Suppose you inhabited a reality in which your fellow inhabitants conjured up other realities at will, displaying them before you by acts of narration? “Theories of Narrative” proposes a range of approaches to such conjuring acts in face-to-face, mouth-to-ear, skin-to-skin interaction. The course centers on fast folklore, narrative genres that dissect out into the matrix of the ordinary, that cut to the quick – preeminently, storytelling in conversation – as key to the more durable folk genres – the folktale, the legend, the epic, the myth – genres that change slowly, that hold out against the rhythms of modernity and constitute themselves enclaves of the traditional. Moving across a spectrum of genres, the course examines the formal, structural, and contextual properties of narratives in relation to gestures, the body, and emotion; imagination and fantasy; memory and the senses; space and time. These narratives turn on transmission as well as tradition; they are narratives at work, on the move, in action.

**Coursework**

Collect an oral narrative. Due the 5th week of class. Requisite
Transcribe your narrative. Due the 8th week of class. 30% of grade
Analyze your narrative. Due the 12th week of class. 30% of grade
Theorize narrative. Due the last week of class. 40% of grade

**Required Texts**


**Readings** available on bSpace
Space

Begin with the “aesthetic ecology” of narrative, to take up Mary Hufford’s term: how narrative is implicated in its spaces – the issue of multiple contexting; how it is set off from its spaces – the question of frames, boundaries, and thresholds; how narrators carve out the realities that in turn constitute them storytellers.

Week 1: Multiple Realities

Recommended


Week 2: Storyability and Eventfulness

Required


Week 3: Frames

Required


*Recommended*

**Week 4: Contexts**

*Required*


**Self**

Narrative offers a double footing for the presentation of a self: the presentation of self as a character in a story and the presentation of self as the narrator of a story in which one may or may not appear as a character. These options are variously exploited in the business of producing a self in everyday life, from relatively transparent claims to the selves one presents through duplicitous self-presentations to the manufacture of meanings of the deepest consequence, for both oneself and the other.

**Week 5: Narrative Selves**

*Due*
Audiotape, videotape, or other technological retrieval of a narrative.

*Required*
Katharine Young. 1987. “Presentation of Self in Storytelling.” *Taleworlds and Storyrealms (ibid.)*, 100-156.


*Recommended*


**Week 6: Life Stories**

*Due*
Rough transcription of prospective narrative/s.

*Required*

*Recommended*


**Week 7: Speaking-for**

*Required*

**Architecture**

A progressively elaborated architecture carves narrative away from its contexts. From the definition of minimal narrative, inquiry moves through sequentiality, consequentiality, and the problem of causality; evaluation and the relationship between storability and eventfulness; and the shift from restricted to elaborated code speaking, to arrive at the tenuous border between oral and literary genres.

**Week 8: Form**

*Due*
Transcription of the narrative and its contexts.

*Required*


**Week 9: Structure**

*Required*


*Recommended*

**SPRING BREAK**

**Week 10: Genre**

*Required*


**The Body**

Conversational narrative is implicated not only in its contexts of production and perception but also in the body of its producer and perceiver. The relationship between gestures and narrative, the use of the gesture space as a narrative space, and embodied perspectives on narrative realities, disclose an embodied hold on narrative that has implications for the senses, memory, and emotion.

**Week 11: Performance**

*Required*


*Recommended*


**Week 12: Perspective and Voice**

*Due*

Structural analysis of narrative, 15-20 pages.

*Required*


**Time**

Narratives enter not only into multiple realities but also into multiple temporalities. Ethnomimesis, imitation, and the copy; temporal folding; and repetition and identity present themselves as disturbances of time.

**Week 13: Ethnomimesis**

*Required*


**Week 14: Multiple Temporalities**

*Required*


*Recommended*


*Due*

Final paper on the interpretation of narrative, incorporating the transcription and its analysis, 20 to 25 pages. Present in class an abbreviated account of its theoretical interest.