

Lewis & Clark College: Graduate School of Professional Studies:
CORE 526: NARRATIVE AND VOICE: EXPLORING CULTURE AND GENDER
ACROSS THE LIFE CYCLE

CORE 526 (1 Semester Hour Credit)

Carol Witherell, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus cswitherell@comcast.net (phone: 503.635.7854)
MAY 2008

*Class meets: Thursday, May 1 from 5:30-8:30 p.m.; Friday, May 9 from 5:00-9:00 p.m.;
Saturday, May 10, 9:00-5:00 p.m. South Campus Conference Center Room 107*

*Some stories accumulate power like a sky gathering clouds, quietly, quietly, till the story
rains around you. –Anne Fadiman, The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down.*

Course Description: Drawing from different cultural traditions in psychology, anthropology, literature and biography, participants will use narrative as an interpretive method for making meaning out of the predicaments and possibilities that compose a human life. Culture, gender, and power will be explored as meaning systems that affect individual responses in the cognitive, social, and moral realms. Participants will make connections between their own biographies, individuals they serve as professionals, and lives addressed in selected narratives.

We will draw from selected narratives in film and print and journal writing, using tools of narrative inquiry and dialogue circles to expand and enhance our understanding of and responsiveness to the needs of our students, clients, and associates from diverse ethno-cultural and gender experiences.

Texts:

Required reading before class:

Fadiman, Anne. (1997). *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures*. (New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 1 Available at the college bookstore.

OR

Tolman, Sandy. (2006). *The Lemon Tree: An Arab, A Jew, and the Heart of the Middle East*. New York: Bloomsbury). Available at the college bookstore.

In class: Short excerpts from books, articles/passages/poems to be distributed in class for written reader response and dialogue circles. In May 2008 included excerpts from Jan Morris' *Conundrum* and Nora Vincent's *Self-Made Man*.

Videotapes/DVDs (Excerpts of some will be shown in class; all are recommended for viewing in the future if you wish to pursue the topics of this course further.):

Boys Don't Cry

City at Peace

The Color of Fear

Crash

**Dialogue at Washington High*

Encounter Point

Facing the Truth (South African Truth and Reconciliation Council videotapes)

Gender: The Enduring Paradox

Lady Day: The Many Faces of Billie Holiday

Peacemakers: Palestinians & Jews together at Camp (140 Muslims, Jews & Christians of all ages, including from Israel and Palestine, share their lives, struggles, and breakthroughs in the California mountains. (Dialogue, 1448 Cedarwood Dr., San Mateo, CA 94403 (650) 574-8303

**Promises: “A deeply moving portrait of seven Palestinian and Israeli children, Promises follows the journey of a filmmaker who meets these children in and around Jerusalem, from a Palestinian refugee camp to an Israeli settlement in the West Bank... These children exist in completely separate worlds, divided by physical, historical and emotional boundaries, Promises explores the nature of these boundaries and tells the story of a few children who dared to cross the lines to meet their neighbors.*

**Seeds of Peace (a Nightline videotape of a camp in Maine that brings Palestinian Arab & Israeli Jewish teenagers together for the summer to share their lives, histories, fears, and hopes for their respective and common futures)*

Smoke Signals

The Way Home (narratives of women of diverse cultures and continents; note—there are several videotapes/DVDs of this title, so review descriptions before ordering)

**TransAmerica - A transgendered women soon to become transsexual. begins a cross-country journey with her newly discovered 18 year old teenage hustler son (who does not know that she was his father), weaving a tender, comical, and sorrowful story, all, as they discover who they each other and what they mean to teach other.*

*(*Shown in May 2008)*

In-class writing and journal writing to be shared in dialogue circles

Goals of the course

We will:

