

*"No, it'll not do just to read the old tale out of a book. You've got to tell'em to make'em go right."
(Richard Chase, Grandfather Tales)*

**INLS 558-001: Principles and Techniques of
Storytelling (3 credits)
School of Information and Library Science
Manning Hall, Room 208
Thursdays, 6:00-8:45pm**

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Dr. Brian Sturm

Office: 215-A Manning Hall

Phone: 919-962-2460; **Email:** sturm AT ils.unc.edu; **Web:** <http://ils.unc.edu/~sturm>

Office Hours: By email or by appointment

Online Communication: We will use [Sakai](#) for any online communication we need for this course.

TARGET AUDIENCE

This course is for graduate students or upper level undergraduates with an interest in learning to perform oral narratives. The purpose is to help students gain performance and communication skills through active engagement in combining storytelling theory and skills. It is an emotionally challenging class (to create evocative performances requires a deep emotional vulnerability and a willingness to risk) as well as an intellectually stimulating one.

COURSE PRE-REQUISITES

None

COURSE GOALS AND KEY LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Theoretical:

1. Students will come to understand the values of storytelling for different age groups: children in primary school and elementary school, young adults, and adults.
2. Students will explore the potential of storytelling for special audiences.
3. Students will gain an understanding of the historical development of storytelling and the various types of storytelling around the world.

4. Students will compare various models of the storytelling process.
5. Students will gain insight into the administration of storytelling events: planning, promotion, and evaluation.
6. Students will gain a perception of the power of storytelling to move or engross an audience.

Practical:

1. Students will gain a thorough grounding in the practice of storytelling through classroom practice and performances and at least one public performance. A repertoire of at least three stories will be expected by the end of the session.
2. Students will explore the possibilities of various props and media for storytelling.
3. Students will experiment in class with various exercises that will facilitate their understanding of the different aspects of storytelling performance.

CLASS SCHEDULE

August 25th

Theory: Introduction to storytelling and the class. Expectations, assignments, grading, online area. Definitions, kinds, and values of storytelling. Historical overview. Research resources.

Readings: Have a look at *The Storyteller's Sourcebook* – SILS Ref: GR74.6 .M3 2001

Practice (focus): Small group reading aloud and group story creation

September 1st

Theory: Storytelling: trance, paradox, and the psychodynamics of enchantment.

Readings: first read Stallings [The Web of Silence](#); then read Sturm [The Enchanted Imagination](#); and then read Sturm *Power of "I"* article and *Caring for Stories* article (on Sakai)

Practice: Storytelling games

September 8th

Theory: Finding and selecting an age-appropriate story. We'll also discuss storytelling language, beginnings and endings, and child development.

Readings: Shedlock – [The Art of the Story-Teller](#), pages 43-98, also available at [Project Gutenberg](#); read [Folktale Openings](#), [Folktale Closings](#), and [Child Development](#) and [YA Development](#).

Practice (focus): Storytelling card games.

September 15th

Theory: Guest visit by storyteller, Mark Riddle. Preparing and presenting stories.

Readings: Sturm *Process of Sharing Stories with Young People* article (on Sakai); Shedlock – [The Art of the Story-Teller](#), pages 31-42, also available at [Project Gutenberg](#); Sturm *Eye Contact and the Veil of Story* article (on Sakai)

Practice (focus): "Theater of the Face" (eye contact, facial expression, and storytelling games)

September 22nd

**Storytelling Session #1 (Preschool): stories not to exceed 7 minutes
Cue Card #1**

September 29th

Theory: Guest visit by storyteller, Amy Sayle (*Storytelling Under the Stars*, director). Media in storytelling, props, flannel boards, etc.

Readings: [Mixing Puppets with Storytelling](#) (*Emergency Librarian*, May/June 1990, Vol. 17, p15, 3p); have a listen to Ruth Stotter on [Using Props in Storytelling](#) (it's 53 minutes long, so plan accordingly)

Practice (focus): "Theater of the Body" (body language, gesture, posture, mime, and storytelling games)

September 24th – [Wake County Storytelling Festival](#), 11:00am – 4:00pm. (free and open to the public at the Historic Oak View County Park)

October 6th

Theory: Storytelling for Special Audiences (physically and emotionally challenged, YA, elderly)

Readings: Blankenship article; Chinen article; Settingrington article (on Sakai).

Practice (focus): "The Art of Emotion" (analysis and portrayal of emotions)

October 7th - 9th – [National Storytelling Festival](#) in Jonesborough, Tennessee

October 13th

Theory: Guest storyteller, Michael Nager. Administering storytelling programs (design and evaluation)

Readings: Look at the entire *Storytelling Magazine* issue for September/October 2004 (Volume 16, issue 5) which is dedicated to Producing Storytelling Events; The [Purpose of Character Voices](#)

Practice (focus): "The Art of Imitation" (character voices, dialect, and sound effects)

October 14th – 16th – [Storytelling Festival of Carolina](#) in Laurinburg, NC

October 20th

FALL BREAK – no class

October 27th

**Storytelling Session #2 (Elementary/YA) stories not to exceed 12 minutes
Cue Card #2**

November 3rd

Theory: Creating stories from Personal Experiences. Guest storyteller, Sarah Beth Nelson.

Readings: *Crafting Personal Stories* (O’Callahan) and *Crafting Childhood* (Harley) on Sakai. Also, have a listen to some of the stories told at [The Moth](#) in New York City and watch the [Call of Stories](#) from BYU.

