INLS 490 – Storytelling: Designing your Professional Narrative  
(Spring 2024)

Manning Hall 208  
Tuesday, 11:00am-1:45pm

Instructor Information  
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Course Description

This course will help you design and refine your professional communication skills to increase the engaging power of your self-presentation, particularly during interviews and other professional settings. We will focus on three aspects of your professional skills repertoire: how to analyze the “story” of the organization in which you want to work (corporate narratives), how you assess your own skills and develop an associated professional narrative, and how you merge those two in the moment of the interview or other professional context. It is a performance class, so expect to be doing a lot of presenting in front of the class and in small groups. Feedback will focus on those presentations to push you to increase the emotional value and intensity of your self-presentation.

Target Audience

Anyone who wants to improve their narrative performance and interview skills.

Course Prerequisites

None
Course Goals and Key Learning Objectives

By the end of the course, you should:

1. Understand the role of personal stories in the interview process.
2. Develop skills and feel more confident in personal narrative performance for interviews.
3. Know how to research employers to understand their “story” and tailor your self-presentation to their needs and desires.
4. Understand the embodied and transactional nature of interviews (verbal, nonverbal, proxemic, and kinesthetic).

Diversity/Inclusivity Statement

1. I agree to treat everyone with respect and to value your statements even when I disagree with those statements.
2. I agree to listen when others talk and consider what they’ve said.
3. I agree to use “I” statements when sharing my opinions: “I think…,” “I believe…,” “I feel…”
4. I believe that learning occurs when we encounter ideas that are new, different, and perhaps controversial. These ideas can help us think and grow, if we allow them space for exploration; however, I agree not to tolerate hate speech or personal attacks in the name of “different perspectives.”

Class Schedule

Articles listed in the Readings section of the syllabus are either hyperlinked or on the class CANVAS site. There is no textbook for this class.

SECTION 1: Folktale Storytelling for Basic Performance Skill Development

January 16th

In-class: Introduction to each other and the course. Overview of the Storytellers Sourcebook. Improvisation ice-breakers and storytelling skill games.
January 23rd

**Topic:** Finding, Learning and Presenting Stories.

**To Read Before Class:** Sturm *Eye Contact and the Veil of Story* and Caring for Stories articles (CANVAS)

**In-class:** Small group reading aloud, “scening,” “layering,” and storytelling of fables

January 30th

**Topic:** Emotional Engagement of an Audience

**To Read Before Class:** Sturm *Peeling the Onion* and *Emotion Motions* (CANVAS)

**In-class:** Storytelling games; “The Art of Emotion” (analysis and portrayal of emotions); "The Art of Imitation" (character voices, dialect, and sound effects)

February 6th

**Assignment #1:** Storytelling Performance of Folktale (not to exceed 8 minutes)

February 13th – NO CLASS: WELLNESS DAY

SECTION #2: Assessing Employers for Their Stories

February 20th

**Topic:** Exploring Organizational Storytelling – marketing/branding

**To Read Before Class:** Rise of Storytelling as the New Marketing (Pulizzi 2012) (CANVAS); Using Storytelling to Strengthen Your Brand; Brand Storytelling: 10 Steps to Start Your Content Marketing Hero’s Journey

**In-class:** Corporate Story analysis workshop

February 27th

**Topic:** Exploring Organizational Storytelling – leadership/management
To Read Before Class: *Six Stories You Need to Know How to Tell* (Simmons 2001) (also on CANVAS); Watch: *Leadership Storytelling* (~16 minutes);

**In-class:** Information Organization Story analysis workshop

**March 5th**

**Topic:** The Stories Job Descriptions Tell (skills, experience, and qualifications desired), but also…

To Read Before Class: *How to Read Job Descriptions – and what to Look For; 7 Red Flags in Job Postings; How to Read a Job Description the Right Way*, and EITHER: Skill Requirements (Verma et al. 2019) OR Educating IM Professionals (Chen and Zhang 2016) (CANVAS)

**In-class:** Find several job descriptions for positions you might like, and deconstruct them individually and then share in small groups. Use *Indeed.com, ZipRecruiter.com, Idealist.org* (for non-profits), or any other job search site you prefer.

