HON 341.01                Fall 2012
Storytelling

Catalog Description:
Prerequisite: acceptance to the University Honors Program, or consent of instructor.
How important is storytelling to our daily lives? What can improving one’s storytelling actually achieve? Using multiple approaches, we explore storytelling as an essential mode of human connectivity with a central focus on improving storytelling skills.
(Offered as needed.) 3 credits.

Course Objectives:
Upon completion of the course you will be able to:

1. Quickly and effectively break down stories into fundamental parts central to compelling drama, e.g. the hook, the window, the use of the unexpected, and the telling moment;
2. Use these fundamental techniques to better analyze your own stories and how to tell them effectively in any medium (including digital and Internet);
3. Improve your oral and written communication skills after the course is finished by continuously applying these fundamental techniques to new storytelling models that you encounter;
4. Analyze an audience and tailor your approach in various social situations;
5. Write more critically and constructively about the stories you tell as well as the stories you hear by keeping a record of them and analyzing their similarities and strengths before synthesizing what you learn in your own work;
6. Reflect on your progress in the course and determine the differences (and vital similarities) between pre-cinematic and pre-digital storytelling modes and those of the 21st century using primary texts as well as disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives;
7. Tell your very best story to anyone, in any situation, in a way that best represents who you are and what you value.

Content:
The primary goal of storytelling is to connect speaker and listener in a way they had not previously been connected. It is a linguistic tool used to more effectively navigate a myriad of social situations; it can help one make friends, convey a good first impression, and even deepen a relationship by explaining why one is the way one is. When viewed in
this way, it is easy to see why storytelling is vital to being human—or perhaps more specifically, why storytelling is vital to being a more relatable, more successful human. As such, the study of various fundamental parts will be undertaken to create a solid foundation in how to tell effective stories. This course will focus intensively on the multiple modes of storytelling as a tool of human connectivity within the oral, written (such as creative non-fiction, prose fiction, poetry), visual (cinema), and digital (blogs, YouTube, et cetera) spheres.

Writers and storytellers incorporated into the course work will likely include: Twain, O. Henry, Hearn, Baldwin, Rushdie, O’Connor, Cash, Silverstein, and Hughes.

Key questions:
- How important is being a good storyteller to being an effective interpersonal communicator?
- How does one read an audience?
- What do our stories tell others about who we are?
- How can one’s stories be bettered to more effectively represent one’s self in various social situations?

Current Required Texts:

Instructional Strategies:
1. Seminars, small groups, and focused one-on-one feedback designed to encourage voice, amplify strengths, and improve weaknesses in story design and delivery.
2. Visual/audio presentations using PowerPoint and clips from cinema, television, music, and the Internet will be utilized to demonstrate key aspects of compelling storytelling and how it can be applied. This realizes course objective 1.
3. Occasional mini-workshops focusing on key components of storytelling (the hook, et cetera), as well as oral presentation to group: gesture, body language, elocution, pace, clarity, and rhythm. This realizes course objectives 2, 3, and 4.
4. Final Project (graded): A dynamic presentation of your best non-fiction story about yourself. You may choose one of the following options: oral, written (creative non-fiction or graphic fiction), digital (blog entry, website, or flash animation), or video. This specifically realizes course objective 7, but will also demonstrate depth of knowledge and understanding of 1-6.
5. Written assignments (graded):
   a. Notebook: Your notebook will become your storybook. It will include seminar notes and in-class exercises, but will also allow you to record and deconstruct stories you overhear, watch, or read outside of class, and compare them to the fundamental aspects of storytelling. This realizes course objective 5.
   b. Personal Essays: These realize course objective 6.
c. Final Presentation (depending on your choice of medium): course objectives as above.

Learning Outcomes:

a. Understand multiple approaches to storytelling technique through primary texts, both traditional and digital;

b. Able to view contemporary issues of interconnectivity and privacy in a rapidly evolving (and frequently invasive) digital world through the broader lens of storytelling;

c. Develop stronger writing, speaking, and listening skills, specifically in regard to self-awareness, self-representation, and analysis of social situations.

Methods of Evaluation:

1. Evaluation and grading will be based on the following requirements:

   - In-class participation (specifically in-class exercises).
   - Three personal essays based on selected readings.
   - Notebook.
   - Final Presentation.

2. Grades will be assigned as follows:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essay #1</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>Essay #2</td>
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<td>Essay #3</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Notebook</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Presentation</td>
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A = 100-91; B = 90-81; C = 80-71; D = 70-61; F = below 60.

Chapman University Academic Integrity Policy:
The course syllabus should include the following statement:
Chapman University is a community of scholars, which 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 not be tolerated anywhere in the university.

Students with Disabilities Policy:
The course syllabus should include the following statement:
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
inform the instructor at the beginning of the term. The University, through the Center for Academic Success, will work with the appropriate faculty member who is asked to provide the accommodations for a student in determining what accommodations are suitable based on the documentation and the individual student needs. The granting of any accommodation will not be retroactive and cannot jeopardize the academic standards or integrity of the course.

Prepared by: Ryan Gattis, Sept. 2011

Last revised: Ryan Gattis, Aug. 2012