopardize the academic standards or integrity of the course."

**Chapman University's Equity and Diversity Policy.** "Chapman University is committed to ensuring equality and valuing diversity. Students and professors are reminded to show respect at all times as outlined in Chapman's Harassment and Discrimination Policy. Please see the full description of this policy at <http://www.chapman.edu/faculty-staff/human-resources/eoo.aspx>. Any violations of this policy should be discussed with the professor, the dean of students and/or otherwise reported in accordance with this policy.