

*"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 307
Thursdays, 5:45-8:30pm**

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Dr. Brian Sturm

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Office Hours: By email or by appointment

Online Communication: We will use [Sakai](#)/Canvas, email, and [Zoom](#) 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 storytelling through a variety of theoretical models.

3. Students will understand the power of storytelling to move or engross an audience.

Practical:

1. Students will be more competent and confident public performers and presenters, with skills that can help in myriad settings, such as job interviews, conference presentations, reference interviews, workshops, and class presentations.
2. Students will understand the power of distractions when presenting.
3. Students will learn to enunciate clearly, project their voices, and maintain compelling eye contact.
4. Students will know how to evaluate storytelling performances.

PERSONAL INCLUSION COMMITMENT

As an instructor, I strive to create a learning environment that treats diverse ideas and perspectives with respect. I aim to bring diverse voices into the classroom (readings, videos, speakers, etc.), and I welcome your input of specific resources to improve the class. If you feel that something about the class, or something that is said by anyone during the class has made you uncomfortable, please talk to me about it.

CLASS SCHEDULE

August 18th

Theory: Introduction to storytelling and the class. Develop class norms, review assignments, grading. Definitions, kinds, and values of storytelling. Historical overview. Resources for finding stories.

To Read Before Class: Have a look at *The Storyteller's Sourcebook* (on Sakai)

Practice (focus): Small group reading aloud, scening, and storytelling of fables

August 25th

Theory: Why we tell stories: trance, paradox, and the psychodynamics of enchantment.

To Watch Before Class: [Donna Washington](#) (Brer Rabbit and the Laughing Place)

To Read Before Class: 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 (focus): Storytelling games

September 1st

Theory: Why we tell stories: the "hidden voices" in folktales

To Watch Before Class: [Tai Simpson](#) (Indigenous Storytelling as a Political Lens); [Brenda Wong Aoki](#) (Crane Wife)

To Read Before Class (on Sakai), choose one that interests you or find your own regarding folklore/storytelling as social narratives:

- Folktales and Reality: The Social Construction of Race in Chinese Tales (Kong & Goh 1995)
- Momotarō (The Peach Boy) and the Spirit of Japan: Concerning the Function of a Fairy Tale in Japanese Nationalism of the Early Shōwa Age (Antoni 1991)
- Allegory of Dominance: British Power in Rudyard Kipling's Rikki-tikki-tavi (de Abreu 2013)
- What African American Mothers Perceive They Socialize Their Children to Value When Telling Them Brer Rabbit Stories (Leslie 1998)

Practice (focus): Examination of the Hungarian story of the "Rooster and the Diamond Button"; Storytelling games.

September 8th

Theory: Finding, Learning and Presenting Stories. We'll also discuss storytelling language, entering and exiting stories, and youth development.

To Watch Before Class: [Ethnohtec](#): (Original Goldfinger, tandem storytelling); [Jos Duncan](#) (The People Could Fly, starts around minute 1:00)

To Read Before Class: Shedlock – [The Art of the Story-Teller](#), pages 31-98, also available at [Project Gutenberg](#); Sturm *Eye Contact and the Veil of Story* article and *Paradox of Participation* (on Sakai); [Child Development](#) and [YA Development](#).

Practice (focus): Storytelling games.

September 15th

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

September 22nd

Guest: Visit with storyteller, Amy Sayle.

Theory: Media in Storytelling

To Watch Before Class: [Johnny Moses](#) (starts around minute 15:26); [Gregg Howard](#) (Rabbit's Tail, Cherokee)

To Read Before Class: ["Where's the Puppet Stage?"](#); [How to Use Puppets to Tell a Story](#); and [Using Props](#)

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

September 29th

Guest: Le Datta Grimes (oral historian, Special Collections and Archives at Clemson University: oral histories as community stories)

Theory: Emotional Engagement

To Watch Before Class: [Opalanga Pugh](#) (starts around 17 minutes into video) [Dianne Ferlatte](#) (Brer Rabbit's Dance)

To Read Before Class: de Vos chapter; Sturm articles: *Peeling the Onion*; *Emotion Motions*; *Storytelling and the 4th Wall* (on Sakai).

