

School of Information Sciences
University of Tennessee

IS592 Storytelling in the Library and Classroom – spring, 2005
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*We need poets and storytellers who will fill our minds with new images of who we are and might become” (Margolis, *The Fabric of Self: A theory of Ethics and Emotions*).*

Course description: In a long and grand tradition, American public libraries have offered storytelling programs to their young users. This course examines the history of those who influenced the programming and style of such storytelling. Additionally, this course will offer techniques and sources for selecting, preparing and offering stories to library and classroom audiences.

Course objectives: Five modules will serve as touchstones for the content of the course. They will be woven through the class meetings and assignments, rather than worked through in a linear fashion. The modules include:

1. Knowing and sharing ourselves in order to select stories and create style.
Cree Indians tell us that if we can name ourselves and others, we have the power to tell a story.
 - To tell personal stories of names, places, people, incidents
 - To tell urban legends, jokes

2. Selecting stories in order to find right fits
One storyteller says that it takes reading 50 stories to find the right one to learn and share.
 - To appreciate the variety of story frames
 - To appreciate and collect the variety of cultural stories
 - To appreciate and collect versions and variations on universal themes

3. Shaping presentation style
August Baker reminds us that listeners want to remember the story, not the storyteller.
 - To appreciate the interpretation of story
 - To learn to use the artifacts of storytelling
 - To learn to create the ambience and mood for story presentation

4. Preparing the stories
When I tell you a story, I contract the total of my experience as related to that subject into a more condensed matter. Items particular to me are either excluded or explained and items I can expect us to share ride along unstated, taking no space. When you read or hear the story, you re-expand it, making use of all the materials we share for the extraction of the story (from the IBM website).
 - To learn how to code and cue the stories for best personal delivery
 - To practice
 - To listen “between the lines” (Ann Devere-Smith, actress and activist)

5. Preparing a festival
The pacing of stories by mood, by theme or by length offers markers for orchestrating an aesthetic event
 - To deliver three stories
 - To create a program of storytelling

Course assignments:

1. The course requires readings from photocopies;
2. Learn and deliver three stories by end of the course;
3. Write a paper discussing the process of learning five 'prepared' stories. Paper due August 1.
4. Prepare to practice stories daily to small and large groups;
5. Participate and share resources and insights regarding storytelling. Use the WEB for new sources. Subscribe to Storytellrequest (see Greene, page 6 for instructions)
6. Arrange, orchestrate and present three storytelling 'mini-festivals' of 4-5 tellers with programs to hand out for final class meeting (July 19);
7. Attend all six days of class. Any missed class results in a lower of a grade (example, A to a B+, etc.)

Course schedule:

July 14 – Overview and first steps

July 15 – Concerning style

July 16 – Creating artifacts

July 17 – In the field

July 18 - Rehearsal

July 19 – The Festival

Course evaluation:

Attendance and participation: 30%

Essay: 35%

Festival contribution: 35%