**March 12th – NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK**

**March 19th**

**Topic:** What Questions to Ask Potential Employers

To Read Before Class: *Questions to Ask in an Interview*;

**In-class:** Sharing of corporate story analyses (voluntary)

**Assignment Due:** Corporate/Information Organization Story Analysis

**SECTION #3: Personal Stories for Interview Situations**

**March 26th**

**Topic:** Personal Narratives: Looking at my life for potential stories

To Read Before Class: *Personal Narratives and the Life Story* (McAdams 2008); Crafting Personal Stories (O’Callahan); Crafting Childhood (Harley) (CANVAS); Also, have a listen to some of the stories told at *The Moth* in New York City and watch the *Call of Story* from BYU.

**In-class:** Constructing personal stories: structure and performance
April 2nd

**Topic:** The interview structure and the kinds of questions interviewers ask and the stories we need to answer them (overview).

**To Read Before Class:** *Five types of interview questions; Different types of interview questions and expert tips to prepare for them; The Elevator Speech* (also on CANVAS)

**In-class:** Working on stories that assess personality (“who am I?” and professional values) and the kinds of questions you might encounter.

April 9th

**Topic:** Developing short anecdotes for interviews (the differences between folktale storytelling and interview storytelling); Stories of Connections

**To Read Before Class:** *Why I am Here Stories* (Simmons 2007) (CANVAS)

**In-class:** Working on stories that show your connection to the organization (“why am I here?”) and the kinds of questions you might encounter.

April 16th

**Topic:** Stories for Behavioral Questions

**To Read Before Class:** *The Best Way to Answer Behavioral Interview Questions* (Gamelin 2023) and *Behavioral Based Job Interview Questions* (Doyle 2022) (also on CANVAS)

**In-class:** Working on stories that demonstrate your knowledge and abilities (“my vision,” “values in action,” and other behavioral questions) and the kinds of questions you might encounter.

April 23rd

**Topic:** Stories for Hypothetical Questions

**To Read Before Class:** *16 Hypothetical Questions Interviewers Ask And How To Answer Them* (Prokopets 2023); *How to Answer the “Hypothetical” Interview Question* (Lopaze) (also on CANVAS)

**In-class:** Working on hypothetical situation stories (“Imagine this scenario…”) and the kinds of questions you might encounter.
April 30th (LDOC)
Assignment Due: Final Interview Performance

Assignments
Storytelling Performance  25% due: February 6th
Critique of Organizational Story  20% due: March 19th
Final Interview Performance  30% due: April 30th
Class Participation  25% due: ongoing

Assignment Descriptions (by date due):

1. In-class Folktale Storytelling Performance
   a. 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 your performance. You will need to schedule a time to meet after your storytelling session (allow 30 minutes). Our evaluation will cover vocal qualities, presentation style, timing, whether you achieved your “emotions,” and the various performance techniques we discuss in class. We will use the Performance grading.xltx rubric on CANVAS in the Files folder to help us assess your stories.

2. Critique of Organizational Story
   a. For this assignment you will be exploring the ways organizations use stories to create a brand identity, to engage users/customers, to manage organizational culture, and to “tell their organizational story.” You will select an organization for which you might want to work, analyze their advertising, website, social media presence, and other media coverage they receive, and create a product exploring how that organization uses storytelling to present itself to the world. This research will lead to either:
      i. A roughly 1,500-word description and evaluation of the organization and its various stories.
      OR
      ii. A 4-5-minute video presentation that addresses the various aspects of your organizational story assessment.
Please use this template to organize your product, whichever you select.

3. **Final Interview Performance**
   a. We will be conducting a formal interview for a variety of different jobs, though all will be information institutions. The goal here is to give you an opportunity to tell some of the stories you have created and, perhaps, devise new ones impromptu as needed to answer the interview questions posed. While you could consider this role playing, and it is somewhat, I am most interested in assessing how well you select and tell your stories to engage the interviewer(s). We will videotape these interviews and discuss them one-on-one the same way we do the folktale performance (though the rubric will be slightly different).

4. **Participation**
   a. Since this is a performance class, and as a group we need all the practice we can get, I expect you to attend class; however, I understand that life gets in the way of education sometimes, so you do NOT need my permission to miss a class for any reason. If you are not there, I assume you have a valid reason to be elsewhere, and I don’t need to know that reason for your privacy’s sake. When you ARE in attendance, please be as engaged and present as possible.

**Grading**

Grading follows the [normal UNC grading schema](#).

**Course Policies**

**Attendance**

Class participation is vital to your learning in this course, so I expect you to attend class each week. This class needs your participation and input each week, so that you can build on prior knowledge, share your experiences, and help your classmates learn and grow.