Practice (focus): "The Art of Emotion" (analysis and portrayal of emotions); "The Art of Imitation" (character voices, dialect, and sound effects)

October 6th – 9th – [National Storytelling Festival](#)

October 6th

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

October 13th

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

October 20th FALL BREAK – No Class

October 27th

Theory: Creating stories from Personal Experiences

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 or [The Monti](#) in Durham, NC.

Video to Watch Before Class: Wajuppa Tossa and Prasong Saihong:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qwpPIZ2AlaY> (Hero of the Mekong River, Thailand)

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

AFTER CLASS REHEARSAL for STORYTELLING UNDER THE STARS PERFORMERS

November 3rd ONLINE CLASS – Brian at Conference

Theory: Administering storytelling programs (design and evaluation)

Readings: See [these two articles](#) from *Storytelling Magazine* (September/October 2004, Volume 16, issue 5) which is dedicated to Producing Storytelling Events in festival contexts. If it interests you, please also read the following two resources on Sakai: Admin.comparing story dev and program dev.doc & Administering a Storytelling Event.doc which deal more with *library* storytelling and storytimes.

Class: we will not have class. Please spend the time practicing your final story.

November 4-5 – [Old North State Storytelling](#), Cary Theatre, Cary, NC

November 10th

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

November 17th (last class)

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

AFTER CLASS DRESS REHEARSAL for STORYTELLING UNDER THE STARS PERFORMERS

November 20th – Twelfth annual Storytelling Under the Stars from 6:00-7:00pm in the Morehead Planetarium

ASSIGNMENTS

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 Review	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 Review

This is a one-two page, single-spaced write-up of your live performance, including:

- One paragraph overview of the gig (setting, format, schedule, design of the event, attendance, etc.)

- Spend the rest of your review analyzing your performance as we have done for your in-class stories (what worked, what didn't, what would you alter were you to do it again, how did the audience react, were they engaged, etc.). Also, if your performance was part of a larger gig with others, assess the entire experience for flow, transitions, emotional arc, etc.

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 in whatever format necessary 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.

SUGGESTED CLASS NORMS or ...HOW WE WANT TO BE TOGETHER

1. View this classroom as a liberated zone
2. Listen to one another (i.e., please put your phones and other tech away unless you *need* to use it for class-related business)
3. Respect one another
4. Maintain confidentiality
5. Use "I" statements; speak about your own thoughts and experiences, not those of others
6. Focus on a broad definition of diversity
7. Bring questions/comments to the classroom
8. Pay attention to how YOU feel
9. Recognize that we are all teachers & learners
10. Attend each class and participate
11. Recognize that this class is the beginning of a journey

These norms, if adopted, will enable us to keep our discourse focused, respectful, and courageous.

SILS DIVERSITY COMMITMENT

In support of the University's diversity goals and the mission of the UNC School of Information and Library Science, SILS embraces and promotes diversity and inclusion in all their forms. We broadly define diversity to include ability, age, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, gender expression, immigration status, national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status. SILS is committed to preparing our graduates to be leaders in an increasingly multicultural and global society.

To this end, we strive to:

- Ensure that our leadership, policies, and practices are inclusive
- Integrate diversity into our curriculum and research
- Promote and nurture an environment in which diverse perspectives and experiences are respected and valued
- Recruit and retain students, faculty, and staff from traditionally underrepresented groups
- Participate in outreach to underserved communities in North Carolina and beyond
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We are committed to cultivating of an academic environment that is open, representative, and equitable to all.

~ The Faculty and Staff of the UNC School of Information and Library Science

GRADING

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.

4. 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 “excellent” 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.

HONOR CODE

This course, like all UNC-Chapel Hill courses, follows the [Honor Code](#). It is your responsibility to abide by the Honor Code. It applies to this course in the following ways:

Plagiarism is one of the most serious breaches of academic integrity, and it means using others’ work without proper attribution.

You may work on assignments together and share ideas, but your final work must be your own, and you must cite sources you use in written and performed work. You may use any style (APA, Chicago, Turabian, etc.) so long as you remain consistent in its use.

Plagiarism in performance means taking someone else’s interpretation and performing it as if it were your own; you may tell the stories other people tell, but you must create your own performance of them.

I am available for consultation on any assignment, and if you have questions about acknowledging other people’s work, please ask me.