- *Explore the richness of narrative, voice, dialogue, and imagination as ways of knowing, inquiring, and making; meaning in our professional practice and civic lives;*
- *Explore narratives of culture, gender, and power as interpretive lenses and cultural fugues in our own and others’ everyday experience with curiosity and generosity—from local to global perspectives;*
- *Explore narrative and voice in the literary/historical texts of our class and in the texts of our own lives and the lives of those we teach or counsel, with the goal of expanding our understanding of diverse cultural and gender contexts;*
- *Explore with imagination the professional goals we each set for ourselves as we read, view media documentaries, write, respond to others’ writing, and participate in classroom dialogues.*

“Some Guiding Questions” to guide our dialogue, writing, reflection, and inquiry:

- 1) How would you describe the inter-cultural conflicts and challenges experienced by the individuals portrayed in the story you are reading?
- 2) How would you describe the opportunities that these conflicts and challenges present?
- 3) Which individuals in the book you have chosen stand out as exemplars for you as you consider the ways that they turn challenges into opportunities and that they push their own edges of assumptions and understanding? Describe an example that stands out for you that reveals how they did this?

What might you take away from their skills as a cultural broker that you would hope to apply to your work as an educator, counselor, or psychologist?

- 4) Consider the following passage in Anne Fadiman's preface to *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*: "I have always felt that the action most worth watching is not at the center of things but where edges meet. I like shorelines, weather fronts, international borders. These are interesting frictions and incongruities in these places, and often, if you stand at the point of tangency, you can see both sides better than if you were in the middle of either one. This is especially true, I think, when the opposition is cultural." How might you apply her statement to your own professional environment and skills when you experience a collision or chasm between cultures that seems especially daunting?
- 5) What is your own cultural identity and experience and how would you communicate this to others if asked? Include experiences of gender in your description. What aspects of my cultural and gender identity might others see that you might fail to see?
- 6) How might our cultural and gender narratives, experiences, and understanding impact and connect with those of our students, clients, associates, and community stakeholders?
- 7) Where have you observed or experienced cultural collisions or chasms in your educational, professional, community, or other experiences, such as civic work on controversial projects or travel in regions whose cultural mores are very different from those you are familiar with?
- 8) What and how might we learn from the history, voices, and personal and cultural narratives of others from cultures different from our own?
- 9) How might Lia's and her family's experience have been different? What kind of interdisciplinary team approaches might have helped Lia and her family? What institutions, services, and individuals might be part of the team? How might such approaches address systemic issues that affect individuals like Lia? (Think big, with huge imagination, and without naming constraints as you start to envision such an approach. Constraints and their solutions can come later.)
- 10) At the end of *The Lemon Tree*, Dalia says "Our enemy is the only partner we have." Perhaps it could be said about Lia's story "The strangers in our lives are the only partners we have." Where might you take either of these statements with respect to your own life and professional experience? (Beware: This might take you to the precipice of your comfort zone; it surely takes me there.)

Background Information and Rationale:

The historian Wilhelm Dilthey wrote over a century ago of the importance of developing an empathetic understanding of human actions, intentions, and history within the culture, language, and meaning systems in which they exist. Extending this tradition, many contemporary psychologists, anthropologists, educators, counselors, and other observers of human nature cite the importance of narrative, imaginative, and metaphorical ways of knowing and giving voice to one's experience and understanding.

Where currents meet there is fog, but there is also the best fishing. --Ruth Campbell
(from "Cognitive Neuropsychology", in G. L. Claxton (Ed.), *Growth Points in Cognition*. London: Routledge, 1988. Quoted in Sutherland, Rosamund; Guy Claxton; and Andrew Pollard, *Learning and Teaching Where Worldviews Meet*, 2003.)

From a very young age, perhaps from our ancestral and cultural legacies as well, cultural and familial stories weave a tapestry of possibilities that our lives may take. **We are, at best, co-authors of our life**

stories. By giving voice to these stories and their cultural and gendered contexts, we stand to gain an awareness that will make us more effective in many dimensions of our lives. When shared within a climate of curiosity, respect, authenticity, and generosity, stories can gather our collective courage and wisdom as we work to create a more peaceful world, one in which differences are honored and separations reconciled and healed as we give voice and listening space to our unique experiences, beliefs, and perspectives.