Practice (focus): “My Life in Story” (personal narrative story exercises)

November 10th

Theory: Digital Storytelling, Children as Storytellers, and Coaching Others

Readings: Look at the Center for Digital Storytelling website and watch some of their [stories](#). Look at the Educational Uses of Digital Storytelling [website](#). Read Jason Ohler’s [The World of Digital Storytelling](#). Read Chapter One of Hamilton, Martha and Mitch Weiss. 1990. *Children Tell Stories: a Teaching Guide*. [on SILS reserve]. Please also read [Children as Storytellers](#); finally scan Doug Lipman’s “[Becoming a Storytelling Coach](#)” and any of his links that suit your fancy.

Practice: "Space" (staging, acoustics, microphones)

November 13th – Seventh annual Storytelling Under the Stars from 4:30-5:30pm in the Morehead Planetarium

November 17th

Theory: Storytelling in Immersive Environments and “Presence”

Readings: McMahan (2003), Lee (2004) (in Sakai)

We will meet in room 208, then move to room 309 at the top of the stacks to play with the Oculus Rift virtual reality software.

November 24th

THANKSGIVING BREAK – no class

December 1st

Storytelling Session #3 (Adult) stories not to exceed 15 minutes

Cue Card #3 – we can bring potluck/munchies to complement the stories?

December 8th – Twenty-third annual Winter Stories at 5:00pm in the Wilson Library

ASSIGNMENTS

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| 1. Storytelling session 1 for Preschool | 15% |
| 2. Cue Card 1 - Preschool | 5% |
| 3. Storytelling session 2 for Elementary/YA | 20% |
| 4. Cue Card 2 – Elementary/YA | 5% |
| 5. Storytelling session 3 for Adult | 25% |
| 6. Cue Card 3 - Adult | 5% |

7. Live Performance Evaluation	10%
8. Class Participation (see attendance policy below)	15%
Total	100%

In-class Storytelling Performances (3)

Performance evaluation is a tricky process, as each performer has a unique style. In order to tailor my evaluation to each of you, your storytelling performances will be video recorded, and we will meet one-on-one in my office to evaluate each performance. You will need to schedule a time to meet after each of your storytelling sessions (allow one hour). Our evaluation will cover story selection, vocal qualities, presentation style, timing, whether you achieved your “emotions” and “risks” for the story, and the various performance techniques we discuss in class. We will use the Student Storytelling Evaluation Rubric on Sakai in the Resources folder to help us assess your stories.

Cue Cards (3)

Please see the cue card template, accessible from the “Cue Card” links above. The cue card is your evidence of background research into your story. Spend considerable effort on this endeavor, as the more you study your story, the more you’ll know its power, and the better performance you will give. Use this template to guide your thinking, and fill in the blank areas with your thoughts on your chosen story. My evaluation will include depth and extent of research, and thoughtfulness of your insights into the various aspects of your story.

Live Performance Evaluation (1)

You are expected to perform *at least one* of your chosen stories to an audience outside the classroom that would be appropriate for that story (i.e., a school classroom, a church group, etc.). The purpose is to expose you to the true performance setting, in which the classroom vanishes and you encounter an audience for whom the story is targeted. I want you to work in small groups for this (I’d prefer you not telling solo). You will need to figure out your action plan (where to tell, with whom, how to sequence your stories, how to advertise if necessary), conduct your performance, and then evaluate it thoughtfully. Use what you learn about story selection, preparation, and presentation along with how to administer a storytelling event in designing and presenting this public session.

Class Participation and Involvement

I will come to class prepared, and I expect you to do likewise: 1) you have read and considered the assigned readings; 2) you have prepared for the practice session (if necessary); and 3) you are willing to put your best efforts into practicing in class, and you are willing to leave your ego at the door of the classroom. This class functions on trust. We *must* build an environment of trust amongst ourselves so that we feel comfortable showing emotions, being vulnerable, and taking risks, for it is only through these three things that storytelling comes alive for the listeners.

COURSE POLICIES

ATTENDANCE

Class participation is vital to your learning in this course, so I expect you to attend class each week. While I understand that life can get in the way of your education, this class needs your participation and input each week, so that you can build on prior knowledge, help your classmates learn and grow, and contribute to a sense of trust and inter-personal reliance that is essential to the success of the class.

GRADING POLICY

Grading for your assignments will follow the H, P, L, F scale for graduate students, A, B, C, D, F for undergraduates. Performances are notoriously difficult to grade, as they are works of self-expression (i.e., art); however, I feel comfortable with the following interpretation for assigning grades to your endeavors.

1. I assume that you are all motivated students (you would not be at Carolina if you weren't); therefore, my expectations are high from the outset. I know that some of you will have past performance experience, some will have natural talent, and some will have neither, so part of my job as professor is to judge you individually (in addition to comparing you to your peers in class). Therefore, I DO grade on effort, on risks you push yourself to take, on your willingness to try new things, etc. While you may never give an Oscar-winning performance, I expect you to push yourself to improve throughout the semester in whatever ways we discuss in class and individually, and if you do so, you will do well in this course.
2. If your work is thoughtful and competent, and shows effort and care, it will receive a P, B, or C.
If your work synthesizes ideas, draws in work from outside of class as well as ideas we've covered in class, or shows risk-taking that markedly improves your performance ability, it will receive an H or an A.
If your work shows a lack of effort, care, or thought (whether writing or performing) it will receive either an L, D, or F.
3. There are three ways of grading performances: 1) how you do in relation to your present ability, 2) how you do in comparison to a theoretical "best" performance, and 3) how you do in comparison with your peer students. I will use primarily the first two of these in discussing/evaluating your work with you. I will also ask each of you to comment upon your classmates' first two performances so that if my view is biased unfairly, the class helps mitigate that bias.