

# The Power of Storytelling: Narrative Theory and Practice

HON 238-01, Spring 2024

Course Syllabus

**Instructor:** Julie Jenner

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

**Meeting Place:** 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 (WI)

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 materially 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 how storytelling techniques manifest in both fiction and non-fiction narratives.
  - 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 collaborate and give constructive feedback to other writers.
  - recognize the benefit of multiple drafts, feedback, and revision in writing.
  - engage in regular writing practice and complete a revised portfolio of work.
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## Course Components

### Course Format

Unless directed otherwise, we will meet in class on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 11 am to 11:50 am. Exceptions might include field trips, fieldwork, or individual conferences. Check the updated course schedule on Canvas or the conference schedule on the shared Google drive for special meeting places.

### Required Texts

The following texts are required for the course (digital versions are fine):

- *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, third edition, by H. Porter Abbott. (ISBN 978-1-108-82335-7)
- *Writing Fiction: A Guide to Narrative Craft*, tenth edition, by Janet Burroway (ISBN 978-0-226-61669-9)

You will also engage with various primary texts and selected works that address specific topics in narrative studies. Any additional readings and viewings will be provided on Canvas modules.

### Technology

You need to bring a laptop or similar device to each class to engage in Canvas discussions and/or other in-class activities. You are responsible for learning to use all the web functions relevant to this course.

### Course Schedule

Week 1: Introduction to Course Community, Content & Concepts

Week 2: Defining Narrative & The Rhetoric of Storytelling

Week 3: Truth in Narrative & Components of Narrative: Point of View & Narration

Week 4: Narrative Components: Characters & Characterization

Week 5: Narrative Components: Settings & Storyworlds  
Week 6: Components of Narrative: Plot & Structure  
Week 7: Revising for Meaning/Individual Mid-term Conferences

\*\*\*Spring Break\*\*\*

Week 8: Components of Narrative: Closure, Conflict, & Comparison  
Week 9: Interpreting Narrative  
Week 10: Adaptation across Media  
Week 11: Final Portfolio Elements: Poetics, Review & Reflection  
Week 12: Editorial Collective  
Week 13: Editorial Collective  
Week 14: Editorial Collective Presentations  
\*Final Exam Week: Portfolio due

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**

We will begin the course by defining narrative and how it acts upon us. Our course texts by Burroway and Abbott will be our guides to the exploration of theoretical concepts underlying narratology and to techniques and approaches to crafting compelling narratives that are compelling and rhetorically effective. There will be many opportunities to examine the work of successful storytellers and the work of the other writers in the course and create original narratives (nonfiction or fiction) of our own. We will also touch on topics such as rhetorical power, interpretation, and adaptation of narratives across media. Below is a summary of the aspects of the course that are vital to having a successful learning experience.

#### A+E+P (Attendance, Engagement, and Participation)

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 respect the writing community by being informed and fulfilling your responsibilities to your classmates. This component of your grade will be evaluated based on your performance and capacity to regularly attend, engage, and participate in the course community.

#### 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 sometimes interferes 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. For an absence to be excused, you must provide an explanation and/or 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 being 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. You are responsible for all assigned reading and work for any missed class sessions. All assignments, due dates, guidelines, and readings will be posted on Canvas.

### Engagement & Participation

We are a community of writers and learners in this course. You will engage with peers for group discussions, collaborations, 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. Sometimes, we will utilize the *Discussion* board feature on Canvas or our shared Google Drive to post your responses to peer work and other activities. The content of these posts will range from creative exercises to responses to readings and viewings. This is a community space, so remember 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, texts, 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 5% of your overall course grade.

### Writing Journal

Intended as a semester-long practice, the writer's journal is an information management device where you can collect reflections, notes, ideas, quotes, questions, and images relevant to the content of the course. We will use it for weekly writing prompts and brainstorming ideas for our narratives, to better understand our writing processes, and to explore concepts introduced in the course. You can choose to use a physical journal or a digital one. Bring it to each class. The journal is not graded, but it holds the potential to enrich the other assessed aspects of the course, especially the reflection essay required in the final portfolio.

### Weekly Writing Activities

This is a series of low-stakes writing assignments posted to Canvas discussions each week. These activities are designed to encourage critical and creative thinking about course concepts and include responses to assigned readings and viewings, field trip reports, and creative writing exercises. These posts are assessed based on effort, thoroughness, and thoughtfulness. WWAs comprise 10% of your overall course grade.

### Original Narratives

You will craft two narratives for this course, carefully considering authorial choices of style, voice, genre, and mode of delivery. These narratives can take many different genres and forms and can be fiction or nonfiction. Given that this is a course about storytelling craft and writing process, narratives should be written specifically for this class, taking course concepts and content into

consideration. These pieces will be peer-reviewed and revised before being submitted for the editorial collective review and final portfolio submission. These original narratives include a reflection essay component and count 15% of your final grade.

### Peer Collaboration Letters

We are a community of writers and learners in this course. Giving and receiving feedback on works in progress is invaluable to growing as a writer and understanding writing as a social process. It is also a way to practice analysis and collaboration and demonstrate our understanding of course concepts as presented in our readings. I will provide guidelines for responding to your peers' work during peer review collaborations for both original narratives. Both responses will be delivered to your assigned peer in letter form. These two letters will comprise 10% of your course grade.

### Narrative Craft Analyses

You will write two analyses of the assigned readings for the course, focusing on the components of narrative and narrative theories as discussed by Burroway and Abbotts in our course texts. One of these analyses is to be revised and included in your final portfolio at the end of the semester. These analyses count 15% of your grade for the course.

### Editorial Collective

In this collaborative group project, you will create an online course anthology using the original narratives generated by your assigned group. Each group will present and read from the anthology during the final weeks of classes. This collaborative effort counts 15% of your final grade.

### Final Portfolio

The final portfolio will replace 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. The portfolio will comprise 30% of your grade for the course.

### Individual Conferences

Individual conferences will take place around mid-term. You are required to sign up for a time slot during this week. 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 with the class, writing in general, or ideas for projects and revisions. This will be the only mandatory conference meeting during the semester; however, please feel free to schedule additional meeting times with me as needed.

### 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. Sometimes these events will take place outside of our scheduled class period. Locations and times will be announced in advance and posted on the course schedule.

## Course Evaluation

I will post grades for completed assignments on Canvas as the course progresses. Your A+E+P grade will be posted at mid-term and readjusted as needed at the end of the semester.

### **Percentage Breakdown**

A+E+P (Attendance+Participation+Engagement)	5%
Weekly Writing Activities	10%
Original Narratives (2)	15%
Peer Collaboration Letters (2)	10%
Narrative Craft Analyses (2)	15%
Editorial Collective	15%
Final Portfolio	30%
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Total	100%

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

## Late Work Policy

Extensions need to be approved before the due date. Any late assignments will incur a 10-point penalty. Late work will not be accepted without consent after 3 days past 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. 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.

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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.