Peter Mortola, a member of our own Counseling Psychology faculty, has suggested that *While narrative appears to be a universal ‘sense-making’ tool that can be used to build understandings between diverse populations, narrative also needs to be respected as holding information that can make visible important differences between individuals and cultural groups.* --“Narrative as a Bridge: Storied Links Within and Between Confluent Education and Multicultural Education.” In *Advances in Confluent Education*, volume 2, pages 155-165. (1999, JAI Press Inc.)

I would ask you to remember only this one thing....The stories people tell have a way of taking care of them. If stories come to you, care for them. And learn to give them away where they are needed. Sometimes a person needs a story more than food to stay alive. That is why we put these stories in each other’s memory. One day you will be good storytellers. Never forget these obligations.

--Spoken by Badger, in Barry Lopez, *Crow and Weasel*, p. 49. (Lopez is an Oregon author)

Don't spend your energy trying to kill the dinosaur. Instead, invent the gazelle.
--E. F. Schumacher

Requirements for participants:

- *Attend all classes, arriving on time (In the case of emergencies, please make arrangements in advance with the instructor)
- **Complete all readings* in advance of class meetings to ensure rich and informed discussions
- **Reflective Journal:* Record reflections on the following, both in and out of class;
 - (1) Readings
 - (2) Class and dialogue circle discussions
 - (3) Ways that you might apply these reflections to your professional, civic, and personal life;
- **Professional Mission Statement/Goals:* Drawing from *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down* **or** *The Lemon Tree*, your journal writing, and small group dialogues, design a Professional Mission Statement and several personal/professional goals in response to one or more of the Essential Questions on the second page of this course syllabus. From these goals, address how you plan to use your experience in this course within your own life and work with your students, colleagues, or clients. You are welcome to draw ideas from any of the “Extensions” listed below if they appeal to you.

**Complete the self-evaluation packet handed out with this syllabus as well as an evaluation of the instructor and the course.*

**Packet due at the end of the last day of class or by 5:00 p.m. Monday (May 12) in the Graduate Core Office in Rogers Hall.*

In a large, self-addressed, and stamped manila mailing envelope, please enclose your

(1) Journal;

(2) Prospectus or Personal Mission Statement;

(3) Self-Evaluation Form (3 pages)

Beyond our class: “Extensions”

For future writing, dialogue with other participants, or projects within your professional site/volunteer work:

Conduct life story interviews of others in which you explore themes of gender and culture, with reflections on how you might use such interviews in your teaching, counseling, or leadership role. (Follow the ethical/professional guidelines regarding human subjects in use at your work site if you interview students or clients);

Share autobiographical narratives in which you explore themes of gender or culture and draw connections to your work as an educator or counselor;

Create a drama, dance, musical, DVD, art/photography exhibit, or other artistic/media presentation that uses narrative and voice to explore themes of culture or gender with a reflection on one or more of the course themes. (See examples in the “City at Peace” website).

Other ideas? Share with us in class or in your dialogue circles!

Readings: that could extend your investigation of the themes of our course:

- Altoma, Salih. (October-December, 2003). "Iraq Poets in Western Exile." Selected Poems by Abd Al-Latif Ataymish, Amal Al-Juburi, Yahya ZI-Samawi, Adnan Al-Sayigh, and Sa 'Di Yusuf.
- Angelou, Maya. I Know why the Caged Bird Sings.
- Baker, Russell. Growing Up.
- Bateson, Mary Catherine. Composing a Life. New York: Plume (Penguin), 1989.
- Belenky, Mary Field; Clinchy, Blythe McVicker; Goldberger, Nancy Rule; & Tarule, Jill Mattuck. Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind. NY: Basic Books, 1986.
- Bishop, Russell & Ted Glynn. (1999). *Culture Counts: Changing Power Relations in Education*. London/NY: Zed Books.
- Bly, Robert. Iron John: A Book about Men. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1990.
- Campbell, Bebe Moore. Sweet Summer: Growing up With and Without my Dad. New York: Ballantine Books, 1989.
- Carr, David. Time, Narrative, and History, 1986.
- Chopin, Kate. The Awakening. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1976.
- Clark, Donald. Wishing On the Moon. The Life and Times of Billie Holiday.
- Coles, Robert. The Call of Stories: Teaching and the Moral Imagination. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989.
- Daiute, Colette, and Hollie Jones. (2003). "Diversity Discourse: Reading Race and Ethnicity in and around Children's Writing." In Stuart Greene and Dawn Abt-Perkins, *Making Race Visible: Literacy Research for Cultural Understanding*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Danticat, Edwidge. (1994/1998). *Breath, Eyes, Memory*. NY:Random House: Vintage Books.
- Das, Ram, and Paul Gorman (1985) How Can I Help? Stories and Reflections on Service. New York: Knopf (the train story, pp. 167-171)
- Dillard, Annie. "To fashion a text." In William Zinsser (Ed.), Inventing the Truth. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987.
- Dillard, Annie. An American Childhood.
- Dillard, Annie. Living by Fiction. New York: Harper & Row, 1982.
- Dillard, Annie. The Writing Life. New York: Harper & Row, 1989.
- Dorris, Michael. Yellow Raft in Blue Water. New York: Warner, 1987.
- Drabble, Margaret. The Waterfall. Hammondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1969.
- Durant, Will & Durant, Ariel. A Dual Autobiography.
- Ellis, Anne. The Life of an Ordinary Woman.
- Engel, Susan. The Stories Children Tell: Making Sense of the Narratives of Childhood. New York: W. H. Freeman, 1999.
- Gavron, Daniel. (2008) *Holy Land Mosaic: Stories of Cooperation and Coexistence between Israelis and Palestinians*. Plymouth, UK: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Giddings, Paula. When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America. New York: Bantam, 1984.
- Gilligan, Carol. (1988). "Exit-Voice Dilemmas in Adolescent Development." In Carol Gilligan et al., *Mapping the Moral Domain*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University.

- Gilligan, Carol; Lyons, Nona; & Hanmer, Trudy. Making Connections. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990.
- Gilmore, David. Manhood in the Making: Cultural Concepts of Masculinity. New Haven: Yale University, 1990.
- Gornick, Vivian. Fierce Attachments: A Memoir.
- Goss, Linda, and Barnes, Marian E. (Eds.). Talk That Talk: An Anthology of African-American Storytelling. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989.
- Greene, Stuart and Dawn Abt-Perkins (Eds.). (2003) *Making Race Visible: Literacy Research for Cultural Understanding*. New York: Teachers College Press (Columbia University).
- Heilbrun, Carolyn. Hamlet's Mother and Other Women. New York: Columbia University, 1990.
- Heilbrun, Carolyn. Writing a Woman's Life. New York: W. W. Norton, 1988.
- Hemingway, Ernest. The Old Man and the Sea.
- Hillesum, Etty. An Interrupted Life. NY: Washington Square Press (Simon & Schuster, 1983.)
- Hoffman, Eva. Lost in Translation.
- Hurston, Zora Neale. Their Eyes were Watching God.
- Isay, Dave (Ed.). (2007). *Listening Is an Act of Love: A collection of StoryCorps' most remarkable stories that paint a moving portrait of American life*. NY: Penguin Press.
- Isay, Dave (Ed.). (2007) *Listening Is an Act of Love: Notes on Ten Beloved Stories—and How to Record Your Own, Interview stories, photos, guidelines, questions, & CD*. New York: Penguin Press. (Also, go to www.storycorps.net)
- Jung, Carl J. (1933). Modern Man in Search of a Soul. New York: Harcourt, Brace.
- Kemp, T. Peter. *Toward a Narrative Ethics: A Bridge Between Ethics and the Narrative Reflection of Ricoeur*. In T. Peter Kemp & David Rasmussen (Eds.), The Narrative Path: The Later Works of Paul Ricoeur. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1989.
- Kingston, Maxine Hong. China Men.
- Kingston, Maxine Hong. Woman Warrior.
- Kotre, John.(1984). Outliving the Self: Generativity and the Interpretation of Lives. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Krondorfer, Bjorn. *Remembrance and Reconciliation: Encounters Between Young Jews and Germans*. (New Haven: Yale University Press)
- LaDuke, Betty. Africa: Through the Eyes of Women Artists. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1991.
- LeGuin, Ursula K. (1967/1987) "Is Gender Necessary? Redux." *Dancing at the Edge of the World: Thoughts on Words, Women, Places*.
- Llosa, Mario Vargas, The Storyteller. New York: penguin, 1990.
- Lopez, Barry. Crossing Open Ground, 1989.
- MacIntyre, Alasdair. After Virtue.
- Mandela, Nelson. (1994). *Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela*. New York: Little, Brown & Co.
- McDermott, Ray and Herve Varenne. (1995). "Culture as Disability." *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* (26 (3): 324-348).
- Merriam, Sharan B. Themes of Adulthood through Literature. NY: Teachers College Press, 1983.
- Momaday, N. Scott. The Names: A Memoir
- Morales-Dean, Fernanda. "Seeing Past the Stereotype to the Story Inside." Published in *Learning Communities Narratives*.
- Morrison, Toni. Beloved.

- Morrison, Toni. *The Site of Memory*. In William Zinsser (Ed.), Inventing the Truth. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987.
- Mortola, Peter. (1999). "Narrative as a Bridge: Storied Links Within and Between Confluent Education and Multicultural Education. *Advances in Confluent Education*, Volume 2, pp. 155-165. JAI Press, Inc.
- Mortola, Peter. *Narrative as a Bridge*, In Joel Brown (Ed.), Advances in Confluent Education. JAI Press, 1999.
- Nazario, Sonia. (2006/2007). *Enrique's Journey: The Story of a [Honduran] Boy's Dangerous Odyssey to Reunite with His Mother*. NY: Random House.
- Neihardt, John. Black Elk Speaks
- Oates, Joyce Carol. Boxing.
- Polkinghorne, Donald. Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1988.
- Ricoeur, Paul. Time and Narrative: Volumes I, II, and III. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984; 1985; 1988.
- Seeking Common Ground*: <http://s-c-g.org/about.html> *Seeking Common Ground* "strives to empower individuals to change the world by creating peaceful communities through integration," socialization, communication, and leadership development.
- Sacks, Oliver. Seeing Voices.
- Simonson, Rick, & Walker, Scott (Eds.) The Graywolf Annual Five: Multicultural Literacy. St. Paul: Graywolf Press, 1988.
- Stafford, Kim. Early Morning: Remembering My Father. St. Paul, MN: Graywolf, 2002.
- Stafford, Kim. *The Story that Saved Life*. In Carol Witherell and Nel Noddings (Eds.), Stories Lives Tell: Narrative and Dialogue in Education. New York: Teachers College Press, 1991.
- Sutherland, Rosamund, Guy Claxton, and Andrew Pollard. (2003) *Learning and Teaching Where Worldviews Meet*. Staffordshire, England and Sterling, Virginia: Trentham Books.
- Thornton, Lawrence. Imagining Argentina. New York: Bantam Books, 1989.
- Wickstrom, Susan. (May 3, 2000). "Stream of Consciousness: An Interview with Sherman Alexie." *Willamette Week*, pp. 51-53.
- Witherell, Carol S., and Nel Noddings (Eds.). (1991). *Stories Lives Tell: Narrative and Dialogue in Education*. New York: Teachers College Press (Columbia University).
- Witherell, Carol S., with Hoan Tan Tran and John Othus. (1995). "Narrative Landscapes and the Moral Imagination: Taking the Story to Heart." In McEwan, Hunter, and Kieran Egan (Eds.), *Narrative in Teaching, Learning, and Research*, pp. 39-49.